Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público: African American and Mexican American Cultural Fronts in Nineteenth-Century Newsprint

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Abstract

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Both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* represent nineteenth-century milestones because they historically demarcate the inception and terminal points of Manifest Destiny’s progress across the continental United States. As such, this project chronicles the cumulative effects of Anglo-based racism on African and Mexican American communities — a fact that remained not only consistent but also remarkably comparable in these two cases, even though each journal is separated by three thousand miles, twenty-six years, and a different language. Such similarities speak to the numerous and interconnected nineteenth-century practices that collectively undermined the agency and survivability of communities of color, including slavery, Anglo-based free labor, Southern and Southwestern lynching, and filibustering expeditions.

Yet *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* are more than mere reflexive reactions to Anglo-based bigotry; they are historical manuscripts that reflect extraordinary self-determination, and this was revealed within the content of each journal through their coverage of militancy, assimilation-based strategies, and an ever-present insistence on authorial autonomy. Both journals represent what scholars today regard as the respective historic origins for African and Mexican American political and cultural consciousness, and are likewise surprisingly radical — even by today’s standards.

By ceaselessly drawing attention to the United States Constitution’s guaranteed civil rights, *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* founded their radicalness on the instinctive supposition that such liberties extended equally and naturally to persons of color. It was this journalistic daring that mostly distinguishes *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* as not only ahead of their time, but also as relevant texts for the present — as contemporary reminders of how their struggle for civil rights remain as unresolved today as they did then.
Dedication

I would not have been able to complete this degree without the assistance of the following individuals.

First, I would like to reverentially acknowledge my original source of strength and guidance, Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:13).

Second, I would like to recognize my wife, Karen Núñez, who has courageously supported my efforts throughout this process. She has read, edited, and graciously offered feedback on large portions of this manuscript. Without her, it would have been literally impossible to achieve this milestone. Karen: you are the sole reason for my success, in this, and in so many other areas of my life.

And lastly, I would like to dedicate my doctorate to my little brother, Esteban Núñez. Although gone from this earth, he nonetheless remains a powerful inspiration for my family and me. Many years ago, I stepped onto this university for the first time, a few days after burying Esteban. Today, I step off this university, with Esteban’s memory close at hand. Together, we will both triumphantly walk across that stage, and someday, into God’s eternal hands.
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Introduction

To say that both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público were milestones in the early efforts for African American and Mexican American self-determination is somewhat of an understatement. Not only do these newspapers carry the historical distinction of being among the first minority-owned and-operated periodicals in New York and Los Angeles respectively, but the editorial tone and approach of each was also decidedly radical for its time — perhaps even by today’s standards. Appearing at a time when both cultures were experiencing historically-significant changes, both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público represent a repository not only of their prevailing conditions and thoughts, but also of their collective responses to the critical challenges they both then faced — and other minority-owned publications continue to face today. My research proposes to connect these two cultural narratives discursively in ways that highlight their corresponding relation to the larger socioeconomic forces of Anglo-based Manifest Destiny of an emerging American empire. While each journal is indeed separated by twenty-six years, a different language, and three thousand miles, they nonetheless bridge both the inception and terminal points of Manifest Destiny’s progress across the continental United States — and the voices of the people of color who experienced its effects first-hand.

Before I summarize the scope and specifics of my project, I would like to state my personal reasons for pursuing this line of research. This story begins years ago while employed as an Oakland Unified School District middle-school teacher. While there, I was frequently struck by the prevailing tensions that often existed between both African American and Mexican American students. Forced many times to either prevent or break up fights, I would oftentimes wonder — in the after-school silence of my empty classroom — how two likewise brown-skinned individuals could so fiercely despise each other, sometimes even to the death. What further puzzled me was that both were inheritors of parallel histories of oppression and subjugation that should — if anything at all — quicken their mutual realization of a shared predicament, indeed, of a shared oppressor. No such epiphany occurred. In fact, their ongoing clashes continued, with both apparently oblivious as to how or why they remain rival adversaries.

Much later, while in graduate school, I began to examine the following questions: can these two stories — i.e., the cultural narratives of the African and Mexican American — somehow connect? Do they historically intersect, and if so, how and when? And most importantly, if they do indeed merge, why should this matter to both scholars and communities of color alike? What I discovered is that these two stories do, in fact, converge, and particularly when they are both examined through the lens of nineteenth-century empire-building — a process that utilized both slavery and territorial acquisition as a means not only to establish America’s early economic preeminence, but also to subjugate and pathologize Black and Brown communities as undesirable
socioeconomic liabilities. What Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público in essence embody are the historically documented voices that resisted this process, and did so as independent agents. In fact, each journal represents a pioneering feat in itself, with Freedom’s Journal becoming the first African American newspaper in the United States, and El Clamor Público the first Spanish-language weekly in southern California. Equally important, both were minority-owned and operated.

While Freedom’s Journal examined issues related to slavery’s adverse effects in the North and Southeast, El Clamor Público captured the equally adverse consequences of a southwest territorial occupation —land on which slavery’s extension was to be subsequently debated. Yet more fascinating is that both newspapers chronicled surprisingly similar responses to white bigotry — a resultant by-product of nineteenth-century American nation building. One from the East, and the other from the West, each newspaper not only recorded both the development and movement of repressive expansionist policies but also its devastating effects on communities of color. Enveloped in a wave of colonizing violence, Black and Brown people came to represent the victims of a then new and emerging industrial social order. When viewed against this nation-building process, both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público become newspapers that symbolize the historic documentation of a systemic oppression that spanned two geographic locales and, in this way, book-ended some of the most formative aspects of its development.

I would like to acknowledge a few landmark works that have either informed or indirectly influenced the course of my research. The first is Genaro Padilla’s, My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography. While specifically dealing with autobiography, Padilla’s in-depth overview of Californio culture as well as his keen theoretical constructs has given me the discursive tools to better comprehend post-1848 California. David Montejano’s award winning, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 was also essential. A project dealing with Texas, Montejano’s overriding themes of nation-building and economic expansion nonetheless informed my larger understanding of how such imperialist processes later impacted California itself. In a broader sense, I view my research project as launching from Padilla’s and Montejano’s general base of research and, more specifically, as extending a southwestern-based line of inquiry to encompass other similarly-subjugated persons of color in different locales. In this regard, I am additionally grateful to Jacqueline Bacon’s Freedom’s Journal: The First African-American Newspaper, which not only served as an outstanding thematic survey but also as a rich source for secondary bibliographic material.

While I certainly acknowledge and celebrate the distinct cultural aspects that make the African and Mexican American experience unique, I also welcome their shared historical connections, particularly as they shed light on various overlooked or unanticipated interrelationships. What I did not foresee prior to this study, for example, was the extensive degree to which both
Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público promoted ethnic community building as a way to directly counter or offset the destructive forces of Anglo-based empire-building. Related to this discovery is each journal’s similar reliance on United States democratic or constitutionally stated principles — liberties and rights that each editor strongly believed should be extended to people of color as well. Unfortunately, both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público also chronicle a similar disappointment regarding the utter failure of these liberty-based assurances.

In these combined developments, one can clearly sense how the emergence of a democratic-based national vision and a new industrial order held preliminary hope for both African and Mexican Americans — first in the East (1827-29), and then twenty-six years later in the West (1855-59). Regardless of how this scheme of ideological and economic preeminence developed over time, African and Mexican American human rights degrade disproportionately in direct contrast. Efforts at community building most certainly extended beyond both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público, but more as self-contained and isolated ventures, as evidenced in the latter colonies of Liberia, Africa and Sonora, Mexico. Moreover, vestiges of these self-sustaining approaches above are in some respects still apparent in today’s contemporary African and Mexican American communities — a fact that can perhaps likewise explain how two ethnic groups that share such significant historical similarities can remain on parallel yet separate paths of group sustainability. As much as others currently examine both African and Mexican American cultures separately, I hope that this project ultimately serves as an entry point for more comparative-based research regarding these two often-unassociated groups. For now, however, let us turn to a detailed description of each chapter’s development.

In Chapter One, entitled “Hard Print Voices: Evolving Self-Determination,” I begin by briefly laying out the historical and foundational precepts that underlie both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público. Each journal not only chronologically documented the race-based injustices of its respective time but also established itself as one of the first examples of a minority-owned periodical exercising its own authorial control. Regarding their overall editorial range, Freedom’s Journal regularly showcased the commentaries of leading Black intellectuals and radicals while El Clamor Público often published reprints from Spanish-language international journals on issues ranging from imperialism to human rights. While this level of narrative autonomy is extraordinary, I argue that it is each journal’s ability to impart ethnic self-determinism that make them historically noteworthy.

Such editorial autonomy did not go unnoticed and contributed to major journalistic wars that ensued between Freedom’s Journal and The New-York Enquirer, and between El Clamor Público and the Los Angeles Star. Regarding Freedom’s Journal, I demonstrate that it was actually the underlying fear of an ever-growing free Black populace that drove New-York Enquirer
editor, Mordecai Noah, to continually lampoon and negatively characterize a rival African American middle-class. And while *Freedom’s Journal*'s editor, John B. Russwurm, strongly insisted that Blacks — not well-intentioned whites — devise their own defensive rebuttal, I argue against the specific manner in which *Freedom’s Journal* formulated its response, which was by creating unnecessarily divisive and demeaning distinctions between middle and lower-class Blacks.

In the West, *El Clamor Público*'s editor, Francisco P. Ramírez, similarly wrestled with his own nemesis. The *Los Angeles Star* incessantly attempted to establish the hereditary lawlessness of Mexican Americans — a negative typecast that was likely perpetuated by the influx of Southeastern, pro-slavery emigrants then relocating to Los Angeles. Consequently, *El Clamor Público*'s chief contentions were with the Democratic Southern Chivalry Party and The Know-Nothings, two far-right, pro-slavery political factions that exerted considerable regional and political influence. Yet it was not until the 1856 Frémont/Buchanan presidential elections — only five years short of the American Civil War — when this all-out resistance against ethnic self-determinism came to a climax.

Brief biographical sketches of each editor are also included here to trace more fully the underlying motives and beliefs that subsequently shaped each journal. For instance, Russwurm’s initial certainty that full African American political maturation could only occur with corresponding Anglo assistance resulted in both his disillusionment and his later endorsement of the separatist-based Liberian colonization movement. This last point did not sit well with his target Black audience. Russwurm suffered numerous public humiliations from his African American associates as a result. And when Samuel E. Cornish finally departed as co-editor of *Freedom’s Journal*, he not only established other landmark New York periodicals but after a while experienced a similar disgruntlement from his Black readership. In fact, this same dilemma was repeated with Ramirez of *El Clamor Público* decades later with a discontented Mexican American readership. I argue and demonstrate that these collective intra-cultural clashes were not so much breakdowns from within as sabotages from without. In each case, Anglo-based political manipulations had managed to either split or significantly compromise African and Mexican American allegiances that otherwise would have remained intact.

In Chapter Two, entitled “Destiny Manifested: Expressions of White Superiority and Control,” I extend my analysis by exploring a wide-range of nineteenth-century, Anglo-based political forces that created the eventual need for an ethnic self-determined newspaper. Beginning with *Freedom’s Journal*, I outline its indirect approach to slavery by demonstrating how Russwurm and Cornish typically dissected the issue with protracted intellectual articles that discussed free labor and its inherent advantages. Adopting this circuitous or gradualist approach, however, had its discursive advantages. Advocating for immediate emancipation would have carried a risk of possible assassination,
and would have exacerbated the already-heightened Anglo fears of a Black insurrection.

Most disconcerting, perhaps, was the manner in which African Americans — free or otherwise — were later received in the West. In California, there was fierce Anglo resistance to free African American migration. Wealthy Mexican Americans used Blacks as a degraded standard against which to compare their own relative value, eventually negotiating voting rights in this same manner. But such secured liberties were short-lived. The California Land Commission — an alleged landholding safeguard — instead became the principal legislative instrument that in essence facilitated the appropriation of almost all Californio deeded lands. Economically displaced in this manner, Mexican American small ranchers found themselves employed as entry-level prospectors in the surrounding mines where they were routinely persecuted with impunity.

Ethnic-based violence was a cyclical or recurring theme in nineteenth-century America as Black and Brown individuals were especially inscribed with deep racial significance. I explore some specific practices that then comprised domestic terrorism, beginning with African American lynching — a particularly common form of Anglo punishment that often found its way into the pages of Freedom’s Journal. Perhaps more torturous than death, however, was the re-loss of freedom through kidnapping. A practice that dated back partially to the British Navy, even free African Americans themselves later became intermediaries in the lucrative abduction business. More damaging yet — physically as well as psychologically — was the always-looming threat of Black female rape, an exploitative practice that Freedom’s Journal demonstrates held market-based incentives for slaveholders.

Equally present but sadly misunderstood was the high prevalence of Mexican American lynching in the Southwest — a topic that reoccurred frequently within the pages of El Clamor Público. Using statistical data to corroborate their findings, both William Carrigan and Ken Gonzales-Day provide excellent historical evidence to suggest that Mexican Americans were in fact lynched at a per capita rate that actually exceeded African Americans during their most violent years in the South. What is even more disturbing is that a large number of these extra-legal Mexican American murders occurred in townships that already possessed legal command structures — debunking the common misconception regarding the need for frontier justice.

Expressions of white superiority and control were not merely physical but also legislative, political, and economic. Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público shed light on the nineteenth-century imperialist desires of the United States as manifested through African American slavery, white free labor, and filibustering. Regarding slavery, Russwurm argues for commerce-based behavior in newly freed slaves as a way of indirectly discouraging the continuance of slavery itself, and Freedom’s Journal chronicles several instances where large farm-based co-ops were instituted for this very purpose.
But the prospects for these same manumitted or free African Americans in the Anglo-dominated free job market were not only less than encouraging, but outright dangerous — especially in the newly occupied West. And while an imperialist bent was responsible for consuming the Southwest, I show that *El Clamor Público* documented how this impulse continued well beyond 1848.

In Chapter Three, entitled “Colonization Schemes: Fleeing White Democracy and Benevolence,” I return to a more centered reading of *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público*, and particularly of its articles and commentaries illustrating a growing call for colonization — a development that was a direct result of the race-based injustices. I examine the underlying philosophy of the American Colonization Society (ACS). As an organization made up significantly of southern slaveholders, I demonstrate how the ACS designed to create a victorious national narrative of survival in Liberia that would simultaneously drain its surplus free Black population as well. But it was chiefly the manner in which Black expatriates were prepared for colonization — many times through female self-help organizations — that becomes problematic. Taught mainly to emulate Euro-centric ideals, Liberian emigrants were eventually caught between warring Liberia African tribes who resisted Americanization and their own exaggerated attachments to white culture. Firmly opposed to the ACS, the African American leadership not only published frequent rebuttals in *Freedom’s Journal* to this effect but also immediately disowned Russwurm when he finally joined the colonization cause — which he eventually concluded was the only solution to white racism.

Ramírez’s decision to embrace Sonoran colonization was indirectly related to his idealistic faith in constitutionally-based notions of democracy, ideals he believed likewise extended to the colonized populations of the American empire. Using the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as a polemical leverage, Ramírez continually demanded throughout *El Clamor Público* that these rights be officially recognized and implemented. But an increasingly Anglo populace in Los Angeles — a significant percentage of which was pro-slavery as well — proved to be a continual barrier to these political hopes. Additionally, Ramírez apparently experienced some key difficulties as a one-man editor. Trilingual at only nineteen years of age, the youthful editor was — among other things — exclusively responsible for researching articles, many of which found in the fifty or so international journals that were mailed weekly to him by steamboat. By February of 1856, however, *El Clamor Público* had already published its first article in support of the Sonoran Colony, with many more to follow. Discouraged with an ever-escalating level of violence and territorial dispossession, Ramirez finally ceased his periodical and boarded a caravan to Sonora — determined, above all, to evade political and economic defeat.

The in-country realities that awaited Russwurm and Ramírez in Liberia and Sonora respectively proved to be equally challenging, if not outright hazardous. Regarding Liberia, Russwurm in 1829 accepted the editorship of
its colony's newspaper, the *Liberia Herald*, as well as other competing responsibilities, to include superintendent of schools and the Secretary of the Colony. Erratic funding, and African tribal warfare, however, seriously impeded progress. Moreover, their over-emphasized regard for Euro-based ideals caused the African American émigrés to be resented by native populace, an irony that only further underscored the strange predicament then facing both emigrant and native alike in the promised land.

Ramírez himself likewise accepted an invitation to head his respective colony's newspaper, *La Estrella del Occidente*. Enjoying far less financial patronage than its Liberian predecessor, the Sonoran colony experienced a number of setbacks early on — one of which was the irregular and therefore unpredictable disbursement of state employee pay. More disconcerting, however, was the frequent native raids that terrorized the colonists. The surrounding Apache and Comanche were uninterested in any democratic-based advantages possessed by the Mexican émigrés. I examine how Mexican colonists were essentially escaping *to* and *from* their former country simultaneously, attempting to evade Manifest Destiny's pace by moving ever-southward — in anticipation of the previously-established attempts to further annex Baja California's seaports.

In Chapter Four, entitled “If We Stay, Then What?: Recourses for Surviving Nineteenth-Century America,” I begin by asking the following question: for those who did not opt for the utopist homelands of Liberia of Sonora, how did they create social meaning and identity in an environment that systematically denied their humanity? I divide my response into three sections: “Black and Brown Militancy”; “Black and Brown Double-Talk”; and “Recovering Black and Brown Narrative Subjectivity.” As a frequent contributor to *Freedom's Journal*, David Walker not only symbolized the birth of African American militancy but also posed the most veritable threat to white slaveholders as well, many of whom subsequently placed a contract on his life. I argue that Walker’s *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* re-conceptualizes violent resistance as a justifiable co-extension of God’s wrath (against slavery and racism), and that one’s refusal to exert such opposition would in turn be a simultaneous renunciation of both Black community and manhood. The 1856 “Juan Flores Revolution” similarly redrew the boundaries of acceptable proactive resistance when Flores’s multi-class insurgents retaliated en masse against continued Anglo mistreatment — an event that was thoroughly covered by Ramírez in *El Clamor Público*. Joined by Mexican American members of upper socioeconomic standing, the ensuing lower and middle-class rebellion provoked a unique ruling-class response — both Anglo and Californio elite — that signified the inherent dangers of a combined class coalition.

I also discuss extensively the prevalence of double-talk in both *Freedom's Journal* and *El Clamor Público*. As a discursive strategy, this rhetorical approach proposes to appease and resist simultaneously an oppressive
adversary. As such, this method became a somewhat savvier alternative to outright militancy, and its use is well documented throughout both journals. In *Freedom’s Journal*, for instance, Russwurm and Cornish explicitly state their desire to become champions of the oppressed, but they also declare their need to do so in a neutral and passive manner. Using behavioral etiquette as a weapon, Russwurm advocates what I call conduct-based militancy, where Anglo-based prejudice is cunningly disarmed with the outward veneer of praiseworthy behavior alone. I argue that this type of behavioral recalibration not only rests on faulty assumptions but also was apparently ineffective in the end — as Russwurm himself even denounces its efficacy before his fateful departure to Liberia. Ramírez likewise displayed a similar penchant for double-talk in *El Clamor Público*, which was especially notable during the previously mentioned 1856 “Juan Flores Revolution.” Viewing himself as a cultural mediator of sorts, Ramírez continually attempted to journalistically bridge both the Anglo and Mexican worlds by espousing their dual virtues simultaneously — often resulting in what I call schizophrenic renderings. I demonstrate how the Flores revolt pressed the limits of such an approach, and that Ramírez himself becomes an emblematic victim of the very cultural indeterminacy he proposes to overcome.

The most capable tactical stratagem of resistance in both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público*, however, was in their ability to reclaim narrative subjectivity. Indeed, on March 16, 1827, in *Freedom’s Journal* first issue, Russwurm and Cornish explicitly pronounce that African Americans “wish to plead our own cause; too long have others spoken for us.” I demonstrate that this desire for authorial autonomy was not only similarly expressed by Frederick Douglass, Philip Bell, and other pioneering Black newspaper editors of the time but also marked an historic moment in the development of Black cultural consciousness. Likewise, *El Clamor Público* established its most penetrating offensive against Anglo-based domination when it dared to “plead [its] own cause.” Hoping to broker a cultural merger between Anglo and Mexican Americans — two ethnic political bodies existing as bi-cultural equals in a post-annexed world — Ramírez efforts were eventually dashed when Californios were in short order demoted to sub-cultural unequals. To prevent a continued downgrade from sub-cultural status, *El Clamor Público*'s latter issues reflect an all-out reaffirmation of Mexican American ethnic consciousness, as if it were simultaneously recasting the cultural cohesiveness of an earlier bygone period while also reconstructing a new subjectivity for an undetermined future.

Today, *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* represent two of the most significant flashpoints of African and Mexican American progressive consciousness. Both editors struggled with adapting to new socioeconomic challenges while simultaneously establishing expedient strategies of resistance. This project will not only serve to demonstrate how African and Mexican Americans tactically thrived under such adverse conditions but also to illuminate their parallel histories of shared struggles.
Connecting the Past to the Present

From time to time, I look back to the years when I was teaching at the Oakland Unified School District. When I do, I also cannot help but recall the faces of my previously mentioned African and Mexican American students — each vowing to battle one another to the absolute end. I likewise wonder if things would have gone differently had each known about their shared histories of resistance, not casually, but through a well-designed core curriculum that in fact demonstrated the interconnections and dynamic parallels that exist between each group. But during my tenure in Oakland, and most certainly afterwards, no efforts of this sort were attempted, much less envisioned.

Why not?

To answer this, I will consider an altogether different question: can a potential Black and Brown coalition by some means seem forbidding to the power base? That is, does a combined Black and Brown political merger pose certain threats to our established social order? It is clear that an 1830 Northern free/Southern slave Black alliance presented serious risks for an Anglo-dominated slave system (David Walker’s multi-class resistance). It is likewise clear that an 1856 middle/working-class Mexican American alliance caused similar unease in Anglo-dominated Los Angeles (Juan Flores’s multi-class raiders). In both cases, race or class-based unions momentarily superseded an established oppressive order that otherwise benefited directly from their divided states.

A major underlying premise of this study is that allied coalitions are indeed dangerous. In fact, they can be outright seditious, particularly if the merger proposes to unite two previously embattled groups — such as African and Mexican Americans. It comes as no surprise then that many scholars today regard both Walker and Flores’s multi-class alliances as outlaw or criminal. While I have argued that their collective actions were in fact militant, they were so primarily because their maneuvers elicited a proportionally violent response from the Anglo authorities that wished to extinguish their justifiable concerns.

Allied coalitions are as perilous in their ability to locate the beneficiaries of one’s oppression. That is, by proactively countering the repressive practices of slavery and unjust territorial acquisition, both Walker and Flores in essence draw out — like a magnet, if you will — those establishment-based groups that have a continued stake in preserving such inequalities. What makes Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público so valuable is that, like Walker and Flores, both journals not react to but record and locate a shared persecutor across a twenty-six year span — Anglo Americans. Unlike Walker and Flores, however, Russwurm and Ramirez are not straight away assassinated or lynched, but are nonetheless regarded by Anglos as being just as treasonous — enough so that
each editor eventually relocates voluntarily to his respective colony. Let me be clear, though: my point here is not to single out Anglos as inherently evil; but the race-based or biological model of oppression that they appropriated and implemented with impunity is most definitely so, and that in itself deserves closer scrutiny.

The effects of racial oppression are certainly generational. Both African and Mexican Americans — to this very day — continue to experience the effects of history with regards to their life chances. Everything from incarceration rates to high school drop out rates — from underserved communities to underperforming schools — all collectively point to a relatively similar intensity of suffering that is eerily reminiscent of their shared predicament almost two-hundred years ago.

And while this project does not include an extended analysis of the historical periods directly following El Clamor Público, I can only infer — with a relative degree of assuredness — that the present African and Mexican American dilemmas are at least partly associated with the initial injustices documented in both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público.

To that end, here are some additional questions that we can consider at this juncture: is a contemporary African and Mexican American political alliance, based on shared histories of suffering, in fact possible? If so, how would such an alliance organize its joint strategic approach? Would it reassert Russwurm’s earlier advocacy for conduct-based resistance and thereby recalibrate and modify its behavioral range to more befittingly match Anglo-based cultural standards that, in the end, risk imprisoning the movement to an underlying assumption of cultural insufficiency? Or would it deploy Ramírez’s former contestatory articulation strategies—like assimilation-based double-talk—which attempt to appease and covertly resist the power structure simultaneously, but also create a tenuous tightrope of schizophrenic renderings as we seen in Chapter Four? As a bi-cultural alliance, would it resurrect Ramírez’s previous efforts to build co-equal status with Anglos, and if so, would these pleas likewise go unheeded — as they so often do today? Worse yet, would its narrative subjectivity eventually be co-opted by a power base that subsequently softens its revolutionary significance, thereby creating a minority voice that is both less threatening and socially palatable?

If we are to absorb the historical lessons of both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público, then we must also closely examine their collective strategies — as well as their shortcomings — and comparatively measure them against contemporary approaches practiced today. I say this because the combined desperation and despair with which Russwurm and Ramírez implored their cause in the early and mid-nineteenth century remains almost uniformly consistent with the current cries for African and Mexican American empowerment today. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that it was not solely Anglos who upset the efforts of Russwurm, Cornish, and Ramírez, but also African and Mexican Americans themselves — many of who displayed a
rivalrous disposition that was later directed towards their own countrymen. And this last point is especially pertinent, as it demonstrates a need for the overall development of long-term strategic practices that concurrently address both inter- as well as intra-cultural divisiveness.

With a project of this nature, one is also eventually compelled to compare Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público with the frail existence of hard copy newspapers today. Only last year, for instance, The New York Times published a report stating that a “two-decade erosion in newspaper circulation is looking more like an avalanche, with figures . . . showing weekday sales down more than 10 percent since last year (2008).”¹ What is the confirmed source responsible for this hard copy drop? According to the article, the Internet. Electronic media has now established itself as the uncontested standard with regards to information dissemination, including news-based texting and online video news commentary. Whereas Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público relied on a loyal and committed subscriber base, today’s minority-owned and operated Internet news outlets are, by comparison, virtually guaranteed a cyber viewership that is not only widely-divergent but often times passionately uninhibited as well.

And herein lies the tradeoff regarding our present-day electronic news audience. In one sense, the Internet offers news services an infinitely assorted blend of multi-racial and socioeconomic populations, not to mention a truly international or global distributive range. But along with this worldwide reach comes the ability to offer users the added option of instantly responding with commentary and critique, and many times with unforeseen consequences. While this dialogic-based interchange may at first seem democratic by nature, it has likewise given rise to the prevalence of Trolls, Internet surfers who, for instance, can randomly leave anonymous, xenophobic comments that would likewise make the racist diatribes in The New-York Enquirer and the Los Angeles Star seem pale by comparison. And along with our online transfer speeds we have similarly upgraded to a collective level of social intolerance that is now near-epidemic proportions.

While Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público are both recognized milestones in history, they should also cause us to similarly pay heed to the dynamic changes — in technology and otherwise — that have since occurred. We are today dealing with a completely different set of information-based technologies that are virtual in nature, tools Russwurm and Ramírez could never have imagined. With these advances, however, multi-racial alliances are indeed all the more possible. For example, Tomás Custer — a bi-racial, modern-day Francisco Ramírez — owns and operates HispanicTips.com, a groundbreaking online repository for domestic and international news related to the Latino world. And similar to his predecessor, Custer likewise single-handedly researches, edits, manages, and uploads the near-daily editions of

HispanicTips.com. In fact, his following online philosophy closely resembles the general philosophical underpinnings of *El Clamor Público*:

Before *HispanicTips.com*, news about Hispanics and Latinos was out there, but it was scattered and not easily accessible to everyone. I strongly believe that this situation, this lack of accessibility, hinders both the Hispanic community and the nation economically, politically and culturally. My goal is simply to provide easy access to Hispanic news so that people can stay informed.²

Although Custer sometimes admits that *HispanicTips.com* struggles with less than ample sponsorship-based revenues, he nonetheless expresses tremendous hope for both *HispanicTips.com* and minority-run online periodicals in general. And such a mass convergence of minority-centered media interests in Dallas bodes well for their future.

In spite of what may yet emerge with upcoming tech-based advancements, both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* have taught us invaluable lessons that are relevant for any era. It is incumbent upon the present generation of African and Mexican Americans to both understand and integrate these lessons. A part of this must involve honestly confronting both the historical omissions and minimizations that have directly convinced many students of color that their story is incidental and unimportant. Another aspect will entail taking this foundational awareness and merging it with other narratives of color — and in the process building multi-racial coalitions that not only share mutual histories of suffering, but also mutual futures of empowerment. In fact, the ultimate survival of all communities of color will depend on how well we can apply the wisdom of the past with the strategies of the future.

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There are only a few places where a graduate student can comfortably concentrate for long stretches at a time, and these are different for everyone. For me, I will always hold a special regard for the UC Berkeley Boalt Law School Reading Room — a place where I researched and wrote for the last 3 and a half years. I am sure the Boalt Law Library staff will not miss my
obstinate presence during my ten to fourteen-hour marathon research sessions. When it was time to alternate study locations, I was likewise fortunate to have at my disposal the many conference rooms within the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) site. The LBL has literally become my weekend study home for the past several years. I will surely retain the many good memories of contemplating my project over a cup of coffee while overlooking the San Francisco skyline — at 2AM.

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Chapter 1 - Hard Print Voices: Evolving Self-Determination


African American Nineteenth-Century Written Culture and Freedom’s Journal

The circumstances that led to the eventual formation of the African American press — and Freedom’s Journal in particular — are unique. As Yussof Simmonds has rightly argued, John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish had established themselves as groundbreaking editors, and did so at a time when African Americans were hardly acknowledged as human beings.¹ Functioning as an archive of injustice, the African American journal often chronicled the “first drafts of history” — a necessary task, since Black social narrative was either relegated to the periphery of cultural remembrance or simply ignored altogether.² In this way, Freedom’s Journal (1827-29) stands out as not only an historical first but also as what is arguably the inception of Black thought in newsprint.³ Of course, there were most certainly other noteworthy activist-based periodicals in early nineteenth-century America that dealt with the African American cause as well.⁴ The great majority, however, were licensed and operated by white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith, and Arthur and Lewis Tappan. As Thomas Beal aptly notes, Freedom’s Journal was exceptional in that “it was the first newspaper in the United States edited and published by African-Americans” that likewise explored “issues important to the African-American community in New York and beyond.”⁵ More than anything else, it was this issue of narrative subjectivity that marked Russwurm and Cornish as journalistic pioneers — a topic I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four.

Freedom’s Journal also stands out in several other respects, many of which were shared with El Clamor Público. First and foremost, both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público were not only founded upon American democratic ideals, but they also vigorously propagated their virtues — such as material progress and liberty-based rights — throughout their respective issues as well. Moreover, Russwurm, Cornish, and Ramirez all wrote in an

² Simmonds A14.
⁴ Other notable activist-based journals that supported African American rights during this time period were The Liberator, the North Star, The Coloured American, Weekly Advocate, and Rights of All.
explicitly didactic fashion. That is, their editorials frequently took on an exhortative or moralizing tone with which they hoped would empower politically their socially alienated readers.

Regarding *Freedom's Journal* alone, Jacqueline Bacon, in her recent ground-breaking book, *Freedom's Journal: America's First African-American Newspaper*, states that its editors’ “articles gave the reader information about the American . . . system and made them aware of ways those in power used American policies against them . . . . These articles demonstrated the editor’s position that knowledge about American politics should not promote an unquestioning patriotism but should in fact encourage African Americans to examine the nation’s government critically and understand the link between political power and oppression.” While critically scrutinizing their government was certainly important for both journals, such an approach also eventually led to each editors’ disillusionment regarding American-style democracy and its inherent double standards — a topic that I will later further develop. This was particularly true for Russwurm and Ramírez, both of whom came to develop increasing misgivings regarding the apparent validity of their country’s founding precepts. As I will suggest later, both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* eventually altered the pro-American tone of their periodicals significantly, opting instead to showcase articles that proactively demanded equal rights for their respective constituencies.

**Freedom’s Journal: the Voice of the Community**

From the outset, *Freedom’s Journal*’s first issue stated the following in clear terms: “As the diffusion of knowledge and raising our community into respectability are the principal motives which influence us in our present undertaking, we hope our hands will be upheld by all our brethren and friends.” That same March 16, 1827 issue also numerically estimated the United States’ free African American population at approximately five hundred thousand, the great majority of whom remained effectively sequestered from their enslaved brethren. For this principal reason alone community building — as a prevailing stratagem — was of paramount importance for early nineteenth-century African Americans. A regular panel of leading African American intellectuals and activists frequently contributed political and religious commentary to *Freedom’s Journal*, making it a discursive focal point.

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7 Regarding Russwurm, Bacon states that he “came to doubt that America would ever live up to its ideals, and he gave up the pro-American idealism that had shaped the periodical for most of its run.” Bacon 87.


9 *Freedom’s Journal* March 16, 1827.
that in essence galvanized the Black populace — whether slave or free — under one common voice. Even radicals, such as the famed David Walker, likewise published in *Freedom’s Journal* blistering protests on behalf of the enslaved, as well as African American females, particularly one who went by the covert alias “Matilda.” *Freedom’s Journal* attempted to incorporate the manifold layers that not only comprised but also defined the African American community as an interconnected cultural and political body.

When literary historian Walter Daniel argued that *Freedom’s Journal* was “one of the most unimpeachable resources for black American life in the urban North in the first half of the nineteenth century,” he was undoubtedly calling attention to the journal’s stated mission of not only educating its black citizens, but of also actively advocating for their self-improvement and self-sufficiency. In fact, in a November 16, 1827 commentary, Russwurm enthusiastically proclaimed progress and improvement as the overriding theme of the nineteenth century, and that it was crucial for African Americans to avail themselves of its transformative power. Resolutely pledging forthcoming installments filled with “useful knowledge,” *Freedom’s Journal* became a literary receptacle for African American self-help.

A successful Black entrepreneur and contributor to *Freedom’s Journal*, Austin Steward frequently urged young African Americans to steadfastly cultivate the discipline required for economic self-reliance: “Fly then, fly from idleness as from imminent and inevitable destruction: but in vain will you labor unless prudence and economy preside over and direct all your exertions.” These collective appeals, taken together, were not merely rhetorical pleas for community and individual self-improvement alone. Rather, they were

12 Bacon 5.
13 “Improvement is now the general cry through the land; and shall not we, whose condition stands so much in need of improvement in every particular, join heart and hand with the great master-spirits of the present age, whose great aim is to improve the condition of man at large in every corner of the globe?” *Freedom’s Journal* November 16, 1827.
14 Once again, *El Clamor Público* shares remarkably close similarities with *Freedom’s Journal* in this regard, as the following commentary entitled “A la Juventud [To our Youth]” illustrates: “Trabaja, estudia, piensa, discute . . . . La sociedad que sufre y espera . . . nesesita del esfuerzo de tu brazo . . . , de los milagros de tu ciencia” (“Work hard, study, think, and discuss. Our society which suffers and waits . . . is counting on the strength of your arm, on the miracles of your science”). P. Francisco Ramírez, ed., *El Clamor Público* (1855-59) October 4, 1856.
simultaneously charged with an urgent need for both physical survival and cultural identity, as Bacon has extensively argued. This particular style of self-help therefore nurtured individual identity as well as community consciousness, ultimately encouraging African Americans to take control of their political and cultural destinies proactively. Interestingly, this particular journalistic approach was not entirely exclusive, but rather emerged elsewhere as well — and in El Clamor Público particularly.

The Nineteenth-Century Alta California Press

Beginning with the nineteenth century, as technology reached the outmost Spanish/Mexican frontier, Spanish-language newspapers began to appear in greater numbers. As publishing houses became more operationally sophisticated, the total net range of their audience literally spanned the entire continental United States and included hundreds of periodicals. Among the most prominent were El Misisipi (1808) and El Mensagero Luisianes (1809), both in New Orleans; La Gaceta de Texas and El Mexicano, both published in 1813, were based in Nacogdoches, Texas/ Natchitoshes, Louisiana respectively. Soon after, Florida’s first Spanish-language newspaper, El Telegrafo de las Floridas (1817) appeared, as well as Philadelphia’s first, El Habanero (1824).

After its independence from Spain and the ensuing secularization of the missions, Alta California (then the northern outermost frontier of Mexico) was uniquely positioned — geographically as well as philosophically — to fully avail itself of the fourth estate. We know that, by 1834, both California and New Mexico housed operational presses. In addition, early nineteenth-century California yet remained under considerable Catholic control and was particularly wary of politically progressive ideals. Recounting his rather brief and unofficial excommunication from the Catholic Church in 1825 (at the age of twenty-three), General Mariano Vallejo — along with Don Jose Castro and Juan B. Alvarado — were summarily chastised for possessing “forbidden books,” principally “Rousseau, Voltaire” and other subversively anti-Catholic titles that inspired “liberal ideas and any knowledge of the rights of free

17 According to Nicolas Kanellos, “Throughout the nineteenth century . . ., the principal publishing enterprises in the Spanish-language in the United States and northern Mexico (most of the West and Southwest as we know it today) were the hundreds of newspapers that existed from New York to New Orleans, Santa Fe, San Francisco, and elsewhere.” Nicolas Kanellos and Helvetia Martell, “California,” Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960 (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2000) 4.
18 Kanellos 4.
men.’”\(^{19}\) In many ways, the church’s anti-liberal position unwittingly opened the door for the second-generation children of California’s leading elite to consider alternative governing schemes. These progressive sentiments eventually even influenced the Mexican middle-classes well into the post-1848 American period — a point I shall discuss subsequently in relation to the politically radical orientation of Ramirez’s newspaper, *El Clamor Público* \([The \ Public \ Outcry], \ 1855-59\).

When California printer, Augustin Zamorano, established the first non-Catholic free press in 1834 on the Monterey, California coast, there were no experienced Mexican editors available to accept his modestly priced services.\(^{20}\) As increased Anglo settlement continued, however, incidents of cultural misunderstandings as well as outright abuse arose at increasingly alarming rates — and with this the need for Mexicans to document and publish a counter response. From the outset, the nineteenth-century Mexican American press was historically poised to assume a somewhat resistance-based posture. According to Kirsten Silva-Gruesz, the emerging Alta California press “constitute[d] a necessary defensive strategy — an exaggerated denial of the Anglo-American stereotype of Spanish-speakers as ‘scarce more than apes,’ living in a cultureless darkness.”\(^{21}\) As these negative characterizations became more commonplace, their acceptance was made all the more possible by an often hostile white press that functioned as an ideological clearing house of sorts, many times remanufacturing claims made from unofficial sources. For example, many of the racist conclusions regarding California Mexicans that were argued in Richard Henry Dana Jr.’s widely-read 1840s publication, *Two Years Before the Mast*, were not only taken at face value, but were likewise institutionally promulgated by an unsympathetic Anglo press.\(^{22}\)

Without a doubt, the nineteenth-century Spanish-language press became one of the few available channels for critically contesting what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have termed racial formations.\(^{23}\) But such journalistic defiance came at a cost. As José Luis Benavides has argued, the Mexican American press was an exceedingly rare social medium that, while


\(^{22}\) “The Californians are an idle, thriftless people, and can make nothing for themselves.” Richard Henry Dana, Jr. *Two Years Before the Mast* (New York: Signet Classics, 1964) 75 (Originally published in 1840).

allowing for strategic rebuttal, also carried “a high price for journalists” of color as well.24 And dangerous it was indeed, as Ramírez himself makes clear in the following April 11, 1857 El Clamor Público editorial: “We know very well that in denouncing these criminals we exposed ourselves to be assassinated at any time, but we are just fulfilling our duty as journalists, and we know that in doing this we are supported by all the good citizens and by our compatriots.”25 Regardless of these stakes, Ramírez went on to chronicle what many critics today regard as one of the most powerful historical documents of post-Mexican California.

**El Clamor Público: the Voice of the Community**

Apart from confronting and challenging deeply embedded biases, neither El Clamor Público nor Freedom’s Journal for that matter produced reductive, one-dimensional responses to white bigotry. Far from it, the Mexican American press was rather a dialectic organ for self-determination that addressed multiple facets of the Latino experience at once. The Mexican American press certainly functioned as a “preserver and transmitter of Chicano history and culture, maintainer and reinforcer of language, and strengthener of Chicano pride.”26 But beyond this, the Mexican American press — and El Clamor Público in particular — grew as a powerful and outspoken disseminator of nineteenth-century American democratic ideals. Ramírez was one of many Mexican Americans in Alta California who were already thoroughly immersed in liberal and revolutionary ideology. A number of these same individuals even welcomed the incoming Anglo American, democratic-based regime on the basis of its likeminded political leanings — at least at first.27 Regarding El Clamor Público, and more specifically Ramírez’s underlying democratic beliefs, Leonard Pitt states

> the liberal ideas that molded his thinking were common coinage in every Western nation in his time, including the United States. By dedicating his paper to “political independence,” “moral and material progress,” and a “regime of law and order,” he chose the very catchwords that any Yankee editor might fly beneath his

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25 “Sabemos muy bien que denunciando a los criminales nos exponemos hacer asesinados de un momento a otro: pero no es mas que cumplir con nosotros deber como periodistas, y conocemos que en nuestra conducta estamos sostenidos por todos los buenos ciudadanos, y por todos nosotros compatriotas.” Benavides 55.


27 Silva-Gruesz 101.
masthead. He paid homage to the “magnanimous spirit and
grandiose ideals” of the Yankee Constitution and the Declaration of
Independence, and to the nation’s dedication to popular
government, economic progress, civil rights, and the “arts of
peace.”28

Yet there are differing interpretations of Ramírez’s approach, and not all are so
optimistic. Historian Douglas Monroy, for instance, views Ramírez’s philosophy
as not only blind “textbook liberalism” but also as misplaced confidence in a
newly-established system that never intended to socially incorporate Mexicans
as democratic equals.29 And the historical timing of not only Ramírez’s liberal-
based persuasions but many others around him is not incidental either, as
Benito Juárez’s 1855 revolutionary success in Mexico happens to coincide
chronologically with the 1855 founding of El Clamor Público itself.30

Even so, Ramírez’s desire to articulate the civil rights of the Mexican
American community by appending them to the principles outlined in the
United States Constitution was, unfortunately, short-lived. As the rate of
extra-legal lynching and territorial dispossession increased during the years
directly after the 1848 takeover, the idealistic editor gradually became
disillusioned with democracy American-style.31 So embittered was Ramírez
that eventually he not only denounced but even comically caricatured Anglo-
based society by likening it to a “lynch-octracia” — a direct reference to the
large-scale and indiscriminate killing of Latino Americans.32 In a last ditch
strategic effort to safeguard the diminishing range of civil rights still remaining
for his readership, Ramírez finally espoused the voluntary expatriation of all
Californios to a pre-established colony in Sonora, Mexico — a topic I will
discuss further in Chapter Three.


29 Monroy adds, “in the courageous figure of Ramirez we see how liberalism was a praiseworthy,

30 Monroy 219.

31 As Kanellos so eloquently summarizes: “[Ramirez’s] indignation grew as the civil and property
rights of Californios were not protected by the Constitution that he loved so much. He became a
consistent and assiduous critic, attempting to inspire Hispanics to unite in their own defense and to spur
the authorities to protect the Hispanic residents of California . . . . Ramirez became more bitter as time
progressed, at times calling democracy a ‘lynchocracy’ and advising Hispanics to abandon California.”
Kanellos 89,91.

32 I deploy the term ‘Latino American’ here because lynching in California involved other
subgroups besides Mexican Americans, to include Chilean, Peruvian, Spaniard, and Sonoran people, and
others.
Regardless of its brief-lived tenure *El Clamor Público* is still widely regarded by historians as having occupied a unique position in literary and periodical history. In addition to being southern California’s first Spanish-language newspaper — one “that existed independent of Anglo-American or French control and solely beholden to the Spanish-speaking community” — *El Clamor Público* garnered distinction in a several other ways as well. Most certainly, part of *El Clamor Público*’s historical appeal is its uncompromisingly bold and political daring, as we shall later see. Remarking on Ramírez’s extraordinary critical and interpretive abilities as a frontline journalist, Kanellos argues that the audacious editor’s investigative coverage of officially unapproved topics reached a level of insight and analysis that was unusual for a person of his age — even surpassing the aptitude of leading Hispanic thinkers in the eastern United States, Texas, as well as Latin America.

*El Clamor Público* — much like *Freedom’s Journal* — can be further defined conceptually as not only a watch-dog press documenting local and international injustices but also as a concurrent outlet for local, organic culture, as Coy Paz Brownrigg has rightly argued. Alongside Ramírez’s political diatribes could be found local news covering marriages, obituaries, and advertisements announcing all manner of services, including all-Mexican American primary schools, Mexican American-owned barber shops, and land-litigation attorney assistance. Ramirez’s topical range was likewise far-reaching, often covering “bloomers and prostitution; Know-Nothingism and anti-Catholicism; prison reform and death penalties; medical quakery and Mormonism; Manifest Destiny and filibusterism,” according to Pitt. Such was the assortment of critical news and cultural features that one cannot help but wonder: if *El Clamor Público* were not operationally present to record both the atrocities and cultural richness of post-1848 California, this information might well have remained perpetually absent in the Anglo press — as it still sometimes is today.

But it was mostly Ramírez’s critical articles that attracted the attention of rival periodicals. In fact, both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* engaged in sustained clashes with specific newspapers that can be best

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34 Bryan Gray 20.

35 Kanellos 90.


37 Pitt 183.

38 Paz Brownrigg 51.
described as diametric opposites in both philosophy and political approach.\textsuperscript{39} These journalistic battles reveal an altogether different side to guerilla journalism.

**Part 2: A Periodic Nemesis: The New York Enquirer and the Los Angeles Star**

*Freedom’s Journal vs. The New-York Enquirer*

The heated issues that largely defined the conflict between *Freedom’s Journal* and the *New-York Enquirer* revolved primarily around slavery. That is, there was a significant and related concern that went well beyond enslavement itself: what to do with the “five hundred thousand free persons of colour” that had by now settled into white society as well as the thirty-thousand freed slaves that were yearly added to that number.\textsuperscript{40} And the ever-increasing presence of free Blacks further led to a sustained “campaign of black degradation.”\textsuperscript{41} Complicating this issue even further was the near-indistinguishability of both African American slaves and freepersons alike.\textsuperscript{42} Clearly sensing the pervasiveness of this problem, Russwurm and Cornish articulated a policy position addressing unfair racial representations and integrated it into their newspaper’s guiding principles. In the March 23, 1827 issue, the editors proclaim that “daily slandered, we think that there ought to be some channel of communication between us and the public through which a single voice may be heard in defense of five hundred thousand free people of colour...; we believe that the time has now arrived when the calumnies of our enemies should be refuted by forcible arguments.”\textsuperscript{43} And they would indeed need forcible arguments to counteract the steady stream of stigmatizations promulgated by powerful media mogul, Mordecai Noah, founder and owner of both the *New-York Enquirer* and the *New-York National Advocate*.

Early on, contributors to *Freedom’s Journal* expressed outrage at the *New-York Enquirer’s* regularly reoccurring articles that not only blamed free African Americans as the principal and sole source of New York’s vice and crime but also made these claims indiscriminately, without admitting the apparent presence of a growing and more virtuous African American populace.

\textsuperscript{39} The two most notable clashes between *Freedom’s Journal* and El Clamor Público were *The New-York Enquirer* and the Los Angeles Star, respectively.

\textsuperscript{40} *Freedom’s Journal* March 16, 1827.

\textsuperscript{41} Simmonds A14.

\textsuperscript{42} As Simmonds notes: “Since it was almost impossible to visibly differentiate between slaves and Black freedmen, Whites conducted equal-opportunity mistreatment of Blacks [both free and enslaved] on a massive scale. The campaign of black degradation reached alarming heights in 1826 as the white press was complicit in these actions. And this was happening in the ‘liberal’ North.” Simmonds A14; *Freedom’s Journal* March 30, 1827.

\textsuperscript{43} *Freedom’s Journal* March 23, 1827.
In an August 24, 1827 article, a contributor to Freedom’s Journal argued that the New-York Enquirer’s failure to differentiate “respectable and unoffending” free Blacks from those who were not created, in effect, a convenient target for Anglo-displaced aggression.\textsuperscript{44} Another contributor not only levels a similar critique, but also specifically demonstrates how New-York Enquirer editor, Mordecai Noah, repeatedly manifests the aforementioned danger of unfairly singling out Blacks — and many times to the exclusion of whites:

Among the many engines whose object it is to keep alive the prejudice of the whites against the coloured community of this city, I perceive that the “New York Enquirer” stands foremost on the list . . . . I would entreat the Editor of the N.Y.E. [New-York Enquirer], through the medium of your columns, to discriminate more widely, between the virtuous and vicious among us . . . . Why does he not call for public censure and correction of the cat and bird catchers among the whites, who infest not only Broadway, but every place of public amusement, and whose obscenity shocks the eyes and ears of all genteel people?\textsuperscript{45}

This journalistic practice of stereotyping would, unfortunately, continue on unabated in the New-York Enquirer for years, as well as in many other Anglo-owned newspapers.

What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the specific manner in which Freedom’s Journal sought to localize or confine condemnation onto the less principled of their brethren. Suffice it to say that early nineteenth-century African Americans were understandably burdened with correcting any circulating cultural and racial fallacies, and this is characteristically accomplished through the outward display of behavioral traits that were deemed righteousness.\textsuperscript{46} One misconception for which free African Americans felt particular concern was the popular belief that continental Africa had bred uncivilized savages who consequently contributed little, if anything, to the progress of mankind.\textsuperscript{47} It was almost by necessity, therefore, that free African Americans self-classified themselves as front-line defenders of their race, and, as Bella Gross elsewhere argues, to be not only “fearless, but patient, and to

\textsuperscript{44} “Major Noah [Mordecai Noah] . . . asserts that ‘the free negroes of this city are a nuisance incomparably greater than a million slaves’ . . . . We cannot tell why he delights so much in wounding the feelings of the respectable and unoffending of our brethren by exaggerating the conduct of the unenlightened vile.” Freedom’s Journal August 24, 1827.

\textsuperscript{45} Freedom’s Journal August 17, 1827 (Italics in original).

\textsuperscript{46} The concept of outward “signs of salvation” can be further explored in both Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Ronald Takaki’s Weber-inspired Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America.

\textsuperscript{47} Beal 125.
meet their [periodic] enemies with swords of logic and wit, instead of hate.”

Upon these general precepts did *Freedom's Journal* establish itself as a newspaper of image recalibration, as it were, revising the representative racial profile of its people by creating distance from those who would otherwise undermine it — even if it meant disassociating the journal from its less-virtuous African American brethren.

It is also well to note here that while *El Clamor Público*’s editor, Francisco Ramirez, obtained minimal formal education, Russwurm of *Freedom’s Journal*, had the pressure-laden distinction of becoming one of the nation’s first African American college graduates. And this honor, obviously, came with certain tacit cultural obligations. In addition to journalistically touting the arrival of a Black middle-class, Russwurm and Cornish also lobbied the collective interests of a fast-emerging African American elite that was, at that time, thriving in the eastern United States. Indeed, New York itself was the home of “dozens of [African American] literary societies,” including the African Theatre (1821), the Philomethean Society (1830), and the Phoenix Society of New York (1833), all of which comprised a cohort of literally hundreds of intellectual and progressive-minded free African Americans, the great majority taking a vested interest in *Freedom’s Journal* opinions. It was not surprising, then, that *Freedom’s Journal* took keen notice of any fraudulent mischaracterizations of Black middle-class America, and even more so if they sprang forth from its nemesis, the *New-York Enquirer*.

**The “Noah Thesis”**

One of the earliest scholarly sources to have documented the *New York Enquirer*’s anti-African American stance in some detail is Irvine Garland Penn’s 1891 book, *The Afro-American Press and its Editors*. In it, Penn offers the following rather brief aside regarding the *New York Enquirer*: “There was a local newspaper published in New York City in 1827 and 1828 by an Afro-American-hating Jew, which made the vilest attacks upon the Afro-Americans. It encouraged slavery and deplored the thought of freedom for the slave. Against this *The Journal* [*Freedom’s Journal*] was directed, and it did heavy cannonading against this perpetrator of evil.”

Similar to caricaturist Edward Clay’s notorious 1829 lampoon of African American upper-class culture in Philadelphia, Mordecai Noah likewise singled out successful free Blacks as the primary objects of his ongoing journalistic ridicule. Much of the attention given to singling out of well-to-do African Americans was in no small part due

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48 Gross 262.

49 Gross 254-255.


51 For further reading, please refer to Edward William Clay’s *Life in Philadelphia* (Hart & Son, 1829).
to a growing resentment on behalf of Anglos who simply felt that middle-class Blacks were crossing prescribed social boundaries — or, stepping out of place.\textsuperscript{52}

As the ever-expanding presence of legitimately free Blacks became apparent in white-dominant culture, it was the American Colonization Society (ACS) that most vigorously objected to this trend. And they did so by providing an officially sanctioned rationale that altogether refuted the possibility of a future Black and white social admixture. In a pivotal early ACS memorandum, the ACS declared that it “did not offer any chemistry that could blend free blacks into the American ‘Body Politic’.\textsuperscript{53} What it did in fact propose was an ardent resolve to bring together politically an Anglo South/North alliance that would in turn prevent the further settling of free Blacks in American cities. Eventually culminating into a national movement, the American Colonization Society never managed to effectively halt Black social integration. Preferring instead to deport all manumitted slaves back to Africa, it rationalized that African Americans were simply unfit for white society, whether newly-manumitted or well-established, middle-class free Blacks.

Against this loosely defined Anglo South/North alliance Freedom’s Journal not only actively refuted notions of racial inferiority, but also forcefully confronted Mordecai Noah’s frequent New-York Enquirer and New-York National Advocate editorials that all the more fortified these underlying negative preconceptions.\textsuperscript{54} Of particular note were Noah’s New-York National Advocate editorials entitled “High-Life Below Stairs” (March 2, 1825) and “High-Life Among the Coloured Folks” (March 18, 1825), both of which contemptuously lampooned middle and upper-class free African Americans. Noah writes, “The fashion of [Black] servants aping their [white] masters and mistresses is becoming very prevalent . . . . They make great personal sacrifices to purchase a hat and feathers, and other becoming ornaments. The [middle-class] coloured folks are dipping deep in these bon ton touches.”\textsuperscript{55} Although Bacon unquestionably agrees that Noah here does in fact disparagingly exaggerate African American fondness for Anglo-based decorum, she also critically disputes the often-accepted “Noah Thesis,” which effectively situates the New-York Enquirer’s editor as the central raison d’etre for Freedom’s Journal itself.\textsuperscript{56} As Bacon has convincingly argued, it is altogether simplistic to confine

\textsuperscript{52} Bacon 28.


\textsuperscript{54} Mordecai Noah owned and edited both the New-York Enquirer and New-York National Advocate.


\textsuperscript{56} Bacon 29.
Freedom’s Journal”s existence to the singular presence of racism in so far as such reasoning lessens the overriding impact of African American agency and self-determination that is likewise expressed throughout Freedom’s Journal.\(^{57}\)

Aside from addressing racism, Freedom’s Journal also comprised a sophisticated cultural response to a more complex and nuanced range of African American issues, the most pressing of which was a prevailing desire to establish a powerful and permanent independent voice. To that end, Russwurm and Cornish explicitly insisted that African Americans — not well-intentioned Anglo cultural liaisons — were alone responsible for formulating and publishing their own rebuttals to any and all forms of racism, not simply the specified variety originating from the New-York Enquirer. Interestingly, this notion of autonomy would much later become a similar concern as well for Frederick Douglas, who in 1847 parted ways with William Lloyd Garrison over “the way white abolitionists coached him on how to speak,” eventually leading to his founding of the independent The North Star newspaper.\(^{58}\) Indeed, authorial control would remain central to Freedom’s Journal approach and would additionally account for both the strength and sophistication of not only its rebuttals to the New-York Enquirer but also its capacity to oppose demeaning stereotypes effectively.

**Countering Black Caricatures and Lampoons**

In spite of Bacon’s compelling arguments in opposition to the Noah Thesis, the cumulative effect of such negative characterizations as found in both the New-York Enquirer and New-York National Advocate nonetheless had generational consequences for communities of color. For sure, there was certainly nothing surprising in the New York Enquirer’s debased portrayals. Buffoon-like caricatures of African Americans had been proliferating in newsprint as early as the late eighteenth-century. According to Bacon, these “vicious caricatures in broadsides and cartoons created since the [American] Revolution [only] became more elaborate. Beginning around 1815 or 1816, broadsides ridiculing African American freedom celebrations were produced in Boston,” comprising some of the earliest known racist caricatures in America.\(^{59}\) It is interesting to note here that the distasteful and racially offensive minstrel show began to exhibit increasing mainstream popularity around the late-1820s, precisely the time of Freedom’s Journal’s periodical run.\(^{60}\) More interesting yet, the minstrel show itself survived as a fashionable form of American entertainment well beyond the closure of Freedom’s Journal, even

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57 Bacon 3.


59 Bacon 28.

appearing later within the pages of the *El Clamor Público*. On February 9, 1856, for example, Ramírez enthusiastically welcomed the much-awaited arrival of “The Blackies,” a traveling troupe that captured the admiration of both white and Mexican American audiences alike.61

If negative characterizations were repugnant to the African American community as a whole, it apparently remained the job of the Black middle-class to devise the specified terms by which a collective rebuttal would be delivered. Indeed, throughout the issues of *Freedom’s Journal*, there seems to be a recurring urgency to separate “the virtuous and vicious among” the African American populace, a point I have previously discussed. What I would like to suggest further here, however, is that this differentiation-based strategy not only seems to elevate Black middle-class status as an all-encompassing counter to racist or negative characterization but also promotes it as a potential nexus of class-based power yet available to the less-fortunate or less-refined Black lay person. This much was clearly illustrated in a July 13, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* letter to the editor, where a contributor underscores middle-class wealth as a remedy for the poor as well a tool that would possibly circumvent racism altogether: “The accumulation of individual wealth by honest industry, frugality and good calculation should be pressed upon the mind of the rising coloured generation. Good principles, a good education and wealth, will very soon break down the barriers between them and the white population.”62 If Black middle-class status did in fact contain this latent transformative potential, it would be all the more crucial for Anglo America to conceal — or lampoon — any signs of its growth.

In his now-classic 1839 book, *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia* (recently reprinted with extensive annotations by Julie Winch), Joseph Willson describes in great detail the lengths to which Anglos often went in overlooking the apparent class-based diversity within the African American community itself. Written primarily for a white audience, Joseph Willson argues that individuals — such as Mordecai Noah — had become socially habituated “to regard the people of color as one consolidated mass, all huddled together, without any particular or general distinctions, social or

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61 “California Mintrels. –Los Negritos. Esta compania goza de buena reputacion en todas las ciudades del norte, y los nombres de Hussey, Beron, Moulton, Sterling, Frances y Rattler son muy familiares entre los habitantes de todo el Estado. Todos son los mejores artistas que jamas hayan llegado a trabajar a esta ciudad” [“California Minstrels – The Blackies. This company enjoys a great reputation in all the cities of North [America], and the names of Hussey, Beron, Moulton, Sterling, Frances y Rattler are quite familiar with the inhabitants of our state. They are the best entertainment artists that have ever arrived to work in our city (Los Angeles)"]. *El Clamor Público* February 9, 1856.

otherwise.” It was morphological or phenotype characteristics, more than any other factor, that overwhelmingly defined African Americans as a single social cohort. This also, in effect, rendered it almost impossible to challenge these reductive typecasts effectively on any level — including the appreciable leverage one gained through economic rank.

Perhaps lacking other recourses for offsetting the continual lampoons directed against Blacks, *Freedom’s Journal* still privileged class — more than anything else — as its principal thrust in countering society’s continual racist portrayals. It was a concerted effort at both validating the existence of an often-overlooked yet powerful Black middle-class while also demonstrating its capacity for defending itself and, by proxy, the enslaved and Black under-class as well. More than this, however, it was a hopeful strategy that foresaw the eventual integration of the Black lower class into America’s echelons of power.

If *Freedom’s Journal*’s class-based approach was indeed threatening to the status quo, it was subsequently confirmed through Mordecai Noah’s later proclamation, which stated, “the free negroes of this city are a nuisance incomparably greater than a million slaves.” Most certainly, these counter-tactics employed by the Black middle-class, while perhaps not comprising the sole expressed purpose of *Freedom’s Journal*, were nonetheless a significant impetus for its existence. However, whether or not a full and lasting assimilation of the African American underclass occurred as a result of these strategies is a matter still debated today.

**El Clamor Público vs. the Los Angeles Star**

When Gray stated in 1855 that Ramírez was “one of the few people in Los Angeles who was at home with the printed word in English and Spanish,” he was in essence referring to California’s earliest second generation of Mexican Americans who directly proceeded the Californio elite’s fall from glory. Whereas the Californio gentry were ultimately forced to rely on the unreliable transcriptions (and manipulated omissions) of Hubert Howe Bancroft’s agents, the second-generation of middle-class, bilingual Mexican Americans were better equipped to tell their own stories themselves. As Leonard Pitt aptly

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64 *Freedom’s Journal* August 24, 1827.

65 For a more complete discussion examining Black underclass assimilation today, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s *The Two Nations of Black America* (Public Broadcasting System, 1995).

66 Bryan Gray 21.

67 Both Enrique Curruti and Thomas Savage conferred and traveled with Mariano Vallejo for more than half a decade — from San Francisco to San Diego — transcribing the lives of notable Californios.
states, it was Ramírez’s “awareness of the difficulties of the younger generation” that enabled him to “articulate the views of most Californios in the 1850s.”

And that he did, often attracting the ire of rival Anglo publications, most particularly the Los Angeles Star.

As odd as it may seem, Ramírez actually launched his journalism career as an apprentice at the Los Angeles Star — a Los Angeles-based, English-language newspaper that was established principally to benefit the then-small Anglo American population. Editor James S. Waite employed Ramírez as a typesetter and translator for the Spanish page of The Los Angeles Star’s four-page periodical that was aptly entitled, La Estrella de Los Angeles. However, due to its heavily Democratic party, pro-slavery inclinations, the apprentice became inevitably aggravated as he daily translated “copy tinged with a seemingly repellent gringo chauvinism.”

Likely financed by long-time family friend and wine cultivator, Don Jean Luis Vignes, Ramírez soon afterwards founded El Clamor Público at just nineteen years of age — a vehicle specifically created to promulgate more thoroughly a much-needed and counterbalancing Mexican American perspective. Ramírez’s weekly journal essentially functioned both as a Spanish-language exposé of Anglo injustices and — very much like Freedom’s Journal — as a defense-based intermediary that aggressively championed the rights of lower and middle-class Mexican Americans alike. Throughout the pages of El Clamor Público, Ramírez stressed civic engagement as his primary credo, challenging his countrymen to participate actively in legislative matters that directly affected the economic and political future of Mexican Americans in California. On June 19, 1855, with little formal education, Ramírez single-handedly edited and pressed its first issue.

Ramírez’s first full-time foray into journalism, however, was actually earlier with a small newspaper in Marysville, California. According to Gray, this small unincorporated borough was a town of about 4,500 people [that] stood at the juncture of the Feather and Yuba rivers, with direct communication by steamboat to Sacramento. It was a supply point for the gold fields, a fact that brought Ramírez into contact with American miners. The region had a history of intense hatred toward Mexicans, and Ramírez must have been affected to some extent by this hostility. In later years, American violence toward the Spanish-speaking would be a frequent theme in his newspaper.

Although violence in one form or another was a general fixture of nineteenth-century California reality, the methods of reporting — and the resultant

68 Pitt 181.
69 Bryan Gray 21.
70 Pitt 182.
71 Pitt 23.
conclusions — often varied greatly between Anglo and Latino-based journals. In spite of apparent evidence that clearly exposed bigotry-driven violence toward Mexican Americans, the *Los Angeles Star* would customarily hold to the notion that its “order loving [Anglo] citizens have not added another blot to the unenviable annal of the city.” Even in early bilingual editions of the racist-prone *Los Angeles Star*, reporting practices involving the same event usually resulted in markedly different findings within each respective English and Spanish-language section.

Much like Mordecai Noah’s *New-York Enquirer*, the *Los Angeles Star* would similarly go to exaggerated lengths to establish the hereditary or innate lawlessness of Latinos — whether Mexican American, Chilean, Peruvian, Sonoran, or Spaniard. For instance, in 1856 the *Los Angeles Star* compiled the total number of Los Angeles courtroom convictions, reporting that 68 out of 110 were of Mexican American descent. Whether or not these statistics confirmed a deep-seated bias in incarceration rates was never thoroughly examined. Nonetheless, Spanish-language periodicals like both *El Clamor Público* and *La Cronica* (1924-34) took particular notice. In a large-scale effort to counter-balance public perspective, *El Clamor Público* often retaliated by printing bountiful “reports . . . of Yankee ‘killings, plunders and outrages of all kinds’ against Spanish-speaking people,” hoping to restore symmetry to issues that were often inflexibly one-sided. Ramírez, ever vigilant and watchful, kept a keen “ear cocked for the faintest dissonance from the [Los Angeles] Star and, on the slightest provocation, crossed editorial swords.” Even so, it was becoming increasingly clear that these racial misconceptions, taken together, were merely lateral manifestations of much larger political shifts occurring in Los Angeles at the time. The growing intolerance encountered by Ramirez was, as we shall see, more attributable to the type of Anglo settler emigrating into California — and to the cultural dispositions they carried in with them.

**Pro-Slavery Los Angeles: The Southern Chivalry Party and The Know-Nothings**

One issue that significantly contributed to the on-going *El Clamor Público*/*Los Angeles Star* periodical feud was the simple fact that mid-nineteenth-century Los Angeles had gradually acquired a sizable southeast emigrant population that was steeped in pro-slavery ideology. With regard to its editorial leanings, *El Clamor Público* was itself fiercely pro-abolitionist as well as deeply beholden to the Los Angeles-based pro-abolitionist Republican

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73 Paz Brownrigg 50-51.
74 Pitt 189.
75 Pitt 186.
Party. In fact, so fierce were Ramirez’s personal convictions regarding slavery that an 1850 San Francisco Herald article charged El Clamor Público with being “the most violent of all the ‘Free-Nigger organs’ in the state.” Benefiting indirectly from these negative characterizations was high profile, Los Angeles Assemblyman, Joseph Lancaster Brent. A bilingual lawyer from Maryland, Brent was not only a frequent and vocal contributor to the Los Angeles Star but also a key leader from within a radical branch of the Democratic Party known as the Southern Chivalry — a faction whose explicit goal was to extend slavery into the newly-acquired states of the west. Highly successful in winning over the support of the elite Californios, Lancaster diligently persuaded Mexican landowners to “deliver [over] the votes of their employees, friends, relatives,” a logistical move that in turn was extraordinarily instrumental in keeping the Southern Chivalry in power.77

Appalled by this practice, Ramírez regularly issued editorials that both blasted the Democratic Party and chastised the Los Angeles Mexican community for bartering their votes. An August 28, 1858 editorial by Ramírez, for example, reads: “There are no words strong enough to condemn a man who sells his vote and vilely prostitutes his conscience and personal rights.”78 In a related El Clamor Público commentary, Ramirez extends his criticism by further calling attention to the underlying hypocrisy of the Southern Chivalry faction itself: “The Mexican vote has always been desirable to this party, and in all the elections. The Democrats always entice us with sweet words and grand promises; but barely have these elections passed when we’re once again regarded as ‘greasers’.”79 And the term “greaser” here is not rhetorically incidental. To be precise, it was Joseph Lancaster Brent who first supported and then amended the notorious 1851 Greaser Law, a legislative modification that Ramírez criticized as being nothing more than a cosmetic touch up, leaving its essential effectiveness untouched.80

Closely associated with the Southern Chivalry faction, the Know-Nothings were essentially a far-right nativist fringe with deeply entrenched pro-slavery sentiments as well. Since the Know-Nothings enjoyed powerful political

76 Rice 132.
77 Bryan Gray 25.
78 Bryan Gray 28.
79 “Los votos de los Califorinios han sido siempre deseados por este partido, y en todas las elecciones,—dulces palabras y grandes promesas han sido gastadas con profucion y cello por los Democraticos; pero apenas ha pasado el tiempo de la eleccion, ya solo se reconocen como ‘greasers’.” El Clamor Público September 13, 1856.
80 Ramírez called the newly-altered Greaser Law “una nueva edicion de aquella famosa ley en que calificaba de greasers a todos los descendientes de la raza Española” [“a revised edition of the same old law which still defines greasers as any resident of Spanish descent”] El Clamor Público February 23, 1856.
alliances nationwide, it is not surprising that they became almost-constant fixtures in *El Clamor Público*. Devoting considerable coverage to their statewide activities, but particularly their growing influence in the greater Los Angeles area, Ramírez encouraged Mexican Americans to unite politically against this common foe, for if Latinos remained divided, one could never assuredly determine “if that malignant enemy is among us--the Know-Nothings--with their stupidity, racial intolerance, and conspiratorial ideas.”\(^81\) As a proud, native Californio himself, Ramírez additionally found it difficult to fathom how a group of European immigrants could self-righteously monopolize the term nativist for themselves — especially in his own former country.\(^82\) In spite of these pointed rebuttals, however, a united Know-Nothing and Southern Chivalry collective continued to leverage considerable sway in Los Angeles politics. And it was during the 1856 Presidential Election where such clout would become especially visible.

**Frémont vs. Buchanan**

Perhaps no other event better captures the newspaper battles that transpired between *El Clamor Público* and the *Los Angeles Star* than the national election of 1856. As each periodical was essentially backed by opposing political sides — *El Clamor Público* by pro-abolitionist Republicans and *The Los Angeles Star* by pro-slavery Democrats — the heated exchanges were almost inevitable. Five years short of the American Civil War, the associated stakes of this election — and its accompanying tensions — could not be higher. Running on a pro-abolition reform platform, Republican candidate John C. Frémont campaigned on a policy slogan that advocated “Free Speech, free press, free soil, free men, Frémont and victory!”\(^83\) As one can perhaps imagine, Ramírez was more than enthused to endorse Frémont. The Southern Chivalry, however, was more than quick to lampoon politically Frémont, Ramírez, and the Republican Party altogether by posting disparaging advertisements in San Francisco that read: “Frémont: Free Niggers and Frijoles.” What was especially troubling for the Democratic Party, however, was the fact that *El Clamor Público* had become one of the leading journal-based

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81 “... si prevalesca entre nosotros el maligno enemigo, el Know-Nothingismo, con su estupidez, intolerancia y conspiraciones.” *El Clamor Público* April 7, 1855.

82 In his third issue, Ramírez criticized the Know-Nothing ‘nativists’ as “miserable and fanatical”—misdirected individuals “entes que se llaman asi mismo ‘Nativo-Americanos,’ cuando sus bisabuelos emigraron a America del mismo modo que lo hacen en nuestros dias los habitants de Europa” [‘who call themselves ‘Native Americans’ when their great grandparents emigrated to America in the same manner our own did from Europe’]. *El Clamor Público* July 3, 1855.

83 Bryan Gray 27.
vehicles supported by the Republican Party, a political duty for which Ramírez would later be reimbursed.\textsuperscript{84}

Gradually, Ramírez published his first, albeit brief, endorsement of Frémont on February 16, 1856.\textsuperscript{85} By August 23\textsuperscript{rd} of the same year, however, \textit{El Clamor Público}'s pro- Frémont campaign had gained considerable momentum. In the aforementioned issue, Ramírez delved into an all-out advertising blitz, including a complete Spanish-translation of the Republican platform, along with its anti-slavery clause: "Resolved, That the constitution confers Congress the sovereign right over the Territories of the United States, for its governance, and in the exercising of that power, it is within the power and right of Congress to prohibit barbarism, polygamy and slavery."\textsuperscript{86} In swift response, the \textit{Los Angeles Star} and other Democratic-controlled periodicals slammed \textit{El Clamor Público}, as well as others, as being infected with "Nigger-worship[ing]."\textsuperscript{87} Ramírez likewise retorted by publishing entire sections of \textit{El Clamor Público}'s September 27, 1856 issue in English — itself a rare occurrence, including the following re-print:

\textbf{Nigger Worshippers:} Our opponents have heretofore made no little noise and fuss about "Nigger Worshippers." Every little 7 by 9 sheet in the pay of the Dromedary and slave driving party have been plethoric with bile; every petty locofoco orator has rendered his carcass a conduct for the emission of "nigger" gasconade and "abolition" slang. It has been howled on the street corners and formed the topic of conversation[s].\textsuperscript{88}

As both periodicals increasingly "crossed swords," as Pitt has phrased it, the underlying political consequences of a Republican Party defeat became rather clear — a possible extension of slavery into the newly acquired Southwest and, most notably, Los Angeles itself.

Ramírez’s journalistic attacks were aimed not only at the Democratic Party itself but also its presidential candidate, James Buchanan. Of particular concern were Buchanan’s expressed plans for continued Latin American filibustering, or widespread pillaging of lands (William Walker in Nicaragua, specifically) and a potential extension of slavery into Cuba, as proposed in his

\textsuperscript{84} Bryan Gray 27.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{El Clamor Público} February 16, 1856.
\textsuperscript{86} "Resuelto, Que la constitucion confiere al Congreso el derecho soberano sobre los Territorios de los Estados Unidos, para su gobierno, y que en el ejercicio de este poder, es el deber y el derecho del Congreso prohibir en los Territorios las reliquias del barbarismo, la poligamia y la esclavitud." \textit{El Clamor Público} August 23, 1856.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{El Clamor Público} September 27, 1856.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{El Clamor Público} September 27, 1856.
joint-sponsored 1854 secret Ostend Manifesto. According to an October 4, 1856 El Clamor Público editorial,

Buchanan’s election would be a signal for an invasion of the Cuba coastline — for yet another “Land Commission” (similar to the one already in place in California) to rob Cuban citizen’s of their land and property — new “greaser” laws to banish the Cubans from their homes . . . . And all of this for the simple reason of annexing more slave states into our Union — to expand the slaveholding territories . . . , to nationalize a repugnant system that disregards human liberties and human rights — a damning curse upon our country.89

It is little wonder, then, that Democratic Assemblyman Joseph Lancaster Brent accused El Clamor Público in a Los Angeles Star article of “disseminating sentiments of treason and antipathy among the native population” — or, as Pitt aptly concluded, of “giving [Mexican Americans] Californians dangerous ideas.”90 Indeed, it was not so much Ramírez’s seditious ideas as it was his extraordinary defiance that ultimately marked him as a target of contempt. As we shall see in Part Three, Ramírez, Russwurm, and Cornish altogether trail blazed incredible voices of resistance that were certainly not only legendary for their time but also far ahead of it as well.

**Part 3: The Editors: Making History**

**John B. Russwurm: One of America’s First African American College Graduates**

On September 6, 1826, John Browne Russwurm was honored with delivering the commencement speech at his own graduation from Bowdoin College.91 Entitled “The Conditions and Prospects of Haiti,” it focused specifically on the cultural as well as intellectual transformative development of

89 “[Buchanan’s] elecion sera una señal para una invasion de las Costas de Cuba—otra 'Commision de Terrenos' para robar la propiedad del pueblo—nuevas leyes de ‘greasers’ para desterrarlos de sus hogares . . . . Y todo esto se hara simplemente para que se anadan mas Estados esclavos a esta Union—simplemente para darle un campo mas extenso a la esclavitud humana . . . , para nacionalizar un sistema repugnante a la libertad y a los derechos de la humanidad—una maldicion para el pais.” El Clamor Público October 4, 1856.


free black men in Haiti, a major source of pride for free African Americans in the United States at the time:

    Such were [freedom’s] effects upon the Haitians — men who in slavery showed neither spirit nor genius: but when Liberty, when once Freedom struck their astonished ears, they became new creatures, stepped forth as men, and showed to the world, that though slavery may benumb, it cannot entirely destroy our faculties.  

This theme was to become a recurring conviction for Russwurm — that free men of color necessarily require the unrestrained cultural and economic latitude to maturate fully to the level of their Anglo counterparts. And in many ways, Freedom’s Journal itself became especially attuned to this objective. Russwurm further felt that the success of this objective was ultimately contingent upon Anglo America’s shared commitment to this joint-endeavor. As true now as it was then, Anglo America’s unyielding mistreatment and dehumanization of Blacks — enslaved or otherwise — made clear to Russwurm that a sustainable solution to racism required a mutually embraced effort.

    Born in Jamaica in 1799, Russwurm’s birth status appears to be a point of scholarly dispute. Simmonds’s claim implies that Russwurm was born into slavery — “to a Black mother and a White father in 1799. His father was his owner . . . and his mother was a slave.”  Bacon, conversely, contends that both Russwurm and Cornish were “two free-born African-Americans.” We do know that young Russwurm was eventually sent by his father in 1807 to Quebec, Canada for boarding school, and then later to a secondary-level private school in Maine where he graduated in 1819. In 1824, Russwurm was accepted to Bowdoin College as its first African-American student and where he shared membership in the same literary club with the Nathaniel Hawthorne.

    Directly following his Bowdoin commencement address, Russwurm attracted the attention of the American Colonization Society (ACS). Ever seeking African American endorsees for their somewhat experimental Liberian colonization scheme, Russwurm’s Haitian independence speech apparently harmonized nicely with the ACS’s separatist design for an independent and detached African American colony away from Anglo-American United States. Eventually declining their “flattering and liberal” employment offer, Russwurm instead moved to New York in 1827 and joined Samuel Cornish as the junior editor of Freedom’s Journal.
Despite the dissimilarity of their upbringings, the co-editors made a complimentary team. Cornish provided a militant idealism to *Freedom’s Journal* while Russwurm directed such zeal into a pragmatic and newsworthy form.\(^97\) And a practical strategist he was. Almost immediately, Russwurm distinguished himself amongst his colleagues as a methodically oriented editor of considerable talent. According to Brewer, there were “few men . . . whose editorial pen could battle with such force against a volcano of sin and oppression, like unto that of American slavery.”\(^98\) But like Ramírez of *El Clamor Público*, Russwurm began to likewise feel the enormous pressures associated with a groundbreaking periodical. Within months of its opening, a number of issues plagued *Freedom’s Journal*, one of which was a growing and general discontent among African Americans regarding the paper’s overall content and direction. There were, for instance, frequent complaints from several key subscribers who felt the periodical did not fully represent the full range of the African American experience.\(^99\) A more serious grievance for *Freedom’s Journal* readers, however, was Russwurm’s eventual and unexpected endorsement of colonization, a policy that both *Freedom’s Journal* editors had long opposed.\(^100\) This infuriated the African American populace who condemned Russwurm for tacitly compromising with the highly controversial ACS plan.\(^101\)

As with Ramírez of *El Clamor Público*, Russwurm’s eventual undoing was, unfortunately, the result of his own target audience’s wrath. In fact, Russwurm had ultimately generated so much spite among his fellow African Americans that they not only “burned him in effigy” but also no objection was apparently “too caustic for the free Negroes of New York City and Philadelphia to hurl against him.”\(^102\) It is equally important to note here, however, that both Russwurm and Ramirez’s undoing was as much the result of a series of calculated Anglo-based manipulations — whether it came from racist, Virginia pro-colonizationists who sought to split African American allegiances (pro-colonization vs. anti-colonization African Americans), or whether it came from racist, pro-slavery, Democrats in Los Angeles who sought to split Mexican American political loyalties (Ranchero elite vs. working-class Mexican Americans).\(^97\) Simmonds A14.


\(^99\) Bacon 57-58.

\(^100\) The first indication of Russwurm’s conversion to Liberian colonization occurred in *Freedom’s Journal* on February 14, 1829.


\(^102\) In a letter to Gurley, Russwurm writes “A violent persecution which is not considerably subsided, has been raging against me, in [Philadelphia], on account of my change. Two meetings have been held, which were numerously attended; & in fulfillment of my prediction, ended in useless declamation.” Bacon (2003) 417-418; Bacon 14.
Americans). In either case, the effective net result was an African American or Mexican American body politic that was ruptured and divided, and these exploitative measures, in the end undermined a potential defensive front that otherwise may well have remained ideologically united — a topic that I’ll further explore in Chapter Two.

Russwurm eventually departed for Liberia, Africa. Contacting ACS Secretary, Ralph Randolph Gurley, Russwurm wrote the following in a letter dated January 26, 1829: “I deem it expedient to advise you [Gurley], that I am on the eve of relinquishing the publication of Freedom’s Journal, with my views on the subject of Colonization materially changed . . . . I am willing to be employed in the colony [of Liberia] in any business, for the performance of which you may deem me qualified.” It was in Liberia where Russwurm’s long hoped-for success finally flourished. Heading the settlement’s local newspaper in Monrovia, the Liberia Herald, Russwurm continued to defend the American Colonization Society jealously, but also to write “glowingly about the colony, which he deemed a ‘land of true equality’.” As discussed in Chapter Three, the actual reality of the Liberian colony was far less ideal, and often involved tense and complicated territorial disputes with several neighboring African tribes. Regardless, Russwurm persisted in expressing great (and perhaps inflated) hope for a land where African-based enterprise was — at the very least — uninhibited by Anglo-based racism, as the following Liberia Herald editorial clearly illustrates: “What my sensations were upon landing I can hardly describe. This town contains double the number of houses I expected . . . . The colonists here, (at Monrovia,) appear to be thriving . . . . You here behold coloured men exercising all the duties of office of which you can scarcely believe[;] many fulfill the important duties with much dignity.” To Blacks long habituated to American-styled bigotry, the Liberian colony must have indeed seemed like an indescribable paradise.

Despite all its allure, Liberia still took nearly a decade before a reliable system of commerce and government was established. Complicating matters further were the ever-present and embedded ACS Anglo liaisons — an issue that eventually angered many Black settlers who felt patronized by their paternal-like presence. After an inevitable feud between African American colonists and Anglo ACS agents, Russwurm withdrew from Monrovia altogether and resettled in Cape Palmas, Liberia, an alternate colony sponsored by the state of Maryland, where he succeeded in becoming its governor and, by all accounts, appeared to enjoy relative success thereafter. His burial statue, commemorating his leadership and vision, still stands in Cape Palmas, where he died in 1851 — four short years before El Clamor Público’s opening issue.

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104 Bacon 253.
105 Bacon 252.
Samuel E. Cornish: America’s First Ordained African American Presbyterian Minister

It is perhaps unfortunate to note that Cornish’s notable contributions to *Freedom’s Journal* are sometimes overshadowed by Russwurm’s clamorous stance on colonization. While it is true that the co-editor did in fact voluntarily resign from *Freedom’s Journal* six months after its inception, Bacon argues extensively and convincingly that “there is no evidence” to suggest that “the dissolution of Cornish and Russwurm’s partnership was [not] amicable.”

With regard to *Freedom’s Journal’s* popularity, there have been some critics who further suggest that it was actually Cornish himself, and not Russwurm, who propelled the journal to its historic heights. Even *Freedom’s Journal’s* famous motto, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” was not only Cornish’s creation, but also guided the journal’s founding spiritual principles; it went noticeably missing in the issues following Cornish’s resignation.

The historical details of Cornish’s early life are, unfortunately, somewhat sketchy. We know that he was born a free African American in Sussex County, Delaware in either 1795 (Bacon) or 1796 (Simmonds; Gross). After being briefly educated in Philadelphia, he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1819, spending a year as a stateside missionary in Maryland. And it was actually during his brief assignment in Maryland when Cornish witnessed first-hand the mistreatment of African slaves by so-called Christian slave-holders, a subject that Frederick Douglass, Cornish’s contemporary, would later extensively document in his celebrated 1845 autobiography.

While initially an advocate of African American emigration to Haiti, Cornish later rescinded his views after having heard suspect and dissatisfied reports from returning émigrés. Summarizing his collective views on colonization, Cornish offered the following April 18, 1827 commentary in *Freedom’s Journal*: “The Colonization Society, excellent as [are] its plans . . . is altogether . . . too feeble in its powers . . . . [T]he principles of freedom are too rapid in their growth . . . , too quick and irresistible in their operations to wait for the drizzling process of transporting two millions of people across the Atlantic. *Emancipation must take place on the spot where slavery exists.*”

As

107 Gross 280.
108 Gross 248.
109 Simmonds A14; Bacon 43-44.
110 Simmonds A14; Cornish has since earned the additional distinction of having become America’s first African American who underwent clergy training required of a Presbyterian minister. Bacon 44.
112 *Freedom’s Journal* April 18, 1827 (Italics in original).
implied by these sentiments, Cornish remained a life-long opponent of the ACS, not only opposing its overseas enterprise throughout his brief tenure with *Freedom’s Journal* but also afterwards as the founding editor of both the *Colored American* and *The Rights of All*.

When Gross writes that Cornish was an “uncompromising idealist and radical thinker,” she is perhaps referring to what were arguably his most prolific years following *Freedom’s Journal*. Determined to concentrate more exclusively on both the ministry and pro-African American related projects, Cornish became an influential force in the New York Manumission Society as well as a forward-thinking director of the African Free School movement. He likewise cultivated ties with key organizations, such as the Phoenix Society and the New York Committee of Vigilance, and also advocated the efforts of leading abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison. Most historically significant, however, was Cornish’s continued and tireless activism in journalism. As Gross most aptly summarizes, “indifferent to hardships, and unconcerned with personal reward, Cornish launched one journal after another.” For instance, his most noteworthy post-*Freedom’s Journal* periodical endeavors were rather short-lived, as was the case with both the *Colored American* and *The Rights of All*, the latter of which was a post-Russwurm continuation of *Freedom’s Journal* under a different name.

Cornish also developed increasingly less radical viewpoints as the years went on, which apparently caused him to lose a considerable level of influence, especially with younger activists. As Bacon notes, “by the time Cornish left the *Colored American* in 1839, some felt that his views were no longer relevant[—]‘an old School man’ who ‘stands by the old paths but does not inquire for the new’.” Cornish’s final days as editor of the *Coloured American*, however, ended as a direct result of his growing frustration with his fellow brethren more than anything else, an experience that uncannily parallels that of both Russwurm and Ramirez.

It is fascinating to note that each editors’ respective final days culminated with scathing editorials that collectively denounced their intended audiences. For example, on April 12, 1838, Cornish published the following condemnation addressing the *Coloured American’s* consistently low African American subscription rate:

If our people be taken as a body, and their patriotism judged . . . by their support of the only paper conducted by themselves and

113 Gross 248.
114 Bacon 54.
115 Beal 126.
117 “Only six monthly issues appeared, with the last published on October 9, 1829.” Bacon 255.
118 Bacon 258-259.
consecrated to their interest [the Coloured American], every intelligent mind would say they mostly deserve to be slaves; We say to all such, appoint your man, and [the] moment you bring into the field more talent and experience [than us], we will gladly yield our place, and pledge towards the salary of our successor, at least $50 annually. But until they do this, we demand their support, and brand them as imbecile, impolitic and cowardly if they withhold it.119

Twenty years later, using surprisingly similar phrasing, Ramírez blasted his fellow Mexican Americans in a December 18, 1858 El Clamor Público editorial highlighting their political apathy:

And you, imbecile Californians! You are responsible for the lamentable acts we are witnessing. We are tired of saying: ‘Open your eyes, now is the time to assert your rights and interests.’ It is shameful, but necessary to admit that you are the sarcasm of humanity. When the time comes to vote, the first of your rights, you go about the streets in the carriages of [Democratic] candidates, and you will not cast your votes unless you are paid for them . . . . You are cowardly and stupid, inspiring nothing but disdain . . . . You might as well renounce once and for any and all noble sentiments and prepare to cast upon yourselves the yoke of slavery.120

No doubt, these two excerpts demonstrate the inherent frustration involved in assuming cultural leadership at a time when few, if any, role models existed. Ahead of their times, each editor grappled with journalistic topics concerning injustices that were, for the most part, largely overlooked by Anglo editors of their time — topics that likewise required novel or radical rhetorical approaches. Moreover, each had to gauge the net effectiveness of these atypical approaches on the fly — with little, if any, time for corresponding readjustments.

In his final years, tragedy struck the idealistic Cornish, beginning in 1838 when his youngest son drowned. Mrs. Cornish died soon after in 1844. As if to further exacerbate his fate, his oldest daughter passed in 1846 while

119 Bacon 270.

120 “Y vosotros, imbéciles Californios! Vosotros tenéis la culpa de los lamentables hechos que estamos viendo. Estamos cansados de decir: ‘Abrir los ojos, ya es tiempo de sostener vuestros derechos y intereses.’ Es vergüenza decíarlo, pero es forzoso confesarlo: sois el sarcasmo de la humanidad! Cuando llega el tiempo de ejercer el primero de los derechos, sois arrastrado por las calles en los carruajes de los candidatos, y no queréis votar a menos que se os compren vuestros votos . . . ! Cobardes y estúpidos , no inspiraréis mas que el desprecio . . . . Entonces renunciad de una ves a todo noble sentimiento, y preparaos a llevar el yugo del esclavo.” El Clamor Público December 18, 1858.
his youngest was committed to an insane asylum where she died in 1855. Left in relative solitude, Cornish finally relocated to Brooklyn, New York where he was finally laid to rest in 1858.

**Francisco P. Ramírez: Organic Intellectual Extraordinaire**

History does not often present us with accounts of nineteen-year olds who single-handedly confront and defy a determined territorial and political occupation. But such was the incredible case of Francisco P. Ramírez, a story that has yet to be fully appreciated and studied by scholars. Although *El Clamor Público* has received some well-noted scholarly attention during the last fifteen years, only one historian to date, Paul Bryan Gray, has produced a yet-to-be-released biographical sketch of Ramírez.

Born into rather modest circumstances, Ramírez was the grandson of similarly-named Francisco Ramírez, a humble carpenter “who arrived in Alta California in 1794 with a party of settlers from Sonora, Mexico.”\(^{121}\) Ramírez’s maternal grandfather was Francisco Avila, a one-time mayor of Los Angeles who also holds the additional distinction of having constructed the oldest house in Los Angeles still standing today, the Avila Adobe.\(^{122}\) Ramírez’s father was rather unaccomplished, owning a small grapevine parcel outside the city center along the Los Angeles River. The plot itself was situated within a much larger, more productive vineyard owned by the now-historically famous winemaker, Don Jean Luis Vignes, and Ramírez even at one time housed the offices of *El Clamor Público* at the Vignes estate.\(^{123}\) Perhaps in a cruel twist of irony, a two-block-long Ramírez Street now commemorates the birth site of the fearless journalist, only one block away from the modernly renovated Los Angeles County Jail.

Because of Ramírez’s early association with the popular Frenchman Vignes, he not only acquired proficiency in French but was also “one of the few people in Los Angeles who was at home with the printed word in English and Spanish.”\(^{124}\) Vignes was also instrumental in monetarily sponsoring both at

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121 Bryan Gray 20.
122 The Avila House today remains viewable to tourists and visitors alike along historic Olvera Street, Los Angeles, California.
123 On November 24, 1855, Ramírez permanently moved the offices of *El Clamor Público* to the Vignes estate.
124 Bryan states that Ramírez “grew up during an unstable period when Los Angeles was evolving from a remote adobe village on the Mexican frontier to an American enclave. He was an intelligent boy who quickly acquired an excellent knowledge of English from American settlers. He also learned French, a skill taught to him by Jean Louis Vignes and his compatriots. Ramírez’s mastery of French and English, together with his native Spanish, made him conversant in three languages before he was fourteen years old.” Bryan Gray 20-21.
St. Joseph’s College and Santa Clara College (in San Jose, California) respectively. For Francisco, however, his formal catholic education lasted less than a year before dropping out altogether, after which he became immediately employed as a columnist for *The Catholic Standard* in San Francisco. After a second stint in Marysville, California with the *California Express* — an area notorious for its intense hatred towards Latinos — Ramírez eventually returned to Los Angeles.

Prior to these events, however, Ramírez first secured a valuable apprenticeship with Manuel Clemente Rojo in 1851, then the editor of the Spanish-language section of the *Los Angeles Star*. A combined politician, attorney, and self-trained poet, Clemente Rojo is believed by Gray to have likely imbued Ramírez with a critical sense of political awareness during his tutelage. When Clemente Rojo finally vacated his editorial position, Ramírez immediately assumed charge of the one-page *La Estrella de Los Angeles* in 1854.

Quickly growing frustrated with the journal’s dual anti-Mexican/pro-slavery slant, Ramírez re-designed the Spanish-language section to better reflect a more balanced perspective of Los Angeles’s long-standing Latino populace — a view that the *Los Angeles Star* editor-in-chief failed to fully incorporate. Already a highly skilled newspaperman, trilingual, and “far more sophisticated than his age would suggest,” Ramírez was ready to venture out on his own — at only nineteen-years of age.

At the encouragement of *Los Angeles Star* editor, James S. Waite — and under the likely monetary sponsorship of Don Jean Louis Vignes as well — Ramírez founded Los Angeles’s first Spanish-language newspaper, *El Clamor Público*, on June 19, 1855. The general content of *El Clamor Público* remained unquestionably liberal from the outset. As Gray states:

> Several recurrent themes appeared in the pages of *El Clamor Público* drawn directly from Mexican liberalism. Among them was a fervent belief in racial equality and the abolition of slavery. Others included the impartial administration of justice and full political rights for every citizen. The last two ideals were incorporated in the United States Constitution, a document greatly admired by Ramírez, though he believed its value was largely nullified by American racism and slavery.

The more popular and progressive issues that were additionally covered during *El Clamor Público*’s four-year run were filibustering (particularly as it related to William Walker’s illegal activities in Nicaragua), Mexican-American lynching, Mexican American territorial dispossession, and the virulent nativist

125 Bryan Gray 21.
126 Bryan Gray 23.
127 Bryan Gray 24.
group, The Know-Nothings (a political version of our present-day Minutemen). While Ramirez also admittedly held pro-Constitution as well as pro-assimilation views, he nonetheless tirelessly recognized and gave voice to the most complicated predicament then facing Mexican American citizens — the collective loss of homeland sovereignty together with the simultaneous divestment of formerly guaranteed rights.

Historically speaking, it was this journalistic stance of surrogate defender of the oppressed — more than anything else—that placed *El Clamor Público* on the academic map in recent times. For Mexican Americans, the combined experience of military subjugation, racism, and persistent poverty caused many to internalize their predicament. Sensing rejection from their newly adopted Anglo countrymen, yet alienated from their native culture as well, Mexican Americans resolved this crisis of indeterminacy by recasting their identity on even more absolute terms. As a consequence of this identity recalibration, a number of scholars have credited Ramirez as not only having facilitated this cultural phenomenon but also as having created innovative, self-defining terminology in the process. For instance, Ramirez is regularly given credit as having been the first to coin the term “La Raza” in the newly conquered western United States. For instance, historian David Gutiérrez explains that *El Clamor Público* variously and recurrently employed the terms “la poblacion Mexicana (the Mexican population of California), nuestros compatrias (our compatriots), nuestra poblacion California y Mexicana (our population of [Mexican] Californians and Mexicans [from Mexico]), la raza Española (the Hispanic race or people), nuestra raza (our people).” These varied designations were in no small way crucial for restructuring what was then — and what is today — a fragmentary consciousness.

Moreover, what further makes *El Clamor Público* so historically significant is its public documentation of exactly how terms such as “nuestra raza” become charged with simultaneous defensive and restorative significations. That is, much of what comprises *El Clamor Público* is what Genaro Padilla has termed “contestatory articulations,” or, the rhetorical strategies that simultaneously oppose and appease an abusive power structure while likewise establishing an alternative lexicon of survival. Gutiérrez likewise argues that terms such as “nuestra raza” were not only almost exclusively standardized through Spanish-language journals, but their specified use also “marked the birth of an oppositional strategy in American society while offering an alternative, positive label that countered the stigmatized status many Americans imposed on Mexicans.”

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128 After the 1846-48 Mexican-American War, there were continued efforts to filibuster or illegally claim additional lands in Mexico and Central America.


130 Gutiérrez 36.
based weapons of defiance and mollification, *El Clamor Público* led the discursive charge that transformed hopelessness into hope.

In spite of Ramírez’s principled convictions regarding self-empowerment, it was ultimately — and ironically — the upper-class Mexican American ranchero elite who most politically undermined his published liberal ideals. In large part due to his atypical upbringing, the young editor was accordingly wedged into a municipal power vacuum of sorts — a fact that heavily influenced his political leanings. Commercially situated outside of the more prominent ranchero/laborer economic hierarchy, Ramírez’s family were instead members of a small community of agriculturists (wine growers), retailers, and entrepreneurs, many of whom enjoyed periodic but minor dispensation from the Californio elite. As a result, Ramírez came eventually to identify more closely with the Mexican American working and under-classes, an affiliation that directly inspired his attempts to elevate their political consciousness whenever possible.

But it was Anglo-American violence against working-class Mexican Americans — mostly in the form of lynching — that continually bothered Ramírez, especially as the rate of such murders arose to alarming heights. In an impassioned August 2, 1856 *El Clamor Público* editorial, Ramírez exclaims, “Oh fatality! Only Mexicans have been the victims of the people’s insane fury! Mexicans alone have been sacrificed on gallows raised to launch their poor souls into eternity. Is this the liberty and equality of the country we have adopted?” Becoming increasingly critical of his newly-adopted nation’s democracy, a term that Ramírez often editorially satirized as “lynch-ocracia,” he soon began to vigorously support the large-scale relocation of Mexican Americans to Sonora, Mexico. When the final issue of *El Clamor Público* appeared on December 31, 1859, Ramírez himself had already made arrangements to assume editorship of the Sonoran Colony’s newspaper, *La*

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131 Bryan Gray 24.
132 Pitt 181.
133 “¡Oh fatalidad! Mexicanos solo han sido victimas del furor insano del pueblo! Mexicanos solo han sido sacrificados en patíbulos afrentosos que se levantan para lanzar a la eternidad sus pobres almas! ¿Es esta la libertad y la igualdad del pais que hemos adoptado?” *El Clamor Público* August 2, 1856.

134 “Diariamente estamos viendo salir partidas de gente de diferentes naciones, con direccion a Sonora y otros puntos de Mexico. Según sabemos, la causa de un viaje tan repentina, es la poca o ninguna justicia que las autoridades Californianas, observan con respecto a los extrangeros.” [*Daily we see travel parties of various nationalities destined for Sonora or other destinations in Mexico. We also know the reason for such a sudden departure is the little or complete lack of justice the California authorities afford foreigners*]. *El Clamor Público* September 11, 1855.
Estrella de Occidente [Star of the West]. However, the colony experiences of not only Ramírez but also John Russwurm in Liberia, Africa were anything but ideal. The tumultuous conditions in the experimental settlement eventually led to Ramírez’s return to Los Angeles — two years later in March, 1862.

Upon his arrival, Ramírez fully immersed himself in California political life at both the local and state levels, eventually re-establishing old ties with former affiliates from within the anti-slavery Republican Party. Becoming one of only eight Notary Publics in Los Angeles, Ramírez in time brokered an alliance with Republican governor, Leland Stanford (founder of Stanford University), which in turn led to a later political appointment as Registrar of the Federal Land Office in November 1862. Later nominated as the Republican candidate for Senator in August 1863, Ramírez’s contender, Henry Hamilton, was no less than the self-proclaimed-racist and Democratic editor of his previous periodic rival, the Los Angeles Star. Ramírez was defeated 922 votes to 761.

Not only were these the American Civil War years but also the period of the French invasion of Mexico. Aside from an obvious presence of pro-slavery sentiment, California also reflected the turbulent changes occurring south of its border. The Golden State gradually became home to a steady stream of political exiles fleeing Mexico’s bloodshed, many of whom took root in the San Francisco Bay Area. As Gray points out, a significant number of Mexican writers and politicians — “intellectuals, poets, and artists” — settled in the North Beach area of San Francisco, at the intersection of Powell and Vallejo streets, and formed what later became a lively avant-garde Mexican community. Periodically associated with this progressive quarter, Ramírez was eventually called upon to help co-found La Voz de Méjico and El Nuevo Mundo, two radical newspapers that emerged from this expatriate fraternity.

In 1869, Ramírez eventually studied for the Bar and earned the additional distinction of becoming Los Angeles’s first Mexican American lawyer. Opening his own practice “based mainly on Mexican and French clients,” Ramírez once again re-entered politics and, by all accounts, became an extremely effective Spanish-speaking liaison and campaigner for the Republican Party. In 1880, the party again nominated Ramírez as a legislative candidate, but this time to the California State Assembly. His opponent was Reginaldo del Valle, one of the few other Mexican American lawyers who was also a prominent member of the rancho elite (son of Ignacio

135 According to Hubert Howe Bancroft’s transcriber, “Ramírez was invited by the Gov. of Sonora, Mex. [to] come to that state and take charge of the official paper there.” P. Francisco Ramírez, Dictation for Hubert Bancroft (mss, California 1888?) Frames 0442 and 0443.

136 Bryan Gray 30.
137 Bryan Gray 31.
138 Bryan Gray 33.
del Valle) and thereby strongly endorsed by the racist Chivalry faction of the Democratic Party. In a disappointing blow, Ramírez was narrowly defeated.

In what appears to be a highly suspect political setup, Ramírez was soon afterwards tragically implicated in bank fraud charges. Right before trial, Ramírez fled to Ensenada, Mexico where he “supported himself by teaching in an elementary school and working for a small paper, El Fronterizo.” He quickly regained political recognition, however, and was eventually appointed to “juez de paz, or justice of the peace, in 1883.” Ramírez even married in Ensenada at fifty-eight years old, fathering seven children, and later becoming quite wealthy as a land speculator and real estate investor. Today, Ramírez is not only historically revered as one of the founding fathers of Ensenada, but is also enthusiastically studied by researchers. On December 28, 1908, Francisco P. Ramírez died, completely unobserved by the Los Angeles press. He and his wife lie in unmarked graves in the Ensenada Municipal Cemetery.

Having acquired a sense of African and Mexican American written culture, the major journalistic battles that defined both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público, and the biographical events that shaped each editor, I would like to examine more closely some key aspects of Anglo-dominated, nineteenth-century America. In the next chapter, I will discuss both journals’ critical responses to slavery, colonization, territorial dispossession, and the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax. Moreover, I will also carefully review African and Mexican American lynching, in its various forms, and particularly how Anglo-based racism came to be inscribed on these hanging Black and Brown bodies. Finally, I will examine some nineteenth-century American nation-building practices that frequently reoccurred in the pages of Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público, such as African American slavery, Anglo free labor, and Latin American filibustering.

139 Bryan Gray 36.
140 Bryan Gray 38.
Part 1: Cultural Boundaries: Defining Subaltern Social Spaces in Nineteenth-Century New York and Los Angeles

Both *Freedom’s Journal* and *El Clamor Público* documented and captured what many scholars would arguably call the ‘seminal moments’ of African and Mexican American written history. Regarding *El Clamor Público*, Douglas Monroy notes that “in form it did not differ from most other California papers, but in content it certainly did.”¹ In this chapter, I will examine the various nineteenth-century social, racial, and legal boundaries that informed and shaped the editorial content of both journals. In doing so, I also hope to provide a more thorough understanding of the complex range of cultural conditions that eventually led to both Russwurm’s and Ramírez’s subsequent self exile in Liberia, Africa and Sonora, Mexico, respectively.

*Freedom’s Journal’s* Response to Early Nineteenth-Century Slavery

As a Presbyterian clergyman who formerly managed a ministry for Maryland slaves, *Freedom’s Journal* co-editor, Samuel Cornish, was disillusioned early on with the apparent limits of Anglo American-styled democracy. Witnessing first-hand the cruelty of Anglo Presbyterian slave owners, Cornish was indelibly affected and thereafter expressed a life-long revulsion for “Christian slave-holders” . . . who professed their religious convictions while mistreating their slaves.”² Shouldering these convictions, both Cornish and Russwurm co-designed a journal that routinely reflected a deep-seated concern for African Americans still in physical bondage. But it was a two-sided concern, as free African Americans — like themselves — often faced the real threat of “kidnapping and [subsequent] [re-]enslavement, whether or not they were actually fugitives.”³ Complicating matters, these feared abductors were many times fellow free African-Americans who lured their unsuspecting brethren back into captivity for profit. Such was made clear in an August 8, 1828 *Freedom’s Journal* editorial where Russwurm indeed cautions his subscribers about the possibility of Black entrapment, warning that “any man of colour who will betray . . . a runaway would not hesitate one moment towards assisting to kidnap those who are free . . . . Beware of such . . . ; they are snakes in the grass, charming unwary birds.”⁴

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³ Bacon 209.
⁴ John B. Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish, eds., *Freedom’s Journal* (1827-29) November 14,
Even so, some contemporary critics still regard *Freedom’s Journal* as having adopted an altogether detached position on the institution of slavery. According to this critique, *Freedom’s Journal* sought instead to deliberate rhetorically or passively dissect the underlying logic of slavery, mainly through protracted articles dealing with free labor economics, biblical history, and in-depth scholarly editorials from Black leaders and intellectuals. Indeed, as its first issue clearly states, *Freedom’s Journal* favored an analytical or “simple representation of facts”, by which it hoped to “lay [its] case before the public” — but also with the expressed anticipation of “conciliat[ing] all and . . . irritat[ing] none.”

*Freedom’s Journal* has, therefore, come to be regarded by some as decidedly moderate — a necessarily dispassionate voice that, according to Bella Gross, not only “educat[ed] the colored people” but also actively mollified “the White, for the [projected] destiny of both w[ere] bound together.”

In these various ways, *Freedom’s Journal* had hoped to cultivate a polemically centrist stance that would indirectly or gradually affect slavery’s end.

However, Jacqueline Bacon contends that of the many *Freedom’s Journal* contributors who proposed such a gradualist approach, such strategists nevertheless cannot be reductively labeled as compromising or indecisive. Rather, *Freedom’s Journal* represented for many not only the much needed intellectual arm of the Anti-Slavery movement, but, according to Yussuf Simmonds, the admittedly-restrained beginnings of African American self-determination at “a time when Black people were not even allowed to be human beings[,] much less pioneer-newspaper publishers.” And it wasn’t only *Freedom’s Journal* that wished to moderately state their critical response to slavery, but apparently others as well who were much more directly involved in the Anti-Slavery movement, including Russwurm and Cornish’s contemporary, Frederick Douglass. Similarly advocating a mutually mediated Black/White Anti-Slavery movement, at least at first, Douglass argued that Blacks “must be [their] own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly — not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends.”

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5 *Freedom’s Journal* March 16, 1827. A related *Freedom’s Journal* passage within the same issue states that while the editors are ever mindful “of our brethren who are still in the iron fetters of bondage,” it also admitted concludes that “little can be effected by us.”


7 Bacon 211.


9 *Freedom’s Journal* March 16, 1827.

Cornish, and Russwurm all understood early on that advocating for immediate emancipation not only risked alienating Anglo allies but, as Frankie Hutton has argued, would have likewise jeopardized the continued existence of Black journals altogether—not to mention the lives of those directly associated with them.  

**Fear of a Free Black Populace: The Colonizationist Movement**  

In her now-famous diary, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, Scotland native and conservative Janet Schaw writes of a pending slave revolt in pre-Revolutionary War America. The year is 1774, and the King of England has apparently “promised every Negro that would murder his Master and family . . . his Master’s plantation.” Schaw continues: “the Negroes have got it amongst them and believe it to be true. Tis ten to one they may try the experiment . . . ; an insurrection was hourly expected. There had been a great number of them [American slaves] discovered in the adjoining woods the night before, most of them with arms.” In the same historical period, Hector St. Jean de Crévecoeur, in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1874), further ponders the unavoidable potential for Black rebellion: “What can be expected from wretches in such circumstances? Forced from their native country, cruelly treated when on board, and not less so on the plantations to which they are driven; is there any thing in this treatment but what must kindle all the passions, sow the seeds of inveterate resentment, and nourish a wish of perpetual revenge?” With a growing manumitted Black populace, however, Anglo fears had progressed to include not only slaves themselves but free African Americans as well.

As Bacon has argued, the gradual abolition and steady migration of manumitted Southern slaves led to a proportional increase in the free African American Northern population — especially in liberal cities such as New York and Philadelphia. In such municipalities, white retaliation had already become present. In Virginia particularly, the epicenter of the Colonizationist Movement, there existed the persistent and growing belief that both enslaved and free African Americans might not only strategically collaborate but outwardly express the same seditious tendencies of the Anglo-American radicals of the American Revolutionary War. In *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia*, Marie Tyler-McGraw argues that, of

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12 Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1923) 199.  
14 Bacon 14.
the few areas where nineteenth-century Anglos tacitly conceded likeness with Blacks, it was in both group’s “needs and desires [to] organize themselves and seek liberty, if necessary through armed struggle.” For instance, in an April 27, 1827 Freedom’s Journal editorial, a commentator ominously warns that, while America may “delay the evils of insurrections and revolutions[,] ... like the eruptions of Vesuvius, they will burst forth more awfully amid the horrors of midnight; and woe to every hand within the reach of its lava, wherever Slavery is tolerated!” Not only had Haiti — a recurring subject of Freedom’s Journal — exemplified this potential in 1804, but Benjamin Lundy’s nineteenth-century abolitionist newspaper, Genius of Universal Emancipation, also frequently argued for the inevitability of an uprising as well. But it wasn’t until Nat Turner’s 1831 rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia that many of Anglo America’s worst fears materialized. Sensing imminent retaliation, African Americans correspondingly emigrated in 1832 and 1833 in record numbers to the Liberian colony, causing a significant albeit momentary surge in settlers.

Yet the overriding impetus behind Liberian colonization was not entirely insurrection anxiety alone but also the apparent inability to logistically categorize and thus effectively distinguish between free and enslaved as well. The following description by John Henderson Russell regarding the authenticity of free African American identities eerily parallels the present-day frustrations experienced by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE):

Much difficulty was soon experienced in discriminating between slaves fraudulently passing as free negroes and negroes actually free. The right of free negroes to go and come and to pass to and fro . . . proved to be a cloak behind which runaway slaves escaped detection . . . . Free negroes treated their registers or ‘free papers’ as if they were transferable and escaping slaves used them to conceal their identity. Enterprising slaves even forged such papers, or secured them from white persons who made a practice of forging freedom certificates.

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16 Freedom’s Journal April 27, 1827.
17 Benjamin Lundy forthrightly proposes that “bloody revolt would always be a possibility in a slave society.” Tyler-McGraw 51.
18 A record high of “521 [Liberian émigrés] in 1832 and early 1833,” was recorded directly following Nat Turner’s insurrection. However, “after the fear-induced exodus of 1832, free black Virginia emigration nearly ceased.” Tyler-McGraw 128.
Charles Fenton Mercer, both co-founder of the American Colonization Society (ACS) and member of the Virginian State Assembly, expressed a related and explicit apprehension towards a Black/White racial admixture. In laying forth his public arguments for African colonization, Mercer would refer derogatively to Blacks as degraded and, as such, essentially unfit for the American republic — enslaved or free. 20 What is perhaps most intriguing about the ACS is that it apparently sought to establish a political compromise between the slave-holding South and free North territories by pushing for a mutually-agreed policy that would require the immediate deportation of all newly-manumitted slaves to Liberia. In this way, the American Colonization Society did not ultimately “offer any chemistry that could [permanently] blend free blacks into the American ‘Body Politic’,” but rather sought to administratively moderate the measured decrease of the surplus African American population. 21

As intriguing as this proposal may have appeared to some, an April 27, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* editorial nonetheless seriously questioned its underlying logic: “The project of gradually extirpating slavery, by . . . removing all who are born [free], is too slow. How can you liberate, and educate, and expatriate [to Liberia, Africa] 60,000 or 70,000 annually?”22 *Freedom’s Journal* contributors likewise rejected altogether the ACS’s presumptuous position of dictating what was best for free African Americans. Insisting on maintaining a self-determining voice, an August 17, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* editorial stated that “the [American Colonization] Society has been very zealous and successful in imposing upon the public the foolish idea that we are all longing to emigrate to their land of ‘milk and honey’ . . . . I deem it high time that our friends, in different parts of the Union, should know the truth of the matter—that we are all, to a man, opposed, in every shape, to the Colonization Society.”23 As the colonization debate continued, some African Americans considered relocating to alternative geographic regions. And these destinations were not merely confined to the North or South, but also potentially included the West as well.

**Black Gold: African American Slaves and Freemen in the Gold Rush**

Although not widely connected with slavery, the 1849 Gold Rush was nevertheless an event that attracted not only Anglo prospectors worldwide, but also southern-state slaveholders who in turn recruited their own bondservants as laborers. For this reason, the Black Gold Rush, as it is sometimes referred, is illuminating as it fully demonstrates the actual extent to which slavery not only intersected and informed the editorial pages of *Freedom’s Journal* but *El Clamor Publico* as well.

20 Tyler-McGraw 33.
21 Tyler-McGraw 27.
22 *Freedom’s Journal* April 27, 1827.
23 *Freedom’s Journal* April 17, 1827.
In *Racial Fault Lines*, Tomás Almaguer makes clear the often-omitted fact that “hundreds of blacks came with their gold-hunting masters, some with the promise of freedom in California if rewards of mining were great enough.”  

By 1850, there were already nearly 1,000 African Americans in California, half of whom were free, with the majority situated in the Northern California region. According to historian Quintard Taylor, in *Search of the Racial Frontier*, this population had doubled by 1852. So prevalent was this westbound African American migratory presence that a minister, Darius Stokes, proclaimed in 1855 at the First State Convention of Colored Citizens of the State of California that “should another Sutter discover another El Dorado . . . no sooner shall the white man’s foot be firmly planted there, than looking over his shoulder he will see the black man, like his shadow, by his side.”  

Indeed, Gold Fever had apparently struck the African American as well.

Furthermore, what made this migration more possible was the eventual admittance of California into the Union as a non-slave or free state. Even so, its admission was made possible only after fierce congressional debate that eventually resulted in the Compromise of 1850. While technically a free state, California still retained pronounced racial biases — many of which were forthrightly exposed in *El Clamor Publico* during this same time period. A March 15, 1848 editorial in *The Californian* stated these biased predispositions in no uncertain terms, especially in its opposition to both slave and free African American migration:

> We desire only a White population in California; even the Indians among us, as far as we have seen, are more a nuisance than a benefit to the country, we would like to get rid of them . . . .  [W]e dearly love the Union, but declare our positive preference for an independent condition of California to the establishment of any degree of slavery, or even the importation of free blacks.  

Apparently, California’s free state designation applied only to commerce-based activities.

The desire for a White California population had its origin in two sources. One was clearly racist. The other, however, involved mounting pressure from various market-based sectors to guard California’s free labor from the potentially destabilizing effects of slavery, a topic I will explore more fully in Part III of this chapter. While debating the final draft of the California


Constitution in 1849, for instance, delegate Oliver M. Wozencroft (San Joaquin) expressed a combination of racist and free labor worries with regards to the African American question:

I wish to cast my vote against the admission of blacks into this country [California], in order that I may thereby protect the citizens of California in one of their most inestimable rights — the right to labor . . . . I wish, so far as my influence extends to make labor honorable; the laboring man is the nobleman in the truest acception of the word; and I would make him worthy of his high prerogative and not degrade him by placing him upon a level with the lowest in the scale of the family of man.28

During these same debates, delegate Henry A. Tefft (San Luis Obispo) jointly penalized both Black and Brown phenotypes as he vehemently argued against the “introduction into this country” of all “negroes, peons of Mexico, or any class of that kind,” asserting that immigration of this type would ultimately undermine white labor.29 And Anglos were not the only ones expressing support for similarly stated referendums.

The Mexican American voices of power that likewise restricted or altogether hindered the development of African American civil rights in California were perhaps more disconcerting. Arguing on the grounds of their shared European ancestry, Californio convention delegates eventually petitioned for incorporating Mexican Americans as legally-entitled voters, but only after first racially distinguishing themselves from both Native and African Americans. Further defining the legal import of whiteness, Almaguer observes that convention delegate Pablo de la Guerra “noted [that] if the Anglo delegates used the word ‘white’ only as a term intended to ‘exclude the African race’ from the franchise, then he was in agreement of this usage.” As a consequence, voting rights in California were initially extended only to Anglo and Mexican males of European ancestry.30

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29 Browne 49.
30 Almaguer 55-56.
specified advantages to a very small set of well-positioned Californio families who subsequently monopolized ownership of vast tracts of land.\textsuperscript{31} Social status was largely determined through land grant acquisition, and on skin color. Widely read in the mid-nineteenth century, Richard Henry Dana’s \textit{Two Years Before the Mast} aptly illustrates this point. A self-appointed and detailed chronicler of pre-conquest Mexican culture, Dana describes the Californio landed gentry as essentially an “aristocracy” that was continually “intermarrying and keeping up an exclusive system in every respect. They can be told by their complexions, dress, manner . . . . From this upper class, they go down by regular shades, growing more and more dark and muddy, until you come to the pure Indians.”\textsuperscript{32}

Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his now-famed multi-volume \textit{California Pastoral}, conversely describes the landless Mexican working-class in less flattering terms — as “the baser stock of Hispano-Californians . . . , [the] greasers.” Bancroft determinedly concludes that in pre-conquest California there existed “two distinct classes — that which sprang from the admixture of Mexican and Indian, and that of Mexican [Castilian] blood alone. Whiteness was the badge of respectability.”\textsuperscript{33} And it was this Castilian-blooded — or white — class that likewise dominated bureaucratic affairs as well.

One of Almaguer’s main objectives in \textit{Racial Fault Lines} is also to demonstrate that it was actually the Mexican American landed gentry — and not the Mexican American working-classes — who sustained nominal political power in California after the American takeover. In this regard, the primary beneficiaries of American legislative and civic rights were, by and large, the rancho elite, since their collective pre-conquest clout became a readily transferable asset.\textsuperscript{34} Although the Mexican working classes were, by constitutional decree, similarly entitled to these selfsame rights, Anglos fundamentally failed to regard them as cultural co-equals. And all this is to say nothing of Native Americans, Chinese Americans, and African Americans, all of whom were both overlooked and omitted in the drafting of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.\textsuperscript{35} For these combined reasons Mexican Americans assumed a “qualitatively different ‘group position’ from that of Indians, blacks, and Asian immigrants in the new [California] racial hierarchy” but also a politically divided disposition as well.\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Almaguer 47.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Richard Henry Dana, Jr. \textit{Two Years Before the Mast} (New York: Signet Classics, 1964 [originally published in 1840]) 79.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Hubert Howe Bancroft, \textit{California Pastoral} – 1769-1848. Vol XXXIV (San Francisco: The History Co. Publishers, 1888) 278.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Almaguer 57.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Almaguer 46.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Almaguer 45.
\end{itemize}
The California Land Commission: Dispossessing the Mexican American Landed Gentry

Throughout the entire run of *El Clamor Público*, Ramírez continually challenged both Mexican American landowners and unskilled workers alike to avail themselves of their stated constitutional rights. But writing on behalf of this multi-tiered — and many times disunified — political bloc was anything but easy. As Coya Paz Brownrigg has argued, Ramírez attempted to surmount these differences strategically by creating a multi-voiced rhetorical platform that simultaneously merged wide-ranging and even competing Latino interests into one cohesive voice. Through such “‘hispano-american’” solidarity, Ramírez reasoned, the likelihood of collectively thwarting United States-based domestic and foreign imperialist policies, particularly in Central America, was set in their favor.37 Four issues after the journal’s inception, Ramírez clearly emphasized such convictions in a July 10, 1855 *El Clamor Público* editorial that ardently stated that he stood ready to “fight with strength and energy on issues both political and moral which in one way or another affect[ed] [the Latino population’s] interest.”38 The ultimate success of this multi-tiered, rhetorical approach, however, would be limited at best, a topic I shall reinvestigate from various differing angles in Chapter Four.

If Anglos somewhat grudgingly extended citizenship to their fellow fair-skinned rancho elite, they just as quickly enacted laws that legally challenged the legitimacy of their formerly secure land titles.39 On March 3, 1851, the 31st United States Congress approved the creation of a five-member California Land Commission through the Federal Land Law. Section 8 of the latter read:

> And be it further enacted, That each and every person claiming lands in California by virtue of any right or title derived from the Spanish or Mexican government, shall present the same to the said commissioners when sitting as a board, together with such documentary evidence and testimony of witnesses as the said claimant relies upon in support of such claims; and it shall be the duty of the commissioners . . . to decide upon the validity of the said claim . . . .

While it is true that most Mexican American claimants secured favorable rulings from the California Land Commission, thereby re-obtaining legal possession of their previously owned lands, it was also extremely costly.


39 Almaguer 107.

40 *Congressional Records: Thirty-first Congress* (Session II, Chapter 41: Section 8) March 3, 1851 (Italics in original).
According to Leonard Pitt, not only was “the average time devoted to settling these disputed claims . . . seventeen years,” but likewise lacking monetary resources, Californios were eventually forced to pay for legal counsel with the land they were purportedly rescuing.41

Compounding matters further, experienced and reliable legal counsel in post-conquest California was sparse at best, and available lawyers routinely mislead their Californio clients.42 As Pitt notes, “since most Californians scarcely understood English, much less the technical language of the courts,” they were often entirely reliant on suspect attorneys who took full advantage of their predicament.43 Regarding the ensuing territorial piracy, historian Robert Glass Cleland likewise credits the extraordinarily high-interest loans as being the single factor most instrumental in the demise of the Mexican American landed gentry. For twenty years immediately following the 1848 conquest, all manner of loans (usually for court costs) could typically carry “compound interest rate[s] . . . as high as ten per cent a month.”44 And while awaiting lengthy and costly adjudication, the Californio landed gentry almost invariably faced yet another unforeseen adversary — squatters.

**Squatter’s Rights: Raiding Land Locked in Litigation**

Keeping pace with this unfolding situation, *El Clamor Publico* regularly posted the final rulings of the California Land Commission, or the “aprobación[es] de los títulos de terrenos” [“official land title approvals”] on its title page. But equally present were Ramírez’s cutting critiques regarding the Land Commission’s questionable policies. In its second issue, Ramírez reflects in a June 26, 1855 *El Clamor Publico* editorial that “it truly would have been better if Californios had not presented their land titles to the Land Commission, and not verified their lands against the congress-approved laws of preemption.”45 Indeed, it was the 1852 and 1853 laws of “preemption” and “occupancy rights” that eventually emboldened Anglo working-class squatters to lay tentative claim to Latino property undergoing litigation. And the methodologies employed were usually designed to exhaust the dwindling

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41 Almaguer 66.

42 “Of the fifty or so attorneys who specialized in claim law in the 1850s, most were shysters who lacked not only honesty but also knowledge and experience.” Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1966) 97.

43 Pitt 324.


45 “. . . verdaderamente hubiera sido bueno para muchos Californios el no haber jamás presentado sus papeles a la Comisión, y obtener terrenos en virtud de la acta del Congreso que concede por derecho de preencion.” *El Clamor Público* June 26, 1855.
persistence of Latino claimants already burdened by hefty land taxes, steep loan interest rates, and lengthy bureaucratic legal proceedings. As time progressed, California soon witnessed the formation of “settlers’ leagues,” organized associations that “institutionalized the breakup of ranchos.” Pitt notes that,

the leagues sometimes hired professional squatters who used strong-arm methods on legitimate settlers as well as on claimants. After the Californios had fled in fear, land jobbers bought up and consolidated squatter claims . . . . League attorneys produced numerous writs, injunctions, and counterclaims in the lower courts, sometimes valid but many times “smelling of rank injustice and determined robbery.” In this way adventurers hoped to win a legal draw by some technicality, even if the courts confirmed the original titles.46

In addition, Anglo squatters were a group mostly comprised of working-class miners, many of whom had become unsuccessful as Gold Rush speculators, and thereby felt somehow entitled to the San Francisco Bay Area’s surrounding prime real estate, especially if its presumed owner was a foreign Mexican whose title was also in legal question.

On July 3, 1855, Ramírez addressed this troubling dilemma with an El Clamor Público editorial aptly-entitled, “Cuando Se Acabarán?” [“When Will They End?”]. In it, Ramírez critically questions his newly-adopted country’s judicial that was apparently dismissing Anglo squatter injustice with alarming frequency: “Authorities have arrested four squatters connected with the death of two cows, one being the property of Bruno Bernal and the other of José Espinosa . . . . A San Juan Bautista judge arraigned the criminals on June 14th. Most assuredly they will never be sentenced since the four robbers are Anglo Americans, and everyone has come to expect that a judge will more than likely always acquit an Anglo American.”47 Even highly placed Californio public officials seemed unable to quell this abuse. Regarding squatter immunity, Senator and landowner, Pablo de la Guerra, lamented the following on the Senate floor:

I have seen old men of sixty and seventy years of age weeping like children because they have been cast out of their ancestral home. They have been humiliated and insulted . . . . And yet those individuals who have committed these abuses [Anglo squatters]

46 Pitt 96.
47 “Arrestráron a cuatro squatters, que mataron dos vacas, una de la propiedad de Bruno Bernal y la otra de José Espinosa . . . . El día 14 de Junio ha pasado la acusación al Juez de Paz del pueblo de San Juan Bautista, y seguramente no serán castigados, por razón de que los cuatro ladrones son Americanos, porque a estos señores todo crimen les perdonan los jueces” El Clamor Público July 3, 1855.
have come here looking for protection, and surprisingly the Senate sympathizes with them. You Senators do not listen to the complaints of the Spanish citizens. You do not sufficiently appreciate their land titles and the just right to their possessions.\(^48\)

For better or for worse, the California landscape was changing, a point that many scholars have since regarded as inevitable. In any case, this historical episode would definitively end the reign of the Californio rancho, and likewise send its Mexican and Native American workforce headlong into the next chapter of our golden state’s history — the California mines.

**The Californio Working-Class and The Foreign Miners Tax**

If the Californio landed gentry suffered territorial dispossession, the working-class Mexican American fared far worse. With neither education nor assets and with minimal skills at best, many were left to fend for themselves in the gold mines following the dissolution of the ranchos. While the Mexican American working-class miners at first remained unbothered, their advanced techniques attracted the ire of other less successful fortune seekers — most notably, Anglos.\(^49\) Indeed, as an August 19, 1850 *Daily Alta California* newspaper article clearly illustrates, such simmering animosity soon deteriorated into overt violence: “Many persons of Spanish origin, against whom there has not been a word of complaint, have been murdered by these [Anglo] ruffians. Others have been robbed of their horses, mules, arms, and even money, by these persons, while acting as they pretended under the authority of the law.”\(^50\) Although legally entitled and protected by the same vested mineral rights, Mexican Americans speculators were nonetheless singled out as displaced exiles in their own native land.

Serving previously as a news correspondent in Marysville, California — a mere forty-five miles from Sutter’s Mill and arguably the epicenter of racial hostility towards “foreign” miners — Ramírez was already uncomfortably familiar with the growing injustices suffered by Mexican American miners. It was primarily for this reason that he regularly reported these wrongdoings throughout *El Clamor Publico*’s four-year publication. In an October 2, 1855 *El Clamor Publico* article, for example, Ramírez relayed the following disturbing communiqué from abroad: “A gentlemen of Los Angeles just received a letter from the Colorado River area . . .; the writer of the letter complains bitterly of the injustices suffered by Sonoran miners at the hands of the American

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authorities of the Colorado River region.” However, Ramirez likewise posted helpful mining prospects as well as the successes of his fellow compatriots. Throughout *El Clamor Publico* are numerous intermittent asides that both publicize and celebrate the many mineral claims successfully staked by Mexican American working-class miners.

The passage of the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax brought far-reaching changes for Latinos — both economic and demographic. The most immediate was a corresponding drop in population numbers. According to José Luis Benavides, the once-numerous Latino population that “peaked in 1850” afterwards “declined rapidly [afterwards] until it practically ceased by 1854.” Unabated violence against Latino miners of all types — Peruvian, Chilean, Mexican Sonorans, as well as recently annexed Mexican Americans — was largely responsible for this shift. Even homeward-bound Latinos were targeted departing as they left the mines, sometimes being forced to pay an unauthorized exit fee to leave the state. The decreasing Latino population, however, merely resulted in a corresponding mass recruitment of working-class

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51 “Un caballero de esta cuidad acaba de recibir una carta del Rio Colorado . . . ; El escritor de la carta se queja amargamente de las injusticias que los Sonorenses reciben por las autoridades americanas del rio Colorado.” *El Clamor Público* October 2, 1855.

52 In an August 21, 1855 article, Ramirez writes: “Placeres Nuevos.—Por una persona fuímos informados que se han descubierto varios lavaderos de oro en las inmediaciones de Temécula por una partida de Sonorenses que salió de esta ciudad con el único objeto de hacer exploraciones. La distancia de aquí a Temécula es de 80 millas, dice que sacan hasta $15 diarios, y hay gran abundancia de agua” [“New Sandbanks: We have been notified by one of our informants that new mining operations have been established by a party of Sonorans in the vicinity of Temecula and that the aforementioned have ventured there for the expressed purpose of mining gold. Temecula is approximately 80 miles from here, and it is said that one can average $15 per day, and there is also an abundance of water”]. *El Clamor Público* August 21, 1855.

53 “Todavía se sacan grandes pizcas de oro en los placeres del Norte . . . ; Escribe el Republican de Stockton que un Mexicano sacó en aquel lugar una chispa de oro que valió $3,350” [“There are still large nuggets to be found on the riverbanks of Northern California . . . ; The Republican newspaper of Stockton writes that a Mexican in that region recently mined a gold nugget estimated at $3,350”]. *El Clamor Público* August 28, 1855.


55 “On the Colorado River, a United States Army lieutenant had express orders ‘to make all Sonorans passing out of California with gold, pay a duty . . . and for my trouble, to put the whole of it in my pocket.’ California militiamen blandly confiscated from homebound Sonorans more than a hundred ‘stolen’ mules and horses, ignoring the brand marks proving ownership and compelling the Mexicans to walk 300 miles, including 100 miles across desert.” Pitt 64.
Chinese “coolies” in their stead: “Before long, Chinese miners replaced the Mexicans at the bottom of the social heap,” and “by 1851[,] it was the Oriental’s turn to start paying the foreign miners’ tax.”\textsuperscript{56} And this they most certainly did. But when the original Foreign Miners Tax was later revised in 1855, which, at that point, mainly affected Chinese miners, \textit{El Clamor Público} forthrightly responded with a reproachful reprint from the \textit{Coloma Argus} newspaper: “Foreign Miners Tax: This law from previous legislation, which was recently amended in order to further raise taxes on foreign miners, is incidentally a law conceived locally and should be immediately revoked.”\textsuperscript{57} Unfortunately, the Chinese, like the Mexican Americans, were eventually despised and likewise expelled unceremoniously in 1882 — not only from the mining camps, but also from the nation altogether.\textsuperscript{58}

As I will illustrate in Part Two, retaliatory violence against people of color was not exclusively confined to the gold mines, but rather broadened outward to include disproportionate accounts of lynching and often without legal due process. During its tenure, \textit{El Clamor Público} not only captured these historical moments, but also to catalogue a near-symmetric recounting of injustices committed against the Mexican American landed gentry and working class. Such a multi-voiced, rhetorical platform envisaged a potential two-class alliance. For Ramírez, both classes were ideologically inseparable, and therefore functioned as correlating political modules that in the end could come together to forge a much-needed Latino collective. Whichever the case, it was most certainly the ongoing and brutalizing violence that finally extinguished such hopes for Ramírez, as it was frequently the middle-classes of color who were, ironically, complicit in these acts.

**Part 2: Lynchocracia: Black and Brown Inscribed Bodies**

**African American Lynching: Southern and Northern Domestic Terrorism**

In his short story, “Blood-Burning Moon,” Jean Toomer graphically depicts the horrifying murder of working-class African American, Tom Burwell, a lynching that is particularly telling in its detailed description of White mob violence:

The mob pressed in from the sides. No words. A stake was sunk into the ground. Rotting floor boards piled around it. Kerosene poured on the rotting floor boards. Tom bound to the stake. His

\textsuperscript{56} Pitt 69.

\textsuperscript{57} “Taxes de los Mineros Extrangeros: La ley de la legislatura pasada, por la cual se mando aumentar el impuesto sobre el minero extranjero, fue una ley localmente concebida ye debe ser inmediatamente revocada.” \textit{El Clamor Público} October 2, 1855.

\textsuperscript{58} The Chinese Exclusion Act; passed May 6, 1882.
breast was bare. Nails scratches let little lines of blood trickle down and mat into the hair. His face, his eyes were set and stony. Except for irregular breathing, one would have thought him already dead. Torches were flung into the pile. A great flare muffled in black smoke shot upward. The mob yelled. The mob was silent. Now Tom could be seen within the flames. Only his head, erect, lean, like a blackened stone. Stench of burning flesh soaked the air. Tom’s eyes popped. His head settled downward. The mob yelled. Its yell echoed against the skeleton stone walls and sounded like a hundred yells. Like a hundred mobs yelling. Its yell thudded against the thick front wall and fell back. Ghost of a yell slipped through the flames and out the great door of the factory.”

Although Toomer’s tale is set in the post-Reconstruction south, it nonetheless reveals the dehumanizing lethal techniques that were not only equally prevalent during Freedom’s Journal’s publication run, but also define a methodology of disfigurement that was quite specific to Black bodies. As Gonzales-Day argues in Lynching in the West, East Coast hangings were characteristically far more treacherous, frequently involving a Black victim who was brazenly mutilated, chained, burned, shot, and even blow-torched—all for the general amusement of his white tormentors.

There are numerous accounts of disfiguring violence against African Americans within the literary canon that not only predate but lead right up to the publication of Freedom’s Journal itself: Gustavus Vassa’s descriptions of continually-flogged slaves in the Middle Passage who, preferring death by suicide, hurl themselves overboard; St. Jean de Crévecoeur’s dreadful report of the caged slave who is eaten alive by insects and birds; and the frequent and savage floggings of Frederick Douglass by slavemaster Edward Covey — the “nigger-breaker” — that regularly leave Douglass welted with “marks visible for a long time after.”

59 Jean Toomer, Cane (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923) 34.
61 Gustavus Vassa, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa The African (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2007) 56: “two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea . . . . However two of the wretches were drowned, but they go the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery”; J. St. Jean Crévecoeur 163-164: “Horrid to think and painful to repeat, I perceived a negro, suspended in the cage, and left there to expire! I shudder when I recollect that the birds had already picked out his eyes, his cheek bones were bare; his arms had been attacked in several places, and his body seemed covered with a multitude of wounds. From the edges of the hollow sockets and from the lacerations with which he was disfigured, the blood slowly dropped and tinged the ground beneath . . . ; swarms of insects covered the
the early nineteenth-century, but also were for the first time journalistically documented by African Americans themselves in *Freedom’s Journal*. As James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton argue in *Hope of Liberty*, mob violence not only became increasingly prevalent in the cities of the East and Midwest during *Freedom’s Journal* tenure, but also served specifically to forewarn free African Americans that organized white labor would indeed not tolerate undue competition.  

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the 1827 Boston trial of George W. Steele vs. Allen Cooper. Both Steele, an Anglo sailor, and Cooper, a free African American mariner cook, were involved in a dispute while onboard the docked schooner *Harden* that resulted in Cooper’s flogging — for a grand total of eighty-nine lashes. Coverage of the proceedings appeared as a reprint from the *Boston Courier* in a March 30, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article and stated that investigators “found [Cooper] bruised in a horrible manner; the skin was off the back and arms in over twenty places, and he could distinctly see the three cords of a rope . . . . [The investigators] had seen persons whipped at the public whipping-post, but never anything so horrible as this.” And this *Freedom’s Journal* reprint proved invaluable, as African Americans would have been particularly hard pressed to find any coverage of white-on-Black violence in nineteenth-century periodicals.

Accounts of lynchings, eerily similar to that of Toomer’s fictional Tom Burwell of “Blood-Burning Moon,” likewise began to fill the pages of *Freedom’s Journal*. An August 3, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article, for instance, covered the murder of an African American who was tied to a tree where a “large quantity of pine” was “place around him.” Afterwards, the “fatal torch was applied to the pile,” and the unfortunate victim was, “in a short time[,] burnt to ashes.” Russwurm and Cornish conclude the article by portentously affirming that the victim’s extra-legal execution was performed without judge or jury. In another *Freedom’s Journal* article appearing on April 18, 1827, a “young [African American] man of colour” was merely “thrown” to his death “from [a] . . . steamboat” that was traveling between New York and

whole body of this unfortunate wretch, eager to feed on his mangled flesh and to drink his blood;  

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (New York: Penguin, 2005) 71 (Originally published 1845): “He ordered me to take off my clothes. I made him no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after. This whipping was the first of a number just like it, and for similar offences.”


63 *Freedom’s Journal* March 30, 1827.

64 *Freedom’s Journal* August 3, 1827.
Philadelphia. No motive was given, nor were any suspects apprehended even though witnesses were clearly present. Regarding the victim’s identity, Russwurm and Cornish ominously conclude again with a brief afterward: “Name unknown.”65 As I shall show in my next section, hate-based violence against African Americans took on numerous shocking forms, and the alleged perpetrator’s profile was not always predictably apparent.

**Kidnapping in the North: Re-selling Blacks into Slavery**

Possibly more torturous than physical death would be the re-loss of freedom through the malicious act of kidnapping — and more unbearable still if your abductor were Black. Like publicly traded commodities that can bring a profit, kidnapped Blacks were often “cashed-in” for money, regardless if the victims were legally manumitted or not. In *Freedom at Risk: The Kidnapping of Free Blacks in America: 1780-1865*, Carol Wilson states that the abducting of free Blacks was not only an “all-too-common occurrence in the United States during the decades between the Revolution and the Civil War,” but that such practice, in general, was not an historical anomaly — for either Blacks or Anglos in America.66

The initial precedent for forced abduction in America was actually established during the colonial and post-colonial eras, when the British Navy forcefully kidnapped unwilling Anglo Americans for what was then known as “impressment,” or involuntary duty. In fact, many of the original English inhabitants of the Roanoke Colony were, according to Wilson, straightforwardly lured onto ships bound for the New World—“adults [ensnared] with liquor, children with candy,” with ship captains earning “a pound or two . . . for each unwilling passenger.”67 And such practices continued to arouse the interest of unscrupulous characters in early nineteenth-century America who likewise sought quick profits.

Accounts of successful and attempted kidnappings are, in fact, plentiful in *Freedom’s Journal*, and the topic was a central concern for both Russwurm and Cornish. For example, on July 27, 1827, a reprint from the *Schuylkill Journal*, appeared in *Freedom’s Journal* stating that the Pennsylvania African American community “was in considerable commotion, in consequence of a barefaced attempt having been made to arrest, secure and carry off a coloured man, born in this town and the off-spring of free parents, under the pretext of him being a runaway southern slave.”68 Such incidences were, by and large, attributable to widespread Anglo suspicion concerning black manumission

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65 *Freedom’s Journal* April 18, 1827.
67 Wilson 3-4.
status in the free states. As mentioned earlier, the authenticity of an individual’s freedom papers were questioned, and reliable proof was many times impossible to substantiate. Worse yet, abductors often simply destroyed a kidnapping victim’s official documents.69

Even free Blacks involved in the Underground Railroad were resold into slavery — as punishment. As the following September 7, 1827 Freedom’s Journal sidebar clearly implies, individuals who coordinated transporting and relocating of runaways often shared the eventual fate of their escapees, which, if caught, usually meant immediate execution or re-enslavement: “The free persons of colour . . . convicted of harbouring two coloured children who were slaves were sold according to the sentence of the Court for $942.”70 Other articles in Freedom’s Journal continued to expose a similarly heart-rending side to kidnapping, which was the indiscriminate stealing of free African American children. In a May 4, 1827 Freedom’s Journal aside, a free African American mother from Baltimore offers “$100 for the recovery of her son, John Wallis,” who was believed to have been carried off two months earlier.71

There were likewise incidences where the actions of the so-called kidnappers are uncertain. For example, in the following August 31, 1827 Freedom’s Journal aside, it is difficult to ascertain whether the “aunt” here abducts two children out of compassion, or whether their later neglect during concealment was necessary to avoid detection altogether. In any case, the nine- and seven-year-old girls in question were eventually recovered from “between the joists of the floor of the house.” So long had they remained in closed confinement that “their skin ha[d] assumed [a] whitish appearance from the dampness and moisture” of the dwelling’s underside.72 The difficulty here of distinguishing between an actual and perceived abductor seems symbolically to parallel the indeterminate character of free African American identity itself. While not quite liberated and not quite enslaved, Black reality here is developing what W.E.B. DuBois would later term “double-consciousness” — or, the act of simultaneously accommodating two competing yet irreconcilable points of awareness.

As if manifesting “double consciousness,” African Americans found it eventually necessary to guard themselves from their own racial counterparts, or fellow brethren — some of whom fell victim to the lure of profits to be made from the sale of Black adolescents. In a June 8, 1827 Freedom’s Journal aside,

69 According to Wilson, abduction attempts were apparently conducted with seeming impunity: “In the eyes of most whites, all blacks were presumed to be slaves unless they could demonstrate otherwise, and providing legal proof was often impossible. Not all blacks carried freedom papers, and those who were kidnapped had often been robbed of their papers.” Wilson 7.

70 Freedom’s Journal September 7, 1827.
71 Freedom’s Journal May 4, 1827.
72 Freedom’s Journal August 31, 1827.
the following warning was posted for all the community to see: “A man of colour, calling himself John Purned from Snow-hill, Md. has been arrested in Boston, charged by the proclamation of the Mayor of Philadelphia with stealing free coloured children from that city and selling them for slaves.” While free African Americans may have attempted to avoid entrapment, enslaved females, by contrast, faced a different fate altogether that many times was nearly impossible to escape.

**Black Women: Dehumanization through Rape**

One of the foremost fears troubling former-slave, Harriet Ann Jacobs, author of her 1858 autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, was the real probability of white readership rejection. Finding it impossible to deter the sexual advances of her master, Dr. James Norcom, the highly religious Jacobs reluctantly mothered two children (out of wedlock) with Anglo lawyer, Samuel Treadwell Sawyer, in an act of defiance and retaliation against Norcom. Apologetically explaining her predicament, Jacobs states:

> I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair . . . But the condition of a slave confuses all principles of morality, and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible.  

As clearly evidenced in this excerpt, bodily violence for African American women unquestionably included not only physical dehumanization but also, at the same time, extended far beyond it. Much like Josefa Segovia, who single-handedly vanquished her would-be-rapist with the mortal thrust of a dagger, Jacobs likewise acts independently and outwits the advances of her master, although through altogether different means. Both circumventive measures equally underscore the fact that the boundaries transgressed here were not only deeply sacred and psychological, but also central to their indomitable sense of female self-determination.

Like Abigail Adams before and Margaret Fuller after, *Freedom’s Journal*’s African American female contributor, Matilda, likewise championed

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73 *Freedom’s Journal* June 8, 1827.
76 “If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me, and accuse me of vanity, But you I know have a mind too enlarged and
the role of the self-determined and properly instructed female. But education here must have also entailed far more strategies for survival and self-defense than either Adams or Fuller could have possibly presumed as eighteenth and nineteenth-century, middle-class Anglo women. According to Sandra Gunning in *Race, Rape, and Lynching*, Black women were frequent victims of Anglo sexual aggression precisely because the Black female body was correspondingly criminalized as co-equivalent to the Black male rapist and thus, in technical and cultural terms, “could never [actually] be raped.” Moreover, if the resistant female slave died during rape or the rendering of physical punishment, the master was in any event legally authorized to collect a “compensatory refund” from the government remunerating his property losses.

Hinged upon these legal statutes were the so-called practical and commercial considerations of restocking the labor force. According to Deborah Gray White, the market-based incentives for breeding a potentially competitive work force were especially evident in the American South: “Once [American] slaveholders realized that the reproductive function of the female slave could yield a profit, the manipulation of the procreative sexual relations became an integral part of the sexual exploitation of female slaves.” Not only were Black women physically subjugated and reduced to impregnation machines, their associated domestic roles were also all the more confined and limited. Female slave duties in the American South were, Gray White adds, almost exclusively linked to child rearing, an arrangement that all the more reinforced her liberal to disregard the Sentiment. If much depends as is allowed upon the early Education of youth and the first principals which are instilled take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women.” Abigail Adams, *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams* (New York: Penguin, 2003, August 14, 1776) 214; “It is therefore that I would have woman lay aside all thought, such as she habitually cherishes, of being taught and led by men. . . . I would have her free from compromise, from complaisance, from helplessness, because I would have her good enough and strong enough to love one and all beings, from the fullness, not the poverty of being. Men, as at present instructed, will not help this work, because they also are under the slavery of habit.” Margaret Fuller and Jeffrey Steele, *The Essential Margaret Fuller* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1995) 312.

77 Matilda prefaces this *Freedom’s Journal* commentary with the following question: “Will you allow a female to offer a few remarks upon a subject that you must allow to be all-important[—]the topic of women’s education[?]” *Freedom’s Journal* August 10, 1827.


definitive role as a surrogate caretaker of an ever-replenishing labor force.\(^{81}\) And although some females were indeed authorized to wed slave husbands, their spouses could neither ward off nor prevent the Anglo overseer’s episodes of sexual exploitation.\(^{82}\) As I will demonstrate in the following section, Anglo-based violence did not remain ethnically or geographically localized, but instead traversed westward, following Manifest Destiny’s inevitable path and enveloping new dark-skinned victims in the process.

**A Hidden History: Mexican American Lynching in California**

In a July 12, 1856 *El Clamor Publico* editorial, Ramírez issued the following counsel to his Mexican American readership: “Just a little more patience, Mexican people, and resist contemplating any kind of retribution that would lower us to the level of our persecutors.”\(^{83}\) In actuality, this admonition was posted as a posse of armed Mexicans was allegedly planning a combined retaliatory counter-attack in northern California for the recent hangings of several innocent Latinos. In his latest pioneering effort, *Lynching in the West: 1850-1935*, Ken Gonzales-Day argues that extra-legal punishment of this type was not only commonly practiced in the west, but Latinos in particular were disproportionately affected. What makes Gonzales-Day’s text so pertinent to this study is its underlying thesis of rethinking the historical prevalence of Latino persecution in California. I state this because, of the two latest authoritative texts on lynching, Christopher Waldrep’s *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch* (2004) and Philip Dray’s *At the Hands of Persons Unknown* (2003), neither covers Mexican lynching in any depth, if at all. As Gonzales-Day aptly responds, “it is hoped that this new information will contribute to the understanding of lynching and correct the common misconception that African Americans, Europeans, or European Americans were the only persons to be summarily executed or lynched in California.”\(^{84}\) Even a cursory glance at *El Clamor Publico’s* numerous editorials regarding nineteenth-century violence would have revealed immediately rather extensive accounts of Mexican American extra-legal lynchings.

What contributed most to this historical omission? The answer may be the national records themselves. That is, while the Tuskegee Institute may have successfully compiled an extensive and noteworthy database on lynching, the overarching range of ethnicities represented within its catalog is nonetheless narrow. Mexican American victims are themselves nearly absent from its records. Moreover, William Carrigan’s recent scholarship regarding

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\(^{81}\) Gray White 69.

\(^{82}\) Gray White 153.

\(^{83}\) “Un poco mas paciencia mexicano, y dejad de pensar en un procedimiento que [n]os rebajaria al nivel de [n]uestros perseguidores.” *El Clamor Público* July 12, 1856.

\(^{84}\) Gonzales-Day 47.
this topic has shed some significant light on the comparative lynching rates of both African Americans and Mexican Americans, revealing another surprising fact altogether. As Carrigan states:

Between 1848 and 1879 Mexicans were lynched at a rate of 473 per 100,000 of population. This statistic is astounding even when compared with African American victims during the period scholars claim was most rife with mob-violence — 1880-1930 — and in the most lynch-prone states in the South. During these years, the highest lynching rate for African Americans was in Mississippi, with 52.8 victims per 100,000 of population . . . . Our research reveals . . . that the danger of lynching for a Mexican resident in the United States was nearly as great, and in some instances greater, than the specter of mob violence for a black person in the American South.”

My purpose here is not to pit one group against the other, but to illuminate a little-known but important historical fact that would in turn demonstrate definitively how both Mexican and African Americans — in different time periods, and in different geographic zones, and with varying bodily hues — were equally linked as dangerous, taboo and unlawful subjects. As I shall demonstrate, against these hanging bodies white privilege was inscribed, measured and formulated.

So frequent was the rate of Latino hangings in California that Mexican Americans alone comprise an historic list of firsts and lasts in this category. For example, the first female hanged in California history was a Mexican American woman by the name of Josefa Segovia; she would later earn the additional distinction of becoming the only woman ever hanged in California. After murdering an Anglo would-be-rapeist in self-defense, she was quickly “arrested, tried, sentenced, and hung within several hours’ time.” Reportedly a courageous woman of noted honor and respect, she defiantly arranged the noose around her own neck. When asked for a final testimony, Josefa was poignantly brief: “Nothing; but I would do the same again if I was so provoked.” Moments later, her body hung lifelessly from the scaffold.

The first execution in Los Angeles, California, occurred on February 10, 1854 when Ygnacio Herrera, “a well-respected Mexican soldier,” was convicted of murder. Not only had Mexican American Angelinos “believed his execution to be unjust,” but it also marked a turning point where Latinos began to perceive this biased form of punishment as an ideological co-extension of racist maltreatment. On the day of Herrera’s hanging, “thousands of spectators streamed into town.” Up until that time, no Anglo had ever been legally put to

85 Carrigan 414.
86 Gonzales-Day 187.
87 Gonzales-Day 187.
death in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{88} Conversely, the last men to be publicly executed and hanged in the City of Angels were Rodolfo Silvas and Francisco Martinez. A March 21, 1885 \textit{Los Angeles Daily Times} editorial had reported that between six and eight thousand spectators “blackened the hills” to witness the curious death spectacle.\textsuperscript{89}

By this time, however, condemned racialized men and women in mid-nineteenth-century America had become routinely objectified — frozen into public cultural consciousness, as it were — through the frequent use of postcards. Etched onto 5” x 8.5” cardstock, Silvas’ death portrait was sold as memorabilia to inquisitive onlookers. Interestingly, his photo print still remains on reserve today at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History for the morbidly curious. Similarly, the 4.25” x 6.5” cardstock photo of famed outlaw, Tiburcio Vasquez, is also available for viewing at the California Historical Society. In fact, pre-execution photos of this type had become so popular that they correspondingly pathologized the racial body — and the Mexican American body, in particular — as a self-evident antecedent to social disorder, and even social de-evolution. As I have argued in previous sections, however, \textit{El Clamor Público}'s role in rhetorically countering these cultural inventions cannot be stressed enough. Most certainly, Ramírez not only editorially exposed such hidden presumptions of Latino-based lawlessness, but also in many cases actively reversed or \textit{inverted} this pathologizing process by comparatively showcasing nineteenth-century acts of Anglo barbarism. Despite these efforts, the Mexican American nevertheless continued to serve as a justifying rationale for the fanatical use of violence, as I shall demonstrate in the following section.

\textbf{Judge Lynch: The Myth of Necessary Frontier Justice}

Perhaps nowhere else is lynching mythologized more than in the widely numbered historical accounts of how the West was apparently settled. In these same accounts, lynching is more or less consistently contextualized as a necessary extra-legal means that temporarily superseded and replaced a more formal legal process that was afterwards instated. However, Gonzales-Day’s research informs us “contrary to the popular image of the American West as a lawless frontier, it was those areas with the most law enforcement that had the greatest number of summary executions, vigilance committees, and lynch mobs.”\textsuperscript{90} Not only were properly established legal proceedings operable in California circa 1850, but vigilante mobs also murdered Latinos — regardless

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Gonzales-Day 70.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} Harrison Gray Otis, ed., \textit{Los Angeles Daily Times} (1881–Present) March 21, 1885.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Gonzales-Day 76.
\end{itemize}
of due process — in areas that already had fully employed peace officers as well as judges.91

Often working in conjunction with lynch mobs and many times joining their ranks, deputized vigilance committees were originally established throughout the West as a paralegal adjunct force. A July 12, 1851 Sonora Herald newspaper (Sonora, California) commentary quoted the Sonora Vigilance Committee (a group comparable to today’s Minutemen) as upholding the following principles: “We are not opposing ourselves to the courts of justice already organized. We are simply aiding them or doing work which they should do, but which under the imperfect laws of the state, they are unable to accomplish.”92 The press, for the aforementioned reasons, likewise championed the San Francisco Vigilance Committee (SFVC), one of the most organized and influential in the west. Unlike El Clamor Público, Anglo periodicals such as the Los Angeles Star instead regularly emphasized the regimented character of the SFVC, often noting its leadership, which many times was comprised of leading San Francisco Bay Area townspeople.93

As admirable as these vigilance committees may have been perceived, Gonzales-Day’s close historical examination paints a rather different, if not disconcerting, picture. Regarding legal due process, Gonzales-Day found the apparent actions of either formerly organized vigilance committees (such as the SFVC) or informally organized lynch mobs became, after awhile, indistinguishable.94 Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe’s The Shirley Letters: From the California Mines, 1851-1852 not only clearly reveals this pattern, but also underscores the collective fate awaiting an estimated 1,300 native Latino miners in California. Although guaranteed equal access to the gold mines via the Treaty of Guadalupe of Hidalgo, many Latinos nonetheless deserted their mineral claims en masse fearing for their lives.95 Those who stayed risked almost certain persecution, if not death. Recalling the beating and subsequent hanging of “five or six Spaniards”96 along the Feather River, Smith Clappe writes,

These sentences were unnecessarily severe, yet so great was the rage and excitement of the crowd that the Vigilance Committee could do no less . . . . Oh Mary! Imagine my anguish when I heard the first blow fall upon those wretched men. I had never thought

91 Gonzales-Day 7, 76.
92 John White and John G. Marvin, eds., Sonora Herald (1850-67) July 12, 1851.
93 Gonzales-Day 89.
94 Gonzales-Day 91.
95 Almaguer 69.
96 The term ‘Spaniard’ was often used in mid-nineteenth-century California to describe any individual of Latino descent, to include Mexican Americans, Peruvians, Spaniards, and Chileans (as well as others of Hispanic descent).
that I should be compelled to hear such fearful sounds, and, although I immediately buried my head in a shawl, nothing can efface from memory the disgust and horror of that moment. I had heard of such things, but heretofore had not realized that in the nineteenth century men could be beaten like dogs, much less that other men . . . could sentence such barbarism.”

Although initially an advocate of temporary, well-administered vigilance committees, Ramírez soon expressed outrage over the sheer number and frequency of Mexican American lynchings in California, and most particularly Los Angeles. According to Gray, as the extra-legal killings intensified, “it appeared for a time that Los Angeles was on the brink of a race war.” After the highly controversial 1856 murder of D. Antonio Ruiz by W.W. Jenkins, the City of Angels was indeed approaching racial meltdown. In the following July 26, 1856 *El Clamor Publico* editorial, Ramirez apparently seeks to neutralize what appears to be a potential Mexican American armed revolt: “It is becoming a growing and alarming custom to assassinate and abuse Mexicans with impunity. Mexicans, as a consequence, are presently sick and tired of the insults and injustices that they have up to now endured: but to appeal these injustices with arms is not reasonable. We wish instead for the return of peace.” Unfortunately, the tranquility of pre-conquest California was, for Mexican Americans, both forever shattered and irretrievably lost.

Despite the possible dangers involved in reporting extra-legal killings, lynching remained a recurring topic in *El Clamor Público*. Moreover, Ramirez firmly situated lynching as a manifestation of larger imperialist forces, specifically the ongoing territorial dispossession of the Mexican American landed gentry. In doing so, he linked the concerns of both class-based groups into a single rhetorical rebuttal. But in the end, it was the open exhibition of lifeless, dangling racial bodies that for Ramirez symbolized far more than death itself. It was the psychosocial implications of the act of lynching that ultimately bothered the brave editor. It signified a boundary crossing that, in the history of American violence, would never be re-corrected.


98 Ramírez at first advocated the formation of vigilance committees, but only as an initial measure that would protect Latinos from what was fast becoming a wholesale lynching spree.


100 “Se esta haciéndose una costumbre muy común asesinar y ultrajar a los Mexicanos impunemente. Estos por consiguiente ya están cansados de tantos atropellamientos y injusticias que han sufrido: pero tomar las armas para pedir remedio a sus males, es un hecho no muy en razon. Deseamos que se restablezca la paz.” *El Clamor Público* July 26, 1856.

101 Paz Brownrigg 40.
Part 3: Imperialist Desires: Nation Building through Slavery, Free Labor Competition, and Filibustering

On the Backs of Slaves: Deconstructing the Economic Rationale for Slavery

While the “accounts . . . of the horrors of slavery” may have been peculiarly brief in Freedom’s Journal, what was instead included was judicious coverage of slavery that attempted rhetorically to deconstruct its ideological and economic underpinnings. For this reason, anti-slavery arguments found in Freedom’s Journal are often economic in nature — demonstrating that Manifest Destiny likewise required enslaved Black bodies as the principal propellant of nation-building. Not only had the slave economy flourished in the Southeast, but the latter procurement of the Southwest was philosophically founded on the well-received presumption that this system should similarly “expand beyond the South” and into “the newly acquired territories west of the original thirteen colonies.” This precise discursive transition — or juncture — defines the interconnectivity between Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público — especially as it relates to their ongoing dialog regarding both slavery and territorial acquisition.

Throughout Freedom’s Journal’s run in late 1820s, free African Americans began — for the first time — to participate early on in the slavery debate. Inquiries regarding the economic viability and sustainability of slavery itself were particularly common from Freedom’s Journal contributors. One June 8, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article, for example, carefully examined the cumulative costs associated with the slave enterprise. Adding the “expense of rearing children” with additional operational requirements, the commentator compares these aggregated expenditures with the estimated operating overhead of an Anglo free-labor farm. By calculating the costs versus output, the author here not only questions the underlying economic justifications for slavery but also indirectly advocates for the eventual overturning of its continuation altogether.

A closely related critique found in Freedom’s Journal had to do with types of incentives required to produce effective labor output, and whether the slave system undermined economic motivation on the whole. In an August 17, 1827 article, a contributor takes on this issue by deconstructing the economic

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102 Bacon 210. Adding to this, Bacon likewise observes that “accounts in Freedom’s Journal of the horrors of slavery were brief at times, yet they [likewise] vividly revealed the system’s brutality and capriciousness.” Bacon 212.


104 Freedom’s Journal June 8, 1827.
mechanisms required to induce production psychologically. He states that “when this drudge is a slave, no motive but fear can operate on his diligence and attention.”

Constant supervisorial oversight and degrading punishment is, according to the author, required to make up for the naturally occurring competitive drive of a free laborer. Another contributor, agreeing with the aforementioned argument, deduces in a September 14, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article that “slave labour has never been able to maintain its ground in competition with free labour” and that “such has been the opinion of the most eminent philosophers.” The reference here to “eminent philosophers” is perhaps intentional. For example, in Theory of Incentives, Martimort and Laffont argues that Scottish philosopher, Adam Smith (widely cited as the father of modern-day economics), expressly advances a hypothesis regarding the “incentive deficiency” of slavery in his well-known Wealth of Nations (1776). According to Smith,

the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any. A person who can acquire no property can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible. Whatever work [the slave] does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance can be squeezed out . . . by violence only, and not by any interest of his own.

Concurring with Adam’s assessment above, an August 17, 1827 Freedom’s Journal editorial likewise supported the “incentive deficiency” theory by citing behavioral patterns in slaves such as laziness and indifference that, while having some basis in observational fact, also highlighted mannerisms that, unfortunately, Anglos would later appropriate to characterize African Americans negatively.

Anti-slavery arguments in Freedom’s Journal also attempted to more directly compare the net effectiveness of African American field slaves to free African American farmers, with particular attention paid to the measured

105 Freedom's Journal August 17, 1827.
106 Freedom's Journal September 14, 1827.
109 “This undoubted and indisputable fact must be still more strongly impressed on the mind of every one who has been in the habit of seeing the manner in which slaves perform their daily labor. This indifference and the extreme slowness of every movement plainly point out the trifling interest which they have in the advancement of the work” as they are “always actively turning hand and foot . . ., singing, joking, and laughing.” Freedom's Journal August 17, 1827.
industriousness of liberated Blacks — proof that the principles of monetary incentive functioned equally for individuals of any color. For instance, a June 1, 1827 Freedom's Journal article celebrated the innate industriousness that was clearly evident in a nearby free African American settlement in New York. There, the author contends, one would be “astonished to behold the works that have been accomplished within a few years by the industry and enterprise of a free [Black] population. Their well cultivated fields, their populous towns, and their prosperous villages have sprung up with a rapidity that seems the work of enchantment, and they are still progressing with a pace accelerated by the assurance of success.”

If, as Barrington Moore argues in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, the cause for civil war in American was the competing ascension of free labor capitalism, then free African Americans were clearly determined to be a part of it.

Not only was the net-productivity of free African American farmers hailed over the slave system, but expressed plans to accommodate and promote Black agrarian entrepreneurship were published numerous times in Freedom's Journal. Evidence of this is found in a recurring advertisement that first appeared in April 18, 1827 where Cornish (along with an unspecified colleague) publicized the following announcement:

LAND FOR SALE: The subscriber is authorized to offer to his coloured brethren 2000 Acres of excellent Land, at less than one half its value, provided they will take measures to settle, or have it settled, by coloured farmers . . . . The land is of the best quality and well timbered. The subscriber hopes that some of his [African American] brethren who are capitalists will at least invest 500 or 1,000 dollars in these lands . . . . [H]e thinks such a settlement, formed by coloured families, would be conducive of much good.

SAMUEL E. CORNISH.

Perhaps aiming to develop similar settlements, slave owners like Colonel Ward of Virginia also set aside land on which approximately one hundred and fifty of his newly-emancipated slaves eventually settled, as a May 4, 1827 Freedom's Journal aside reported. A May 11, 1827 Freedom's Journal article reported that, in a similar case, philanthropist, Frances Wright, founded a Tennessee settlement with the specific and “benevolent design” of affording asylum to slaves. More than a mere refuge, however, Wright’s immense endowment of

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10 Freedom's Journal June 1, 1827.
112 Freedom's Journal August 18, 1827.
113 Freedom's Journal May 4, 1827.
nineteen hundred acres would also establish domestic and vocational training programs designed to develop appropriate commerce-based behavior. 114

Russwurm likewise argued for specific conduct-based requirements that he believed were necessary in order to fully incorporate the former-slave into the mindset of an incentive-based person within a capitalist system. As William Brewer argues, Russwurm abhorred the stultifying effects of slavery precisely because it habituated African Americans to accept their circumstances unconcernedly — a trait that he believed, in turn, “destroyed every semblance of [economic] ambition.” 115 Linking this mindset to the progression of southwestern Manifest Destiny, Russwurm argues that it is the slave’s “lack of force of character,” in particular, which undermines “the bold and manly vigor which is carrying our white brethren to the West, to Texas, to Canada, and every nook and corner of the wide globe.” 116 Other editorials in Freedom’s Journal similarly associated economic aptitude with not only Black evolutionary progress but also with the added potential of nullifying racist social relations, as the following July 5, 1827 article by African American businessman and entrepreneur, Austin Steward, makes clear:

Fly then, fly from idleness, as from imminent and inevitable destruction: but in vain will you labor unless prudence and economy preside over and direct all your exertions. Remember at all times, that money, even in your [free African American] hands, is power: with it you may direct as you will the actions of your proud brethren — the pale [Anglo] population of the country! 117

But even if it were logistically plausible to retrain and reintegrate former slaves into the general populace, the ensuing Civil War proved that, in the end, the southern states either lacked the intention or political will to do so. What is instead historically documented is the South’s rather complex plans for the eventual transplantation of all freed slaves outside of the continental United States altogether — a topic I will cover in Chapter Three. Regardless, the actual experience of an ex-slave within a heavily Anglo free labor market was many times fraught with difficulties, to say the least. More often than not, however, it was simply outright dangerous.

On the Backs of Non-Slaves: Deconstructing the Economic Rationale in Favor of Free Labor

There were numerous supporters in Freedom’s Journal who not only experienced similar dilemmas but also critically praised Douglass’s account

114 Freedom’s Journal May 11, 1827.
116 Brewer 418-419.
117 Freedom’s Journal July 5, 1827.
below as representative of the difficulties to be encountered in the Anglo free labor market. In the subsequent excerpt, Frederick Douglass recounts his re-introduction into society as a moderately skilled carpenter following years of bondage:

The facts in the case were these: Until a very little while after I went there, white and black ship-carpenters worked side by side, and no one seemed to see any impropriety in it. All hands seemed to be very well satisfied. Many of the black carpenters were freemen. Things seemed to be going on very well. All at once, the white carpenters knocked off, and said they would not work with free colored workmen. Their reason for this, as alleged, was, that if free colored carpenters were encouraged, they would soon take the trade into their own hands, and poor white men would be thrown out of employment... My fellow-apprentices very soon began to feel it degrading to them to work with me. They began to put on airs, and talk about the "niggers" taking the country, saying we all ought to be killed; and, being encouraged by the journeymen, they commenced making my condition as hard as they could, by hectoring me around, and sometimes striking me.

Explaining perhaps part of this opposition are economic historical arguments, such as Laird Bergad’s in The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States, which contends that, by the early-nineteenth century, slavery had become somewhat outmoded and largely incompatible with the emergent free wage labor system from the North, the latter being a socioeconomic contract more suited to industrial expansion. The sudden appearance of a free and competitive Black labor force, part of which directly resulted from vigorous abolitionist political activity, was not entirely based on benevolent designs alone, but on rather a nationalist desire to modernize the economy in ways that reflected both increased efficiency and productivity.

As Manifest Destiny propelled United States industry westward, along with it came parallel Anglo objections towards a growing and inevitable free Black workforce that likewise wished to participate as enterprising subjects of capitalism. In California alone, for instance, strong objections to both African American free laborers and slaves alike were clearly articulated in its first constitutional convention in 1849. In extolling the virtues of the Anglo free

118 Experiencing the mounting and often violent opposition of white free laborers, a commentator wrote in an April 18, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article “that in this land of freedom,” Anglo “journeymen in most of the arts have combined together not to work with the man of colour, whatever may be his character and qualifications.” Freedom’s Journal April 18, 1827.
119 Douglass 56.
laborer, conventional delegate Oliver M. Wozencraft himself wholly rejected the proposed importation of free Blacks, claiming that such a presence would altogether hinder the evolutionary advancement of Anglo-based progress in the western states. A March 15, 1848 Californian editorial echoed similar sentiments, stating, “we desire only a White population in California,” in essence reflecting the mounting concerns regarding not only an all-Anglo free labor force in the golden state, but its unconditional preservation as well.

The principal characteristics that differentiated pre- and post-conquest California were most assuredly economic in nature. However, if the feudal-based or so-called outdated Californio economic system was resolutely replaced by Anglo-based free capitalism, Blacks were, without question, excluded as potential economic competitors in this new visionary social scheme. Such were the overall hostilities towards free Black competition in California, for example, that African Americans planning to relocate to the newly settled west were urged to avoid San Francisco altogether “and to go instead to [still heavily Mexican-influenced] Los Angeles, which was considered a ‘good town for colored folks.’” For those African Americans who yet dared to brave their fellow white free labor activists in San Francisco, their eventual decision to retreat and relocate to less-hostile Alameda County contributed ultimately to the historic formation of Oakland’s present-day Black population.

Further attempts to discourage African American westward migration resulted in a series of unsuccessful yet draconian California state legislation that proposed prohibiting free Black settlement in 1850, 1851, 1855, and 1857. As both slave and free African Americans came under increasing attack for purportedly undercutting the economic prospects of unemployed European gold miners, one final effort to restrict Black immigration into California was sponsored by Assemblyman J.B. Warfield in 1858. The near-passage of this bill alone resulted in the northward retreat of hundreds of African Americans. Instead of migrating southward to Los Angeles like their former contemporaries, however, these self-exiles instead relocated to Canada, taking an entire fifteen percent of the total California African American population with them.

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122 The Californian March 15, 1848.
123 Almaguer 30.
124 M. Rudolph Lapp, Afro-Americans in California (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Co., 1979) 27.
125 Almaguer 41.
126 Almaguer 38.
127 Almaguer 38.
As we shall see later in Chapter Three, the actual origins of resistance toward free Black economic competition did not originate in California, but began much earlier — in the southeastern United States generally, and particularly in Virginia with the founding of the American Colonization Society. In fact, free Black competition came to be so feared that both state and nationwide proposals for the forced relocation of ex-slaves abroad — to neither Los Angeles nor Canada, but to Liberia, Africa — became increasingly popular. For these reasons and more the underlying presumptions of the abolitionist freedom movement of the North not only became complicated but also suspect altogether, as a June 29, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article aptly argues: “even the few who have escaped the iron fetters [of slavery] find their freedom to consist rather in name than in reality” in the North. Such ironies of democracy continued with the unrelenting expansion of the American empire, eventually enveloping new peoples of color into its matrix of legal and cultural contradictions.

**Land Grab: William Walker & the Pirates of the Caribbean**

To say that Francisco Ramírez was concerned with America’s restless empire building is an understatement. A competent trilinguist himself, Ramírez frequently kept abreast by reading across a wide spectrum of political debate in Spanish, English and French, focusing particularly on the ongoing United States’ efforts to acquire huge portions of Central and Latin America. As Nicolas Kanellos has argued, it was “precisely because of Ramírez’s Spanish-English-French trilingualism” and the continual availability of “newspapers from throughout the hemisphere” that he was ultimately able to cultivate and argumentatively demonstrate a “broad understanding of the intentions and effects of U.S. imperialism on Mexico, Central America, and the rest of the hemisphere to the South.” Moreover, as the sole editor of a four-page weekly, Ramírez routinely read and translated from up to fifty separate periodicals delivered to him by steamboat from all parts of the globe. These newspapers familiarized the young editor with the latest filibustering activities then occurring in Central and South America — land grab activities that Ramírez viewed as a co-extension of the then-recent 1848 takeover of northern Mexico.

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129 Freedom’s Journal June 29, 1827.
131 “. . . diarios de todas partes del mundo . . . que algunas veces se leen cincuenta periódicos sin que tengan ni una línea digna de copiarse . . . —[un] trabajo oneroso y despiifarrado.” “. . . daily newspapers from all parts of the globe . . . , sometimes reading up to fifty newspapers without finding one
A recurring target of Ramírez’s editorial critiques was nineteenth-century raider, William Walker, the self-appointed president of Nicaragua (July 1856) who ultimately sought to expand American slave-holding territories through the attempted colonization of portions of Mexico, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. According to historian Robert E. May, “slavery’s field of battle lay in the tropics, [for] the only way to ‘strengthen slavery,’ the only way to reverse the Republican Party’s attempt to confine slavery and thus gradually destroy it . . . was for Southerners to force their institutions into Central America,” thereby establishing an extended southerly safeguard zone of slave-friendly provinces. Such imperialist intentions were already apparent to Ramírez when he reprinted Buchanan’s 1856 presidential campaign promise to appropriate Texas, Mexico and Latin America as alternative slave-holding territories. In the aforementioned September 27, 1856 El Clamor Público article, Buchanan not only explicitly affirms such expansionist designs, but does so by appealing to the racist rationalization that both Latinos and American slaves would categorically coexist in a potentially annexed Latin America simply because of their like complexions.

The regional sequestering or corralling of dark-skinned nationalities above is important because it underscores what historian Felix Gutiérrez’s has argued, which is that while the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo may have officially terminated all military operations, it also simultaneously ushered in the beginning of a cultural system of domination based on Eurocentric racial categorizations. Having personally witnessed the aftereffects of the fated Anglo seizure of power in Los Angeles, Ramírez comparatively likens Walker’s foray in Central America to a similar and continuing tradition of Anglo-based buccaneering — and with good reason. As Kanellos has aptly demonstrated, the Mexican American “Californios were not exceptional,” in their territorial capitulation “to the United States,” in so far as “they were just like their

potential line to translate . . . —a very arduous and sometimes fruitless task.”] El Clamor Público August 21, 1855.


133 “La adquisición de Texas sean los medios de retirar gradualmente a los esclavos hacia al Sur, a un clima mas congenial con su naturaleza; y pasaran finalmente a México, y allí se juntarán con un raza en donde ninguna preocupación existe con su color[---]Españoles, Indios y Negros, mezclados unos con otros en toda variedad.” (“The acquisition of Texas can possibly be a means by which we gradually relocate U.S. slaves further South, a climate more congenial to their nature; there we can possibly move them further into Mexico, where they can be integrated with a people for whom color concerns are non-existent--Spanish, Native-American and Blacks, all mixed one with another in all manner of variety”). El Clamor Público September 27, 1856.

brother *tejanos* and *nuevomexicanos* who had [likewise] become colonized and oppressed under American imperialist expansion.” It was, therefore, frequently assumed during Ramirez time that the remainder of Latin America would — sooner or later — fall in similar fashion.

Neither Walker’s piracy nor America’s southwest imperialist takeover, however, evolved in an epistemological vacuum. Both were rather historically preceded by popular nineteenth-century travel accounts that described a territory ripe for the taking. Dana’s *Two Years Before the Mast*, for instance, both enjoyed sustained and far-reaching fame and was also devotedly consumed by would-be settlers who considered its content accurate. Long a champion of manifest destiny, Dana repeatedly denounces Mexicans as lacking entrepreneurial vision and conversely praised Anglo Americans as possessing superior industrial ingenuity. Contemplating California’s potential under Anglo economic and political control, Dana excitedly proclaims: “in the hands of an enterprise people, what a country this might be!” Similarly, Alfred Robinson, an American businessman in pre-conquest California who also married into the prominent de la Guerra Mexican family, likewise expressed disapproving sentiments in 1829 when he wrote that Californios, “having lived a life of indolence without any aspiration . . . , naturally fall behind their more energetic [American] successors,” and can therefore apparently do nothing but “idly . . . marvel at the “bustle and enterprise of the new [Anglo] world before them, with its go-aheadativeness and push-on keep-moving celebrity.”

Even after the California conquest was complete — when Anglo political and economic institutions were already firmly in place — disparaging accounts of supposed Latino economic lethargy continued unabated. Newspaper accounts, such as an October 4, 1873 *Ventura Weekly Signal* editorial, for example, unrelentingly argued that it was in fact Mexican intellectual apathy that precluded the southwest region from assuming the enterprising grandeur that Anglo America would, by genetic disposition, naturally beget.

135 Kanellos “Resisting the American Empire” 15.
137 Henry Dana, Jr. 157.
139 “Although we obtained this land by conquest, it would seem to be a good thing to secure it with all its possibilities from a people that have shown so little appreciation of its worth . . . ; Yankee genius and enterprise has done more for this country than four hundred years under the reign of the lazy greaser, stunted in growth and benighted in intellect.” John Bradley, ed., *Ventura Weekly Signal* (1873-79) October 4, 1873; November 9, 1879.
By at least the 1850s, two circulating presumptions were foremost in American minds. The first is that indigenous populations of the underdeveloped world were fundamentally incapable of establishing desirable government systems. The second is that Anglo-American commerce-based markets could not only regenerate third-world institutions but could likewise restore its inhabitants to a level consistent with God’s manifest vision for world progress.  

Ramírez continually questioned and challenged this imperialist “new world order” in *El Clamor Público*— especially as it related to Walker’s “ungodly” acts of plundering in Central America.

But it was through his continual coverage of Walker that Ramírez also redefined for Californios the concept of a transnational Latino community. By thoroughly understanding the mechanics of empire building at home and abroad, Ramírez ultimately redrew the terms by which Latino oppression was recognized by editorializing the larger international struggles that interconnected the pan-Latino body politic. As Kanellos rightly argues, it was Ramírez’s desire to “embrace the broadest Hispanic constituency possible, in opposition to the Colossus of the North,” and in doing so, raise the collective consciousness by actively contextualizing the current political disequilibrium Californios were then experiencing. What is perhaps most dynamic about Ramírez’s political editorials, however, is that — taken together — they form a collective narrative that endeavors to address, simultaneously and discursively, both Mexican American elite and working-class concerns. Perhaps for this reason more than a few Californios identified with an April 26, 1856 *El Clamor Público* reprint of a proclamation from Guaymas, Mexico that outlined its intention to protect its inner territories militarily from any further United States filibustering incursions: “Comrades! Our enemies to the North want to take away this land, to appropriate its grand natural resources. Let’s prepare to entomb them in the very same grave they expected to find buried treasure. The motherland calls us. Will you not heed her call?”

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141 In an August 28, 1855 *El Clamor Público* commentary, Ramírez argues, “el instinto pirático de los antiguos Anglo-Saxones esta activo todavía” [“the piracy instinct of the Anglo-Saxons of the past is still alive today”]. Especially regarding Walker’s escapades in Central America, he adds that “nadie excepto un asesino y ladrón se juntaria con el para conquistar a un pais [Nicaragua] pacifico y honrado” [“nobody except a murderer and thief would join him so as to conquer a respectable and peace-loving nation”] *El Clamor Público* August 28, 1855.

142 Kanellos “Resisting the American Empire” 11, 12.

143 “Compatriotas! Nuestros enemigos quieren quitarnos este suelo, quieren apoderarse de sus inmensas riquezas. Preparaos a abrirlles un sepulcro donde esperan encontrar una fortuna . . . . La patria nos llama. ¿No acudieris a su llamamiento?” *El Clamor Público* August 26, 1856.
and the almost assured subjugation of working-class Mexicans afterwards that marks *El Clamor Público's* journalistic approach as unique.

While clearly ahead of his time, Ramírez was nevertheless not the only United States journalist who recognized the need to expose and critically deconstruct American imperial power. In a May 31, 1856 *El Clamor Público* article, for instance, Ramírez translated and reprinted the following excerpt from *The Chronicle* — “unos de los mejores diarios Americano de California” [“one of the best English-language daily newspapers in California”]. Aptly summarizing the damaging costs of filibustering, this excerpt ominously predicts the cultural and regional tensions that would inevitably envelope both Mexicans and Anglos — and which persist to this very day:

> Soon the far-reaching effects of filibustering will begin to dawn on us — but this is perhaps something we should have become cognizant of long ago. It seems as if the entire Hispanic race has now become completely antagonistic toward America. The damage done to Cuba, Baja California and Central America [Nicaragua] has made the name American detestable in these regions. And no small portion of this intense hatred . . . comes as the result of our filibustering activities . . . . We as a nation are bound to pay dearly for the sins of a few.144

The preceding was not only a forewarning of the cultural complications that would afterwards define Anglo/Mexican American relations but also a precursor to Ramírez’s own eventual decision to extricate himself from California altogether.

It was these collective expressions of white superiority and control throughout the entire first half of the nineteenth century that caused both Russwurm and Ramírez eventually to re-examine their reasons for residing in the United States altogether. Slavery, the hypocrisy of the free labor market, continued territorial dispossession, and a relentless campaign of violence together convinced the editors not only to seek asylum in other countries but to re-continue their journalistic tenure in their respective motherlands. In the coming chapter, I will explore in more detail the process that led to their self-exiles, and also the ironies that awaited them abroad.

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144 “Bien pronto todos empezaremos a realizar los resultados del filibusterismo — Debíamos haberlo anticipado desde mucho tiempo. Toda la raza española se está haciendo enteramente antagonist a la americana. Los destrozos de Cuba, Baja California y Centro América, han hecho odioso el nombre americano . . . . Y no una pequeña porción de esa intensa hostilidad . . . procede del carácter filibustero que hemos adquirido . . . . Nosotros como nación pagaremos muy caro los pecados de los pocos.” *El Clamor Público* May 31, 1856.
Chapter 3 – Colonization Schemes: Fleeing White Democracy and Benevolence

Part 1: Liberia, Africa: Voices For and Against Colonization

In 1858, Luciano Tapia, an alleged member of the infamous Daniel-Flores gang, was brought to trial on suspicious charges. Although a sizable percentage of Los Angeleños “lamented his fate because he was believed to have been a law-abiding citizen before his brief association with the Flores-Daniel gang,” Tapia was nonetheless hanged. Still pleading his innocence as he stood on the gallows, his reported final admonition to his fellow Latino countrymen was, according to the Los Angeles Star newspaper: “leave this country [United States], . . . it is no place for [you].” Upon completing their final respective journal issues, both Ramírez and Russwurm finally succumbed to this suggestion and emigrated to colonies in Liberia, Africa (1829) and Sonora, Mexico (1859) respectively. Apparently the violence and injustice were likewise too much to bear — a point that I will further analyze later in this chapter.

The American Colonization Society: Origins and Rationale

The American Colonization Society (ACS) brought forth the proposed solution to the dilemma of Black integration in an historic 1817 meeting during which associate members drafted “a glorious scheme . . . to make a colony [for] free [American] blacks in Africa,” with the expressed intention of persuading manumitted slaves to emigrate voluntarily. The ACS further anticipated that appreciable levels of such voluntary expatriation would in turn provide the incentive necessary for Southern slaveholders to liberate their bondservants. Dr. Cortlandt Van Rensselaer, theologian and editor of The Presbyterian Magazine, published the following excerpt in an article addressing the intensely-debated subject of African American colonization in Liberia, Africa: Whilst I am opposed to a scheme of immediate and universal emancipation . . . , I suppose that a large number of slaves are capable of rising at once to the responsibilities of freedom under favoring circumstances, for example, in Liberia . . . . [I contend] that Liberia is becoming to the African race more and more an object of desire . . . . Instead of a ‘compulsory expatriation,’ it would be virtually a voluntary return to the land of their fathers. [We must admit that] the coloured race can never attain to social

2 Gonzales-Day 193-194
and political elevation in the United States. . . . The colonization of the coloured people in Africa is, therefore, in its conception, a scheme of profound wisdom and true benevolence. . . . What an event in the history of civilization! Even in this last half century of wonders, it stands in the greatness of moral and political pre-eminence.  

Written four years before the start of the Civil War, Van Rensselaer’s viewpoints above were in many instances not at all uncommon, but rather had become increasingly commonplace with many Anglo Americans who, for various reasons, remained unwilling to co-exist domestically alongside free African Americans.

Tyler-McGraw credits the figure of African American entrepreneur, Paul Cuffee, with providing one of the principal catalysts in forming the American Colonization Society. A highly successful businessman, humanitarian, and shipmaster, Cuffee ultimately turned to African colonization as a means of circumventing a likely and perhaps inevitable racial conflict in the Southern slave states. Desiring to “raise his colored brethren of this country to civil and religious liberty in the land of their forefathers,” Cuffee landed in 1815 on the shores of Sierra Leone, Liberia, with approximately forty free African Americans, completing what later became famously recognized as America’s first free Black colonization operation. But while Cuffee may have lent a poster child-like legitimacy to the ACS, his high level of success also ironically drew attention to the necessity for eliminating free Black competition on American soil as well, as an April 6, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article illustrated. Recounting a routine business transaction in a Maryland harbor, the contributor describes Paul Cuffee’s affect on Anglo dockworkers who unvaryingly reacted with “astonishment and alarm.” A vessel “owned and commanded by a black man, and manned with a crew of the same complexion,” the contributor continued, “was unprecedented and surprising.” Consequently, the surrounding Anglo populace was likewise concerned regarding the ultimate effect Cuffee’s presence would have on their slaves, fearing that the mere image of Black achievement would incite instant rebellion among other Blacks.

This apprehension was not entirely unfounded, since early nineteenth-century Anglo Americans often assumed that African Americans not only harbored similar desires for revolution — i.e., as modeled by the American

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colonists themselves throughout the Revolutionary War — but would also, in
due course, act on these desires. For instance, Virginia’s Revolutionary War
phase provided numerous justifiable accounts where “thousands of slaves ran
away or were caught up in the war effort.” At that time, African American
slaves willingly joined forces with Virginia governor, John Murray, and in
1775 became instrumental in effectively countering the American colonial
insurgents; it was for many Blacks their first taste of freedom. And with both
“Gabriel’s Insurrection” and “Nat Turner’s Rebellion” within range of early-
nineteenth-century memory, Virginia legislature perhaps had good reason to
regularly debate the ever-present possibility of a slave uprising.

Even the very language used to conceptually legitimate the need for the
Black Liberian colony took on righteous and patriotic overtones — almost as if
Anglo Virginians were vicariously projecting their own “virtuous and
enterprising” spirit onto the potential Black colonists themselves. For many
Anglo Virginian pro-colonists, the symbolic figure of the Jamestown
settlement was not only mirrored in the foundational beginnings of Monrovia,
Liberia, it was also a manifest co-extension of the same Anglo nation-building
process. African American émigrés were not so much pioneering agents but
rather cultural ambassadors of sorts — “carefully nurtured and . . . selected
enslaved men and women” who philosophically transported and transplanted
“[the Anglo’s] own white evangelical, educational, and domestic values [onto]
Liberia.” Within this context, Virginians also saw in Liberia an added
opportunity for restructuring and rearranging, if you will, America’s nation-
building image, which, at that point, was heavily marred with the blemish of
its slave-holding institutions. Wishing to create a compassionate national
narrative that was alternatively centered in the South, Liberian colonization
could possibly appease critics of Southern slave-holding history by providing
a comprehensive example of conditional emancipation — a voluntary
expatriation that likewise modeled the pioneering efforts of Anglos in the New
World.

Later reports overwhelmingly indicate that the established African
American colonists in Liberia had indeed carried the seeds of American
nation-building progress — apparently too zealously, as I will later show. By
insisting that the native African populations “be brought up to [American
cultural] standards” as a prerequisite condition to Liberian citizenship,
African American settlers eventually succeeded in marginalizing the various
tribal groups they purportedly sought to convert. Efforts to re-emphasize the

9 Tyler-McGraw 11.
10 Tyler-McGraw 14.
13 Tyler-McGraw 5.
14 Tyler-McGraw 5.
Black colonists attained level of American sophistication and cultural progress resulted in “exaggerate[d]. . . attachments” to not only the United States but also to its styles and customs of “clothing, rhetoric, public ceremonies, and religious services.” As Edward Blyden has aptly suggested, exslave colonists had already undergone drastic and traumatic changes in their own original core belief systems and subsequently came to assume their master’s worldview. After awhile they even willingly operated as surrogate agents of Euro-American ideals, “believe[ing] that everything American was superior, even as the negative results of such thinking became apparent.”

So entrenched were the Liberian colonists in their ways that by the turn of the twentieth century, they were still practicing the outmoded formalities and customs of 1850s America. More than this, however, the hopeful colony was evidently yet unable to liberate the surrounding African tribes, many of whom strongly resented their Euro-American presence. By the turn of the twentieth century, “they had not Christianized even their part of Africa, [or] prospered as a [Euro American surrogate] nation among [less-developed] nations, or [even] made themselves respected and welcomed in the United States.”

As if lost in time, the African American settlers were suspended in what seemed to be a cruel irony of fate. Unable to determine their past or present identities properly, the lost colony, if you will, had no choice but to slip quietly into a vacuum of indeterminacy.

**Benevolent Societies: Preparing the Expatriates**

In John Pendleton Kennedy’s popular plantation novel, *Swallow Barn*, Mark Littleton at one point philosophically reflects upon the institution of southern slavery. While acknowledging that Liberia may offer a potential remedy to African American enslavement, Littleton concedes that Virginia slaves have also been prepared, equipped, and trained to undertake the prospective colonization experiment successfully:

Perhaps they are destined ultimately [via colonization] to that national existence in the clime from which they derive their origin [Liberia]—that this is [perhaps only] a transition state in which we see them in Virginia. If it be so, no tribe of people have ever passed from barbarism to civilization whose middle stage of progress [in America] has been. . . supplied with mild and beneficial guardianship, adapted to the actual state of their intellectual feebleness.17

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16 Tyler-McGraw 182.

17 John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (New York: Knickerbocker P, 1893) 453.
Meriwether’s slaves are qualified to succeed in Liberia, however, through their extraordinary penchant for imitation, according to Littleton. Or, it is the African American’s emulative disposition that more accurately characterizes their ability to succeed:

[The African American slave] grows upward, [but] only as the vine to which nature has supplied the sturdy [Anglo] tree as a support. He is [thus] extravagantly imitative. The older Negroes here have — with some spice of comic mixture in it — that formal, grave and ostentatious style of manners, which belonged to the [Anglo] gentlemen of former days; they are profuse of bows and compliments, and very aristocratic in their way. The younger ones are equally to be remarked for aping the style of the present time, and especially for the such tags of dandyism in dress as come within their reach.\textsuperscript{18}

Such could perhaps have been the presumptions of various female auxiliaries that joined and collectively fortified the efforts of the American Colonization Society. Mainly comprised of well-intentioned female abolitionists, these organizations distinguished themselves as primarily instruction-based societies whose main purpose was the domestic and vocational training of Liberian-bound slaves. Historically, both the Virginia gentry and Presbyterian Church provided the great majority of volunteers, most of whom earned the distinction of becoming the most dedicated female activists of the African colonization cause.\textsuperscript{19}

Primarily operating between the mid-1820s and 30s, female auxiliaries actually presented a rare opportunity for women to engage purposefully in public discourse — something from which they had previously been barred — even if such participation was restricted or segregated to domestic-based activity. “Focus[ing] on projects that emphasized the centrality of female education” as the main component to the “success of any colonization. . . venture,” female auxiliary efforts consisted mainly of shaping the civil conduct and etiquette-based mannerisms of not only soon-to-be-freed female slaves, but their respective children as well.\textsuperscript{20} Commenting on the central relevance of their mission, an 1836 American Colonization Society-operated journal, \textit{The African Repository}, reported that female auxiliaries were, in their purest essence, an extension of godly charity — created to elevate the African American mother to the highest levels of parenthood, and therein safeguard the future generations of colored children.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{18} Pendleton Kennedy 454.
\textsuperscript{19} Tyler-McGraw 84.
\textsuperscript{20} Tyler-McGraw 90.
There were also veiled presumptions that underscored these lofty religious/domestic convictions — i.e., presumptions that revealed aims extending far beyond a faith in matriarchal duties. As Tyler-McGraw compellingly argues:

This small cohort of educated gentry women saw the pernicious effect of slavery on their families and their society, as much as they saw the injustice and inhumanity of slavery to African Americans. Domestically, that pernicious effect included the moral corruption that human bondage produced in the souls of masters and slaves. It included the habits of tyranny encouraged in their children and the sexual license granted their male relatives. It included their own households, in which they were the frontline troops in confronting indirect and constant slave resistance. It included their fear of slave rebellion and of mulatto progeny.22

As well intentioned and timely as their efforts may have been, they nonetheless contained a measure of self-preservation that tied the survival of Anglo societal mores to the fate of the persecuted slave, not the fate of slaves for their own well-justified sake. It was ultimately Anglo “households” — along with “their own children,” “their male relatives,” and “their fear of slave rebellion” (emphasis mine) — that often drove the necessity to save the African American slave. And as Bacon has argued, it was often Anglo abolitionists like Thomas Jefferson who supported colonization more for the impending dangers that Blacks posed for whites than for an actual desire to alleviate the former’s condition.23

Yet it saving meant complete removal through systematic deportation, it was neither liberating nor in the collective best interests of the African American community, to say nothing of the effects on Black families, as the following August 31, 1827 Freedom’s Journal critique implies: “[The American Colonization Society] are friends [only] from principle, and until their principles are changed. . . , [they are] wholly at war with our best interests, and we cannot view the advocates of such sentiments in any other light than that of enemies, whatever their principles may be. . . . [Therefore, regarding] the Colonization Society, in . . . particular, we would say, “save us from our

22 Tyler-McGraw 84.

23 Jacqueline Bacon, Freedom’s Journal: The First African-American Newspaper (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) 15; Even Thomas Jefferson, in Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVII, likewise ‘laments’ the cumulative negativity that slavery must eventually exert on Anglos: “There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. . . . The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The [Anglo] man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undeprived by such circumstances.”
friends.” Most notably, it was Thomas Jefferson who eventually abandoned early national proposals for compassionately liberating or removing manumitted slaves to local colonies within the United States territories. However, “Jefferson [apparently] found nowhere in North America that was acceptable as a site.” Using the pretext of Manifest Destiny as his rationale, Jefferson reasoned that rapid Anglo demographic growth would inevitably compromise any domestic Black colony. Citing irreconcilable differences, Jefferson further argued that the ensuing social merger of Blacks and whites would ultimately place at risk the developmental aptitude of the nation as well. As was made clear in an August 25, 1814 correspondence with Edward Coles where Jefferson insisted that Anglo “amalgamation with the other [Black] color produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character, can innocently consent.”

While Jefferson continued to underscore the degradation of African Americans, others curiously wondered how an un-enlightened race could also purportedly establish a thriving American-style democracy abroad. Many Freedom’s Journal contributors, in fact, continually challenged the logic that placed so little domestic confidence in Black ability yet hurriedly assumed a miraculous emergence of proficiency once safely across the Atlantic. While this incongruity is obvious, one must remember that female auxiliaries — existing primarily as instruction-based societies — also assumed that a purportedly degraded African American populace would likewise be naturally willing to embody and mirror the same Anglo-based national values that they saw as self-evident and desirable. Moreover, female auxiliaries and pro-Liberia advocates viewed their instruction-based activities not only as a benevolent act but also as one that, by necessity, harmonized with the “extravagantly imitative” nature of a race they otherwise regarded as child-like and “ignorant.”

24 Freedom’s Journal August 31, 1827.


26 “The advocates of the colony at Liberia are endeavoring to acquire support, by representing in the first place, the total unfitness of our free coloured people to rise from their present ignorant condition and debasement in this country; and depicting in glowing colours, the future civilization and mental advancement of a whole continent through this establishment. . . . Here, then we have a contradiction in terms.” Freedom’s Journal November 16, 1827. Also, Bacon points out a similar argument by Veritas in Freedom’s Journal: “. . . Veritas . . . remarked that the colonizationists called African Americans ‘the most degraded, the most abandoned race on the earth,’ yet at the same proposed that they should be ‘sent . . . to civilize and Christianize the benighted Africans; to be the virtuous missionaries when in Africa.’” Bacon 196.

27 Pendleton Kennedy 453.
Such a missionary-like zeal and patronizing spirit was clearly evident in Ann Page, a nationally-recognized female auxiliary leader, when she liberated her domestically-trained slaves to Liberia in 1831:

You will be as a light set on a hill — the eyes of the world will be upon you to see if you walk worthily — I cannot set you free here, you would be in obscure places where I should never know whether you were doing good or ill. . . . You cannot expect that as white people have taken the trouble to settle this country they will give it up to you, so as that you could have sufficient advantage here to become an independent people — that will not be.  

For Liberian émigrés, a so-called independence — through emulative behavior — did produce “exaggerate[d] . . . attachments” to the “clothing, rhetoric, public ceremonies, and religious services” that both Ann Page and the female auxiliaries perhaps deemed as essential to duplicating the American Republic that her slaves could never inherit, or, more accurately, an American Republic of which they were never meant to be a part.

**Free African American Responses to the American Colonization Society**

If Liberian-bound manumitted slaves were in fact never destined to become a part of the US-based American Republic, then the already-freed and integrated African American populations of the North took careful notice all the more, and with good reason. The primary cause for alarm stemmed from the growing concern that the ACS’s “glorious scheme” sought to recruit not only slaves who were otherwise under contractual agreement to emigrate but also free African Americans who they hoped would voluntarily migrate as well. It was *Freedom’s Journal* — at least initially — that published and showcased the most strident voices of free Black opposition against the American Colonization Society. Rapidly ascending to power, however, the ACS not only commanded national status, but also wielded the associated political clout to leverage major power in service of its objectives. Like the 1855 Democratic Party in Los Angeles that enlisted influential leaders of color who subsequently lent authoritative credence to its goals, the American Colonization Society in 1827 likewise befriended powerful African American “churchmen, legislators, teachers” who in a similar fashion imbued its organization with a palpable legitimacy.

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28 Dunn 58-59.
29 Temperley 86-87
One of the first contentions, or suspicions, concerning the ACS’s objectives was the obvious and verifiable fact that a significant portion of its influential members resided in the South, and also that they were slaveholders who had a presumed interest in restricting the further growth of a potentially troublesome and competitive free Black populace. Such were the objections of a Freedom’s Journal contributor in a July 6, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article: “In the first place, it appears very strange to me that those benevolent men [of the American Colonization Society] should feel so much for the condition of the free coloured people and, at the same time, cannot sympathize in the least degree with” their own slaves, as “some of the most distinguished of that society, are themselves, SLAVEHOLDERS!”31

Other Freedom’s Journal contributors concurred, stating that the free African American deportation scheme contained stipulations that clearly benefited the planter class. In an August 10, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article, for instance, a British abolitionist argued that an ever-increasing free African American populace would cause growing concern in so far as it contradicted the economic principles of a slave market. Arguing that a free African American populace essentially undermined the value of slave labor, as a free Black citizenry would, by necessity, require removal in order to preserve or recover the original costs incurred in the upkeep of the system.32 Historian Thomas Beal has since added that free African American deportation would have likely also increased the appraised value of the slaveholder’s human commodity and was therefore well within the implied economic interests of the South.33

Numerous attempts were also made to quantitatively deconstruct the underlying logic of free African American deportation as argued by the American Colonization Society. One contributor likened the scheme to a southern “safety valve” that would decompress the Black populace and “dispose of 30,000 blacks . . . [per] year,” according to his estimate, effectively ridding the economic competition as if through a spigot or “outlet” made specifically for “free blacks.”34 In an April 18, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article, a fellow contributor — appropriating the faucet analogy — argued that the flow would logistically be too slow, and to await the laborious transport of two million individuals was not only unreasonable but also ultimately untenable.35

31 Freedom’s Journal July 6, 1827.
32 Freedom’s Journal August 10, 1827.
33 “If colonization removed free blacks, who agitated for political rights and an end to slavery, the institution of slavery would have a more viable future and the value of every slave would increase dramatically.” D. Thomas Beal, “Freedom’s Journal: The First African-American Newspaper,” Afro-Americans in New York Life and History (January, 2008) 125.
34 Freedom’s Journal March 30, 1827.
35 Freedom’s Journal April 18, 1827.
These arguments were quite noteworthy because they provided *Freedom’s Journal*’s readership, for the first time, with determinable numbers that not only demystified but deflated the ACS’s unsubstantiated claims. As one contributor put it, the entire “project of gradually [abolishing] slavery” through the process of “liberating and removing all [African Americans]” is indeed mathematically indefensible, because it would require an unspeakable amount of resources: the author of an April 27, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article asks, how can a nation credibly justify the costs of expatriating 60,000 to 70,000 annually? Furthermore, by citing the ACS’s failure to take into account the mean growth rate of the free African American populace, another contributor in a September 7, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article similarly underscores the unfeasibility of colonization by arguing that by the time the American Colonization Society will have deported 5,000, “our population will have [already] increased five hundred thousand [500,000]”—a one-hundred fold increase. It was on the basis of these revealing calculations alone that both Russwurm and Cornish rejected free African American deportation altogether in September 21, 1827. Viewing Liberia as a kind of fool’s promised land, they concluded it was essentially unrealistic and deceptive—“a foolish idea . . ., in any country,” even if Liberia was, in fact, an Eden-on-earth.

More problematically, of the large number of Black leaders available, few, if any, were consulted regarding the potential impact of colonization on the free African American populace, as a July 6, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* commentary by William Watkins clearly implies: “We know little or nothing of them, but what we gather from their writings.” Jacqueline Bacon has further noted that the ACS’s decision to exclude African Americans from ongoing discussions resulted in large-scale outrage and resentment. Understandably, there was an appreciable degree of bitterness towards an Anglo leadership that presumed to determine landmark decisions for a populace they both silently disregarded and openly simply ignored. African American political bodies were also politically organized at the time, both in the North and South, many of which undoubtedly could have been consulted.

Not only were these organizations rarely consulted, but the ACS reportedly also resisted inquiries regarding the underlying motives of their

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36 *Freedom’s Journal* April 18, 1827.
37 *Freedom’s Journal* April 27, 1827.
38 *Freedom’s Journal* September 7, 1827.
39 *Freedom’s Journal* August 17, 1827; September 21, 1827.
40 *Freedom’s Journal* July 6, 1827.
41 Bacon 193.
operations, according to one July 6, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* commentary.\(^{43}\) Indeed, a principal aspect of Black resentment rested on the charge that the ACS had preemptively usurped not only African American self-reliance but also autonomous control over matters concerning their own constitutional civil liberties. One commentator expressed a similar outrage in a September 7, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* editorial when he wondered how the ACS can expect anything less than outright anger — and that Anglo Americans would themselves express equal indignation if presented with the same set of nonsensical ironies.\(^{44}\)

It was, therefore, with sheer astonishment that *Freedom’s Journal* readers later learned of Russwurm’s decision to endorse colonization as well as his resolve to relocate to Liberia, Africa. These decisions met with fierce criticism, not solely from, but principally within, the African American leadership who felt betrayed — especially since resistance to the ACS’s colonization plan was widely prevalent in the African American community. William Lloyd Garrison, Anglo American editor of the *Liberator*, published what may have been one of the more caustic condemnations, essentially alleging that Russwurm had sold out his African American countrymen for the proverbial bits of silver: “[Russwurm’s betrayal] is but too deeply stamped on the minds of many . . . . After he subverted the pledge he made to his colored brethren, he left, to our satisfaction, his country — suffused with shame — and branded with the stigma of disgrace — to dwell in that land for which the tempter MONEY caused him to avow his preferment.”\(^{45}\) In what eventually deteriorated into an intensely violent persecution, Russwurm responded in turn by covertly boarding a ship bound for Liberia in September of 1829, supposedly “unvanquished,” according to his own testimony.\(^{46}\) In the second half of Part Three, I will explore what awaited Russwurm in a country he once called the “land of *milk* and *honey*” (emphasis mine).\(^{47}\) For now, however, let me turn to Ramírez and examine how he likewise came to opt for self-imposed exilement.

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\(^{43}\) “Why is it, permit me to ask, that they dread, or become offended at an investigation of the principles upon which their society is based? Why is it that they would have us yield, with implicit credulity, without the exercise of our own judgment, to whatever they propose for our happiness?” *Freedom’s Journal* July 6, 1827.

\(^{44}\) *Freedom’s Journal* September 7, 1827.

\(^{45}\) As quoted in *Bacon* 60.

\(^{46}\) B. John Russwurm, “Letter to Ralph R. Gurley, ACS Secretary,” May 1829; *Bacon* 64.

\(^{47}\) *Freedom’s Journal* August 17, 1827.
Part 2: Sonora, Mexico: Retreating from Liberal America

Misplaced Liberal Idealism

One perhaps cannot fully comprehend the wide range of reasons leading up to Ramírez’s ultimate emigration without first appreciating his initially zealous belief in American democratic principles to — as well as his idealistic assumption that these principles would laterally transfer to America’s newly-annexed Mexican American citizens. In fact, in *El Clamor Público’s* first issue (June 19, 1855), Ramírez ardently outlines — in patriotic overtones — the guiding philosophy of Los Angeles’s first Spanish-language newspaper: “Each one of our political convictions can be boiled down to this single and outlandish desire — *The moral and capitalist progress within our sphere and of social order.*” Ramírez not only affirmed *El Clamor Público’s* commitment to his newly adopted nation’s founding precepts, particularly as expressed in the United States Constitution, but also defined his journal as a defensive front ready to guard the “magnanimous spirit” of liberalism itself.

To these ideals *El Clamor Público* was certainly committed — at least for a while. Much like other moderately educated Mexican Americans of his time, Ramírez initially embraced the notion of constitutionally-guaranteed equality and democracy. In the third issue of *El Clamor Público*, Ramírez translated into Spanish the entire Declaration of Independence on July 3, 1855, apparently attempting to instruct Los Angeles’s newly-annexed Latino community regarding the vast potential of the document’s inherent design.

On the strength of the Constitution’s originality alone, Ramírez often felt empowered to promote like-minded liberal proposals, such as the mandatory education of all youth through public means (Mexican Americans included), where they could “trabaja[r], estudia[r], p[e]nsa[r], [y] discut[ir]” [*work, study, think, and discuss*] the “marcha provincial” [*provincial march*] of civilization


49 “Todas nuestras convicciones políticas se reducen a este único y estrañable deseo — El progreso moral y material dentro de la esfera y del orden . . . *El Clamor Público* está edificado sobre el sólido cimiento de las ideas liberales. . . . Sostendremos a la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, estando convencidos que solo bajo ella tendrán libertades, ye en donde solo se puede hallar felicidad: y combatirémos todo lo que esté opuesto a su espíritu magnánimo y grandiosas ideas” [*El Clamor Público* is built upon the solid foundation of liberal ideas . . . . We fully support the Constitution of the United States, convinced that only under it shall we procure liberty and in that find happiness as well: [our newspaper] shall henceforth fight anything that is opposed to its magnanimous spirit and grand ideals*]. *El Clamor Público* June 19, 1855.


51 *El Clamor Público* July 3, 1855.
through the instructive lens of democratic-based liberty and equality. Particularly apparent throughout *El Clamor Público* were Ramírez’s efforts to plead with his Latino countrymen not only to advocate such issues, but also to partake actively in their newfound civic duties: “Mexicans! The hour has arrived . . . . More than anyone else, we as well have certain inalienable rights in the nation where we presently reside. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo has granted us expansive rights in which to freely enjoy both our lives and property. We are truly bona fide citizens, and as such it is our civic duty to participate actively in public affairs.” Ramírez persisted in reminding his readers of both their inherent rights and obligations until the journal’s last issue.

It is important to note that *El Clamor Público*’s democratic-based stance was, at that time, not only widely represented in many other nineteenth-century American journals, but also popularly expressed throughout the Western hemisphere. For instance, Leonard Pitt has fittingly argued that the ideals guiding *El Clamor Público* were, in fact, not entirely unique but rather trendy hallmarks which were commonly employed by both editors and statesmen alike. Historian Douglass Monroy, on the other hand, takes a slightly more scrutinizing position, essentially viewing *El Clamor Público*’s expressed patriotism as “quixotic” in nature. Ramírez’s chief error, in Monroy’s estimation, was to mistakenly assume that the benefits of American-style democracy would impartially extend to all — regardless of their race. Calling it a case of misguided liberal idealism, Monroy suggests that Ramírez fell victim to his era’s political zealousness, falling “under [its] spell,” as it were. And

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52 *El Clamor Público* October 4, 1856. A July 10, 1855 *El Clamor Público* article similarly espoused universal education for “todas las clases de la sociedad” (“all classes in society”) as a means to ensuring the promotion of civic-minded individuals.

53 “¡Mexicanos! Ya ha llegado el tiempo.... Más que nadie, tenemos nosotros ciertos derechos indisputables en la nación en que ahora vivimos. El tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo nos ha concedido amplios privilegios para gozar libremente de nuestra vida y propiedad. Somos verdaderos ciudadanos, y como tales es nuestra deber tomar parte activa en los negocios públicos.” *El Clamor Público* September 27, 1856.


56 Monroy also interestingly provides the unspoken and possible underlying impetus that propelled eighteenth and nineteenth-Century Anglo-based liberal idealism. Citing the ideas of Edmund S. Morgan in *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, Monroy argues that in “colonial Virginia and during the American Revolution whites . . . [were] able to articulate ideas about
there is perhaps some hard truth in this, as Ramírez certainly did take the Founding Father’s ideas at face value.\textsuperscript{57}

Monroy’s assessment is valuable in that it offers a critical challenge to the professed range of philosophical idealism as it was expressed in nineteenth-century American political thought. Monroy’s line of argument forces us to take into account that it was the contrasting racial differences between and among Blacks, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans that created a hierarchical-based definition of Eurocentric liberty that in turn propelled Manifest Destiny westward. Therefore, the democratic principles of “[American] liberalism prospered not in spite of but because people of color, bound by slavery [or] the labor market. . . . In their condition[,] the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness could never be realized and thus did not endanger the supremacy of those who articulated that often-praised ideology.”\textsuperscript{58} As the civil liberties of California Mexican Americans continued to diminish — in spite of the United States Constitutional guarantees that Ramírez so cherished — the pro-American tenor of \textit{El Clamor Público} changed noticeably, beginning with the May 24, 1856 issue.\textsuperscript{59}

From this point onward, Ramírez’s criticism of United States domestic and foreign policy is formed generally by the extent to which it deviated from — not conformed to — the espoused principles of constitutional liberty.\textsuperscript{60} According to Nicolas Kanellos, by the time \textit{El Clamor Público} approached its final issues, Ramírez’s “indignation grew” exponentially. Crushed and embittered by the utter failure of what he had hoped would be a constitutionally-based lateral transfer of power, Ramírez began to envisage alternative ways in which to safeguard the already fast-diminishing reserves of political capital that yet remained for California Mexican Americans.\textsuperscript{61} In what seems like a desperate stratagem, the young editor proposed a Mexican American statewide exodus from the Golden State.

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individual liberty in a cavalier fashion because they did not have to worry about their effect on the lower or laboring classes. Chattel slavery based on race bound and controlled those who worked.” Monroy 219.
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\textsuperscript{57} Gutiérrez 19.

\textsuperscript{58} Monroy 219.


\textsuperscript{60} “Es verdaderamente curiosa la idea que se tiene de la libertad en los Estados Unidos. Esa libertad tan decantada es imaginaria.” [“It is truly curious this espoused notion of liberty held by the United States. This much-exalted liberty is, in actuality, imaginary”]. \textit{El Clamor Público} July 24, 1855.

Anglo-based Democracy Defined

What Ramírez did not readily grasp was that clearing California of all its Brown annexed citizens would, paradoxically, play right into the hands of the newly established Anglo-dominated regime. And if Mexican Americans could vacate voluntarily — all the better. It may be helpful here to at least tease out a few strands of nineteenth-century racial ideological processes, to borrow Omi and Winant’s concept, and in this way theoretically locate and identify the underlying socio-cultural forces that most strongly influenced Ramírez’s self-exile. Tomás Almaguer’s now-classic *Racial Fault Lines: The Origins of White Supremacy in California* offers a good starting point by suggesting that nineteenth-century Anglo-based racial solidarity was founded principally upon an amalgamation of various once-distinct European ethnicities:

The influx into California of a diverse European-American population, both foreign and native born, created a process in which ethnic differences among these groups was overshadowed by the construction of a collective racial designation as “white.” European Americans drawn into competition and conflict with the nonwhite populations [i.e., Mexican Americans] repeatedly referred to themselves in racial terms, as “white,” rather than primarily defining themselves as Irish, French, English, German, or any other ethnicity.

Even the titles of various nineteenth-century mining camps pointed to a new and developing system of racial classification in California. For instance, gold mine operations such as “Chinese Camp, French Camp, and ‘Chili Gulch’ (named after the people from Chile, not the pepper)” all consistently stressed ethnic categories as their identifying markers, further distinguishing these racial groups as exotic.

In addition, social policy, such as the early California legal code, served to further maintain and reinforce this racial stratifying process. Laws that prohibited miscegenation were, according to historian George M. Fredrickson, prevalent in slave and free states alike, and “usually prohibited intermarriage by statute or constitutional provision, and some of the original states amended their laws to make inter-racial unions null and void rather than merely

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64 Gonzales-Day 13.
punishable.” Although it is true that the statutes to which Fredrickson refers above did not expressly apply to newly annexed Mexicans, the underlying intolerance regarding Anglo/Mexican amalgamation in California was palpable. This was made apparent in city records that in fact documented occasional marriages between wealthy Anglo men and wealthy, light-skinned Californio women, a matrimonial exception that was deemed barely socially acceptable by Anglo standards of convention. Whereas race was the signifier of prohibition that determined and shaped anti-miscegenation laws in the larger United States, it was class that functioned similarly so in early California. An October 16, 1855 El Clamor Público wedding announcement, for example, clearly illustrates the Anglo male/Californio female unions that were typical for this era: “Wedding — This Saturday the 13th Mr. Don James [A.] Watson was married to Ms. Doña Dolores Domínguez, daughter of Don Manuel Domínguez and Doña Gracia Cota . . ., at the San Pedro Ranch, residence of the father of the bride.” In this particular wealthy Californio family alone, four of Don Manuel Domínguez’s six daughters were married to well-to-do Anglo men. Although perhaps few in number, these Mexicanized-Yankees were nevertheless firmly connected to the California power base; no less than twenty-four possessed a massive “one-third of southern California’s developed land in estates as large as 60,000 acres,” most of which was legally transferred through inheritance from their Californio father-in-laws.

If we consider Omi and Winant’s view of racial formation — which is the process whereby “social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories . . . [and] meaning” — then it is possible to surmise that these same processes had “real effects outside the sphere of the [merely] discursive,” as Stuart Hall has argued. That is, El Clamor Público and Freedom’s Journal together seem to constitute much more than historical abstractisms. They reflect the documented sum total of lived realities — many


66 Almaguer 58.


68 Ana Josefa Juliana Domínguez, married to William Dryden; Maria Guadalupe Marcelina – [Never Married]; Maria Dolores Simona Domínguez, married to James A. Watson; Maria Victoria Domínguez, married to George Henry Carson; Maria de los Reyes Domínguez, married to John Fillmore Francis.

69 Almaguer 59.

70 Omi and Winant 61-62.

times tragic — that reflect the net result of these racialized processes. It is with a similar level of tragic urgency that Ramírez warns his Latino countrymen in a September 27, 1856 El Clamor Público editorial concerning the possible irrevocable political losses facing Mexican Americans during the fated 1856 national election: “[El Clamor Público] has always sought to defend at all costs the interests of the Latino community . . . , but in this particular [presidential] fight[,] we cannot just sit idly by and watch the ruin of our own Latino countrymen.—Th[ese] presidential issue[s] alone will decide our fate forever.”

For Ramírez, the iconic figure of Buchanan symbolized a distinct Anglo-based establishment that was itself thinly disguised as a progressive democracy. It was precisely this veiled underside — and its corresponding racialized processes — that Ramírez sought single-handedly to confront and to defy, all with various degrees of success.

**Challenges of a One-Man Editorship**

By the time El Clamor Público had completed its first publication year, the mounting pressure of assuming Los Angeles’s sole Mexican American editorship had already begun to show. Musing upon his pioneering effort, Ramírez admitted in a June 14, 1856 El Clamor Público commentary that he had essentially “worked as hard as is feasibly possible” while tirelessly exposing any and all “corruption . . . that[,] in one way or another[,] has harmed the effective influence of the [Latino] citizenry.” On two other separate occasions — August 21, 1855 and February 2, 1856 — Ramírez also wrote at length regarding the daunting tasks involved in a one-man-editorship and how it regularly demanded drafting articles of various lengths and styles as well as translating from selected international journals. As a trilingualist, these translation-related duties were no doubt compounded significantly and frequently involved the weekly reading of up to fifty domestic and foreign newspapers.

For all these responsibilities, there is evidence to suggest that the Latino populace also failed to reciprocally value Ramirez’s efforts, as a June 14, 1856 El Clamor Público editorial clearly states: “During our short tenure we have

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72 “Nosotros siempre hemos procurado defender a todo tranco los intereses de la raza Española . . . , pero en esta lucha no hemos podido quedar como espectadores de la ruina de nuestros compatriotas.—Esta cuestión presidencial decidirá nuestra suerte para siempre.” El Clamor Público September 27, 1856.
73 El Clamor Público June 14, 1856.
74 El Clamor Público August 21, 1855; February 2, 1856.
75 “. . . diarios de todas partes del mundo — algunas veces leen[do] [hasta] cincuenta periodicos” (“daily newspapers from all parts of the globe — sometimes reading (up to) fifty newspapers”) per week. El Clamor Público August 21, 1855.
noticed that within the Latino populace few have been concerned at all in safeguarding our publication-based efforts."76 That said, there was equally convincing evidence that many Anglos likewise failed to value Ramirez’s radical commentaries all the more — by way of threats on his life. At least that much was strongly implied in a May 24, 1856 El Clamor Público re-printed article that detailed the cold murder of an all-too-popular fellow California editor. Reflecting on the inherent risks of his profession, Ramírez trails the article with an aside that not only discusses the associated hazards of challenging the status quo but also affirms how these perils are exponentially increased for a journalist of color.77

If, as Gray has pointed out, Ramírez was indeed one of the few individuals in Los Angeles fluent in both English and Spanish, then the onus of responsibility for journalistically bridging the otherwise disparate nineteenth-century ethnic and Anglo worlds fell disproportionately on his shoulders.78 Whatever the case, the cumulative editorial pressures, along with the associated caustic political climate, gradually became too much for the brave editor. On December 31, 1859 — the final issue of El Clamor Público — Ramirez submitted a closing and “sullen editorial farewell.”79 Like Luciano Tapia years before, Ramirez similarly concluded that the democratic-based United States “[was] no place for [him].” 80 On March 1860, Los Angeles’s most radical editorial voice boarded a Mexican-bound caravan and headed one-way to Ures, Sonora.81

**Sonora-Bound**

Ramírez’s decision to emigrate was not at all immediate and developed over the course of many years. In the same February 16, 1856 El Clamor Público issue in which he announced his endorsement of anti-slavery Republican candidate, John C. Frémont, Ramirez also published the first of

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76 “Durante nuestra corta experiencia hemos notado que en nuestra raza muy poco se ocupan en proteger estas empresas.” El Clamor Público June 14, 1856.

77 “La pocision de un Editor en California no es muy digna de envidia. Esta llena de peligrosos; el peligro de hablar la verdad cuando se ofrece. Es el deber de un editor exponer la corrupción en donde quiera que se encuentre . . . ;] los peligros que [tenemos] que sobrellevarse son mayores que se pueda imaginar” [“The job of an editor in California is not very worthy of envy. (Evenso,) it is the consummate duty of an editor to (nevertheless) expose corruption wherever it is . . . ;] the related dangers that we must cope with are bigger than you can possibly imagine”]. El Clamor Público May 24, 1856.

78 Bryan Gray 21.

79 Bryan Gray 29.

80 Los Angeles Star February 20, 1858.

81 Bryan Gray 29.
many articles regarding a Sonora, Mexico colony. Located on the front-page and nearly two full columns in length, the byline called for a multi-national coalition of “Mexicanos, Hispano-Americanos, y Californios,” enticing potential émigrés with a lengthy and encouraging summary of Jesus Islas’s 1856 negotiation with the Mexican government regarding a likely settlement. According to the article, possible occupancy was nearly guaranteed as the “colonization project has been well-received with great enthusiasm by various communities throughout the state [as well as] the government.”

In an attached communiqué, Mexico’s Minister of Development, Florencio Monteverde, stated that the expressed need to relocate its annexed Mexican citizens was due to mounting reports concerning the “disdain with which the [Anglo] Americans of the Northern United States view Mexicans and all who speak the Spanish language.” Although the prescribed Sonoran territory was admittedly barren, it nonetheless offered ample measures for existing in a reasonably self-sufficient manner.

Not all Mexican American Californios, however, were agreeable to the idea of Sonoran colonization, and some expressed their disapproval in contentious terms. Questioning Ramírez’s tacit confidence in a government that seemingly was not capable “of protecting colonies on its own border, much less assist them,” an anonymous contributor by the name of “Un Californio” blasted the causal grounds for a Sonoran colonization scheme in a scathing letter to the editor of El Clamor Público, published on May 24, 1856. As the identity of the contributor remains anonymous, it does raise some questions concerning not only the critique’s authenticity but also the writer’s ulterior intention — as many wealthy Californios and Anglos both openly and regularly opposed Ramírez. That aside, “Un Californio” proceeds to depict a Sonoran territory already replete with “mercenaries” as well as “famous guerilla-fighting Apaches” who presently hold various Sonoran towns hostage. While the critique does concede that California Latinos have been victim to many ill-intentioned Anglos, the author nevertheless rests assured that the present American government will eventually ameliorate such matters with the “wisdom (of) its management.”

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82 The actual first article relating to a ‘Junta Colonizadora’ appeared four months earlier on October 23, 1855 in El Clamor Público but merely expressed the possibility in broad strokes. The February 16, 1856 article is, by comparison, accompanied by an official communiqué granting governmental approval.

83 “. . . proyecto ha sido recibido con gran entusiasmo por todas las poblaciones del Estado . . . [y] el gobierno.” El Clamor Público February 16, 1856.

84 “. . . desprecio con que los Americanos de los Estados Unidos del Norte vean a los Mexicanos y a todos los que hablan la lengua castellana.” El Clamor Público February 16, 1856.

85 El Clamor Público May 24, 1856.
A separate anonymous May 17, 1856 El Clamor Público critique similarly asks potential Sonoran émigrés to bear in mind that “California [,] and more specifically Los Angeles [,] has always been places where [Latinos] have found competitive salaries, generosity, and happy times.”86 In this particular instance, Ramirez published a side-by-side rebuttal that was more realistically consistent with the mass-scale disenfranchisement documented in the pages of El Clamor Público: “[Latinos] have already arrived at the impossibility” of existing reasonably within the present social system “for the simple fact that their dominating overseers are driving them to their ruin so swiftly that [,] before much longer [,] they will be forced to ask for handouts” from the least capable among them.87 Indeed, the situation in Los Angeles was, by then, already showing indications of apartheid-like fanaticism, and many were desperate for any solution.

By late 1855, a sizable portion of the Mexican American populace had begun to keep a watchful eye for regularly posted updates emanating from Sonora, Mexico. On September 11, 1855, Ramírez published an El Clamor Público announcement further alerting these hopefuls to a fully operating and routinely scheduled caravan traveling to and from Sonora: “we are daily seeing parties of various nationalities depart . . . for Sonora.”88 Throughout March and April of 1856, Ramírez closely tracked the itinerary of one such caravan, led by Jesús Islas, as it gradually snaked a course “from the city of San Jose” to “Ventura,” and finally arriving “at this city, Los Angeles.”89 By June, there was evidence to suggest that there were many more Mexican Americans willing to emigrate than the Islas caravan could reasonably accommodate. Forced to bivouac temporarily in order to await further provisions, the convoy made logistical arrangements accordingly.90

86 El Clamor Público May 17, 1856.
87 “California y principalmente la demarcación de Los Angeles . . . ha sido el lugar donde [Latinos] han encontrado buenos sueldos, hospitalidad y goces positivos”; “[Latinos] [ya] han llegado a la imposibilidad . . . por la sencilla razón de que sus dominadores los conducen a su ruina tan rápidamente que antes de mucho tiempo se verán forzados a pedir hospitalidad.” El Clamor Público May 17, 1856.
88 “. . . diariamente estamos viendo salir partidas de gente de diferentes naciones . . . a Sonora” El Clamor Público September 11, 1855.
89 El Clamor Público March 15, 1856; April 26, 1856.
90 “La Colonia.—Los emigrantes para Sonora permanecerán en este lugar por algún tiempo. Se han presentado mas personas de las que podrían convenientemente llevar, y actualmente están esperando algunos recursos para proseguir su viaje” “[The Colony.—The Sonoran emigrants will temporarily remain in this locale (Los Angeles) for the time being. They currently have a turnout that far exceeds their capacity, and they will remain put while they await further resources before proceeding”). El Clamor Público June 7, 1856.
Eventually re-supplied and re-outfitted, the émigrés set out on September 8, 1856 and, as Pitt notes, on “February 1857 they had launched their colony at Sáric and Tubutama, 100 miles south of Tucson, Arizona.” Engaged in agriculture, cattle ranching, as well as silver mining, Sáric and Tubutama reportedly saw a sustained increase in its Mexican American colonial population, with more expected to arrive from California. While it is true that both settlements suffered significant setbacks and challenges throughout their initial months, all proceeding accounts suggest the Sáric and Tubutama colonies — consisting of “three-hundred people . . . of all sexes and ages” — were ultimately successful, its inhabitants apparently residing serenely in the new regional clime, as reported by colonist, D. J. de Jesus Felix, in an October 2, 1858 *El Clamor Público* situation report.

It is ironic — and unfortunate — to note that the unjust social circumstances necessitating the need for alternative sanctuary communities remained all the more pervasive in America throughout the years following the Sáric and Tubutama experiments. The violence that plagued Ramírez’s 1850s generation, it seems, evidently continued unabated, with the nation’s “wisdom [of] management” having little or no effect in establishing order for communities of color. In time, other notable refuge-based projects likewise attempted to propose potential safe areas where Mexican Americans could not only re-establish an existence free of Anglo violence, but also resurrect a visionary society that summoned the ideal life of times gone-by.

The recurring notion of a utopist homeland did not end here, but continued to the present in the mythic allegory of Aztlan, existing — if for no other reason — than as a culture-based transcendentalism of sorts through which one “reconstitute[s] the self of an earlier presence . . . , of a past made habitable again,” if only “in the memory’s imagination,” as Genaro Padilla so

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91 An *El Clamor Público* issue reported that the Sonoran colony was indeed increasing with “emigrados de California, que deberán ser bastantes según noticias” [“émigrés from California, which according to reports should be numerous”] *El Clamor Público* October 2, 1858.

92 Islas reported that the Sáric and Tubutama colonists were residing “muy tranquilos . . . , respirando el aire puro y agradable de (ese) hermoso clima” [“quite peacefully, breathing the fresh and splendid air of that beautiful climate”]. *El Clamor Público* October 2, 1858.

93 In 1915, for example, plans regarding a utopist homeland once again resurfaced in the now-famous ‘Plan de San Diego’ where, according to William Carrigan, a “small band of Mexicans signed a revolutionary manifesto” calling for the permanent establishment of “separate borderland republics for Mexicans, Indians, and African Americans”; “‘Yankee arrogance has reached its limit,’ asserted the authors of the plan: ‘it is not content with the daily lynching of men, it now seeks to lynch an entire people, a whole race, an entire continent. And it is against this arrogance that we must unite.’” William Carrigan, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848-1928," *Journal of Social History* (Vol 37, 2003) 425.
aptly argues. For Ramírez, the decision to ultimately emigrate was above all driven by a sense of outrage over the continuing disenfranchisement and mistreatment of his Latino countrymen. That said, we can likewise infer that, at a more profound level, a similarly nostalgic mythos was simultaneously at work — i.e., for a homeland that no longer existed. In this way, Ramírez conceivably rediscovered in Sonora what Padilla has called “the uneasy memory of an imaginary unity elsewhere,” obtainable only in what Janet Varner Gunn has described as a haunted space of indeterminacy, a place where that which has been destroyed can possibly be revived, but only in the vacuum of a perpetually-occurring future tense. For now, let me next examine how Russwurm not only negotiated the challenges of his own colony experience (in Liberia, Africa), but also the complications that followed — many of which were remarkably similar to those of Ramírez.

**Part 3: In-Country: Liberian and Sonoran Realities**

**The Liberia Herald: John B. Russwurm, Editor**

Like Ramírez, Russwurm was invited to assume editorial leadership of his colony’s newspaper, the *Liberia Herald*. And, as we shall soon see, this new geographic locale was beset with its own set of risks and challenges. Unlike Sonora, however, Liberia was not beleaguered by the continual onslaught of determined annexationists. Rather, the geographic distance and ocean-wide barrier separating Liberia from the American mainland was not only expediently advantageous but also deliberate by design, in accordance with the wishes of numerous southern separatists within the American Colonization Society.

Russwurm’s initial intent to relocate was first made evident in a private January 26, 1829 letter to ACS secretary, Ralph Gurley:

I deem it expedient to advise you, that I am on the eve of relinquishing the publication of Freedom’s Journal, with my views on the subject of Colonization materially changed . . . . I am willing to be employed in the colony [of Liberia] in any business, for the performance of which you may deem me qualified. If unqualified, I am willing to qualify myself in this country under the patronage of the society.

Russwurm’s eventual and later-celebrated editorship of the *Liberia Herald*, however, was actually preceded by the groundbreaking efforts of Charles Force,

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an emigrant who manned the colony's first press in 1826. Such was the occasion of the Liberia Herald's historic launching that the American Colonization Society's journal, The African Repository, heralded its arrival with near-religious overtones: “Bid your blest ‘Herald’s’ wing expand/ From shore to shore, from wave to wave,—/ Till distant realms shall stretch the hand/ To strike the fetter from the slave.” Indeed, the Liberia Herald was from all accounts monumental — even earning the later distinction of becoming Africa’s fifth oldest press, excluding French-language journals.

According to historian Carl Patrick Burrowes, the Liberia Herald along with its editor unfortunately experienced a number of significant difficulties early on. Operating almost entirely on donations, the American Colonization Society was regularly challenged to provide supplemental funding for the Liberian colony. As a result, the Liberia Herald's distribution was many times “erratic, due to chronic financial problems.” In addition, Ramirez in Sonora, Russwurm’s energies were thinly stretched over a multitude of dissimilar duties. In total, Russwurm assumed four simultaneous offices: Secretary of the Colony, Liberia Herald editor-in-chief, Government Printer, and School Superintendent. Accordingly, it was Russwurm’s “inability to negotiate the various pressures engendered by his multifaceted involvements” that “ultimately prove[d] his undoing.” Complicating these matters, a continued shortage of resources hampered the overall stability of the colony’s school curricular program, thereby eclipsing Russwurm’s superintendent role as the church assumed increasing responsibility for educational instruction.

Because the Anglo colonial management determined both the content and direction of the Liberia Herald, this in turn provided sufficient reason for the mounting discontent that was then apparent among many Black settlers. Anglo ACS liaisons that exclusively guided and oversaw colonial affairs caused particular concern in that they offered only marginal control to the Black colonists themselves. One such official, Liberian Governor John Pinney, was particularly unpopular, causing a near mutiny among the colonists. After finally convincing Russwurm to publish a highly controversial proclamation that charged his populace to enter an unlawful “state of insurrection,” Russwurm was — once again — on the bad side of his

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98 Dunn 351.
100 Patrick Burrowes 30.
101 Patrick Burrowes 40-41.
102 Patrick Burrowes 32.
103 Patrick Burrowes 30.
104 Bacon 253.
brethren. As Bacon notes, “Russwurm complained . . . in an 1835 letter to Gurley . . . that despite his best efforts at preventing unrest, ‘the whole blame’ for the disorder was ‘cast upon’ him.”

The *Liberia Herald* office was subsequently overtaken by an angry horde of Black dissenters who hurled the type and dismantled the press, rendering it inoperable.

### Natives and Pirates: Social Unrest in the Liberian Utopia

Much more troublesome was the literally centuries-old problem of Native rival tribes who collectively resented Liberian encroachment into their lands. The Vai, Golah, and Dey tribes that had long resided along the Liberian coast were particularly resentful about the ACS’s intrusive presence — especially because the newly established colony had not yet offered any monetary compensation to them. Had it not been for the fortuitous assistance of President James Monroe — in whose honor Monrovia, Liberia is named — the colony might never have been settled in the first place. Dispatching a heavily armed vessel under the direction of Captain Robert F. Stockton, Monroe had hoped to negotiate the territorial sale of Liberia through diplomatic dialogue, but was prepared to deploy more persuasive measures if needed. According to Allen Yarema, “King Peter, chief of the Dey people at the Cape, was reluctant to cede any land, so after several days of delay, Stockton pulled out his two pistols and pointed one at King Peter and the other at the people.” The native leadership was finally persuaded with a strong arm into accepting Monroe’s offer.

According to historical records, a bewildered Black Liberian colonist was documented as saying: “It is something strange to think that these people of Africa are called our ancestors. In my present thinking, if we have any ancestors they could not be like these hostile tribes.” As ironic as this statement seems, the newly arrived Liberian colonists had inadvertently inhabited an area marked with a lengthy history of ever-shifting populations, and along with that the reality of continually fluctuating hubs of power. This atmosphere was one with which the African American colonists were

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105 Bacon 254.
106 Bacon 255.
107 Patrick Burrowes 41.
108 Tyler-McGraw 130.
apparently unconcerned, an oversight that also caused them to underestimate their intrusive presence.\textsuperscript{112} On one particular occasion, tensions resulting from a “resurgence of hostility between the new settlement and neighboring tribes” had built to the point of seriously threatening the continuation of the colony altogether. On December 1, 1822, future ACS agent, Jehudi Ashmun, successfully repelled a tribal attack in what could be described as an Alamo-type counterattack — a brave defensive cohort that defeated a vastly superior element and, in the process, acquired a mythic lore.\textsuperscript{113}

The cause of these skirmishes can also be understood through legislative policy. For instance, the Slave Trade Act of 1819 had earmarked funds specifically for the American Colonization Society’s use, but it did so conditionally — as long as the Liberian colony was correspondingly located on “a site” suitable “for receiving and maintaining Africans rescued from the slave trade.”\textsuperscript{114} A blessing and a curse, these prerequisites placed the African American colonists squarely in the line of fire. “For decades,” argues Tyler-McGraw, the slave ships conducted business “in sight of Liberia’s coastal settlements,” and there were “slave factories and barracoons in every direction.”\textsuperscript{115} The surrounding African tribesmen were concerned about the associated disruption of their own slave trade — of which they were, unfortunately, an integral part. To that end, the Liberian Colony met ongoing and fierce resistance with the Vai, Dey, Glebo, and Bassa tribal groups, many of which were intermediary slave brokers working in tandem with incoming slaveholding vessels.\textsuperscript{116} These never-ending tensions exploded on the night of June 10, 1835, when the “Bassas, led by King Joe Harris, attacked the settlement, set fire to the buildings, and massacred twenty-two members of the emigrant party.”\textsuperscript{117} A six-month war ensued that consequentially affected tribesman but also their associated Anglo shipmasters, who relied on human cargo that was, ironically, America-bound.

\textbf{Liberia: When the Solution Re-creates the Problem}

No matter how well intentioned the solutions of the American Colonization Society may have appeared, the results were inevitably bound to a complicated web of ironies and contradictions that implicated both Anglo and African Americans. Note that the Liberian colonization project — the expressed purpose for which the ACS was first created — proposed the \textit{export} of outbound American slaves to Liberia as well as their potential support in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112} Tyler-McGraw 130.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Tyler-McGraw 131.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Tyler-McGraw 160.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Tyler-McGraw 160.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Tyler-McGraw 137.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Tyler-McGraw 138.
\end{itemize}
preventing the further import of in-bound slaves to America. That is, by “maintain[ing] a friendly intercourse with . . . neighboring tribes” and “exerting upon them the most salutary influence,” as an October 12, 1827 pro-colonization Freedom’s Journal article argued, the ACS proposed to suppress the slave industry by attacking it at its origin and thereby curtailing the availability of human cargo altogether.118 But all this says nothing of the continued demand for slave labor required by the American southern planter class, a large percentage of which were already long-standing and influential members of the ACS.

By enlisting the support of the victims of slavery — American ex-slaves — who would in turn purportedly combat the commerce of slavery at its source is, in itself, a contradiction in terms. The American slave was — in every possible respect — a commodified end-product of slave commerce, a tradable asset or property made possible only through the institution of slavery. In the end, the ex-slave, could only successfully affect slavery in Liberia in proportion to the rate at which its need was decreased in America. As the United States took increasing interest in the territories to the West, it likewise guaranteed not only a continued but ever-increasing reliance on slave labor to drive this expansion forward — especially since the climate of the soon-to-be-acquired Southwest was deemed particularly suited to tobacco and cotton.

If Sonora, Mexico symbolized filibustering or expansionist fanaticism at its worst, then Liberia was simply the flipside of the same nation-building coin, or a corresponding facet of Manifest Destiny’s overall design. The large-scale buildup of slave-based agricultural industries accounted for much of America’s otherwise improbable growth in the nineteenth century, as historian Laird W. Bergad makes clear: “through the course of the nineteenth century the U.S. economy was one of the fastest growing in the world,” becoming a “leading force in the international economy” due to its “extraordinary growth of exports fueled by the European industrial revolution’s demand for . . . cotton.”119 However, such economic growth likewise gave rise to another demographic reality altogether. An ever-growing manumitted or free Black populace also now necessitated the need for plans to effectively rein in their inescapable presence. De-populating America of its surplus African American masses via colonization would have simultaneously eased Anglo fears regarding both revolt and free labor competition while also increasing the comparative Anglo per capita total. Manifest Destiny and its slave engine undoubtedly produced its own system-based anomalies — an increasingly integrated free-Black populace — and as such needed to be recalibrated or adjusted accordingly.

The solution? Under the guise of ordered repatriation, Black Liberians were sent overseas following the general guidance of Anglo liaisons, or colonial

118 Freedom’s Journal October 12, 1827; October 5, 1827.
agents, who subsequently administrated the Black colony’s development. Functioning as tutors of expansionist doctrine, colonial agents, like Jehudi Ashmun, negotiated binding treaties with neighboring tribes in much the same manner and tradition as the Anglo settlers of Northeast America. The following letter from Agent Ashmun appeared in a September 28, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article, illustrating his land-bargaining methods: “It is now ascertained, beyond all doubt, that the inland tribes are anxious to open a direct communication with the colony . . . . Arrangements are making accordingly to effect . . . amicable negotiations with the coast tribes, and Mr. Ashmun thinks there is a promise of speedy and entire success.”120 As Mr. Ashmun zealously overstated his progress here, negotiations were instead typically slow and dangerous, often pitting Black colonist against Black tribesman. If Black colonists did defend their new overseas homeland from unruly natives, it was more likely out of a need to simply survive the resulting vicious intra-racial rivalries, many of which were based on comparing and valorizing the Anglicized customs and mannerisms of the Black cultured colonists against those of the so-called primitive native.

This cultural grandstanding, if you will, was intentional and even seen as visible proof that civilization was indeed marching onward into Africa. Tying in Liberian colonization with later-California settlement, African American colonists were often urged “to show as much initiative in” emigrating to Liberia “as local white families” had shown “in moving to California.”121 A prominent ACS leader further claimed that it would ultimately be “the cultural achievements of” well-educated “returning African Americans” that “restore[d] Africa to its former glories.”122 But as Blyden has previously suggested, African American colonists did not so much bring culture as they brought a specific Euro American ideal of culture. “Believ[ing] that everything American was superior,” the Black colonists merely emulated and carried abroad the same underlying justifications of expansionism — or Manifest Destiny — that were later manifestly expressed in the Southwest during Ramírez’s time.123 This much was apparently quite clear to most African American leaders throughout Russwurm’s editorial tenure, and especially so for a contributor of an August 31, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* commentary who forthrightly argued that if the ACS wished to appeal on behalf of African Americans, then let it advocate for the creation of a unique and valued Black community here — on American soil.124

120 *Freedom’s Journal* September 28, 1827
121 Tyler-McGraw 76.
122 Tyler-McGraw 152-52.
123 Temperley 86-87; Tyler-McGraw 179.
124 “Let the friends of the people of colour [the ACS] endeavor to make an intelligent and respectable community of colour in this country, if they wish to facilitate emancipation; this will appeal to
La Estrella del Occidente: Francisco P. Ramírez, Editor

As Ramírez moved in 1860 from El Clamor Público [The Public Outcry] to La Estrella del Occidente [Star of the West], the newspaper names themselves seemed to evoke a promising transition from ordeal to trend-setting oasis. However, just as with Liberia, Sonora was equally beset with its own set of challenges and contradictions. Kanellos has identified three categories of United States Hispanic newspapers: native, immigrant, and exile. It may be necessary for the purposes of this study to consider yet a fourth — self-exile literature. What also makes this proposed fourth category even more intriguing is that, in Ramírez’s particular case, he withdrew simultaneously from and to his own former country.¹²⁵

On December 17, 1859, Ramírez printed the following El Clamor Público advertisement which in many ways portentously marked his official departure: “For Sale: The printing press of El Clamor Público. The items include all those that are most useful and required for a regular printing press. Inquire immediately with F. P. Ramírez.”¹²⁶ In the subsequent issue — the second to last — Ramírez further articulated his intention to relocate on December 24, 1859, stating that a personal summons from the Governor of Sonora was a major constituting factor in his decision.¹²⁷ Clearly, this plea closely resembles the manner and tone that Russwurm himself used when exiting a similarly embarrassing situation, one that involved the unexpected disloyalty of his target audience.

When Ramírez finally moved south to Ures in 1860, he not only officially assumed the title and duties of the editor-in-chief of La Estrella de Occidente, but also those of the State Director of Public Printing as well.¹²⁸ By all accounts, Ramírez’s dual appointment was indeed a coveted bureaucratic arrangement, particularly in relation to other various ranks within the Sonoran administration. However, a May 17, 1861 La Estrella del Occidente article strongly implies that the Sonoran state was already showing signs of financial

¹²⁵ Kanellos and Martell 6.
¹²⁷ “El Gobernador Pesqueira se ha servido honrarnos con una invitación para que nos traslademos al Estado de Sonora con el fin de tomar la direccion del Periódico Oficial” [“Governor Pesqueira has honored us with an invitation to relocate to the State of Sonora with the aim of assuming management of its Official Newspaper”]. El Clamor Público December 24, 1859.
¹²⁸ Gutiérrez 23; Kanellos and Martell 91.
strain as government-issued funds were often delayed. The State of Sonora “was nearly bankrupt,” argues Gray, and state-appointed employees “seldom received their full salaries.” These troubles could likely be situated in and linked to Governor Pesqueira’s liberalist overturning of traditional state powers, as argued in Rodolfo F. Acuña’s *Sonoran Strongman: Ignacio Pesqueira and his Times*. According to Acuña, Pesqueira’s rise to power was predominantly due to the efforts of “middle-class merchants — nineteenth century Liberals” who fought to capsize the economic power base of the existing “large rancho class,” hence the ensuing and long-standing political and economic melee into which Ramírez was later thrust. In addition, it may be useful to bear in mind that the Sonoran colonization scheme remained, by comparison, far less sophisticated and not nearly as well sustained monetarily as its Liberian counterpart — the latter enjoying extensive campaigning from the American Colonization Society as well as ongoing United States presidential and congressional support.

### Natives and Pirates: Social Unrest in the Sonoran Utopia

Much more troublesome was the literally centuries-old presence of Native retaliation and assault. Apart from the aforementioned political uprisings, Chiricahua Apache and Comanche attacks were not only common but had long become legendary on both sides of the newly-formed borderlands — Northern Sonora, Mexico as well as Southern Arizona (post-1853 Gadsden Purchase).

*El Clamor Público* published its first mixed report regarding potential civil unrest in Sonora in July 26, 1856—the first of its kind up to that date: “We’ve just received reports from Sonora. The political state of affairs is not as good as we’d wish.” Later, on June 29 and July 6, 1860, Ramírez published two reports of Native American incursions associated with the now-famed Apache, Cochise, in *La Estrella del Occidente*, wherein Governor Pesqueira attempted to appease marauding Indians with large cash payments in return for a cease to hostilities. A year prior to Ramírez’s arrival in Sonora, the famed Apache, Geronimo, swore “vengeance on [all] Mexicans” in retaliation for the brutal murders of his mother, wife, and three children by Sonoran Mexican irregular forces. Consolidating forces with the neighboring Chiricahua tribe, Geronimo embarked on an intense guerilla campaign that included frequent raids into

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129 Bryan Gray 29.
131 Bryan Gray 29.
Sonora, Mexico during the summer of 1859. This was, in fact, the inception of a protracted war that continued for fifteen years.\footnote{B. Odie Faulk, The Geronimo Campaign (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 21-22.}

Complicating matters further, Sonora at that time constituted what many Americans assumed would be a likely second territorial annexation. Both Henry Crabb and William Walker had conducted pirating expeditions into northern Mexico and Central America well after the 1848 Mexican-American War, but were ultimately unsuccessful in their efforts. In fact, had it not been for the relatively recent cessation of American filibustering activities in northern Mexico circa 1860, Ramirez might well have decided against relocating, governor invitation or not. The first of these attempts was by none other than William Walker, who in late 1853 — only five years after the Mexican American War — attempted to “gain possession of [the rest of] Mexico, by first taking the Northern provinces,” beginning with Sonora.\footnote{V. William Well, Walker’s Expedition to Nicaragua; A History of the Central American War and the Sonora and Kinney Expeditions (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1856) 28.} On December 7, 1853, Walker, already the self-proclaimed President of the Republic of Lower California, was reinforced with approximately one hundred heavily armed volunteers from San Francisco.\footnote{Amazed at the apparent immunity with which Walker’s army went about, Wells notes that “it could scarcely be credited that an armed party were thus leaving the city without the slightest opposition on the part of the authorities.” Well 30-31.} Ultimately beset by starvation and deserters, what little remained of Walker’s Sonoran expedition eventually surrendered to the American military in San Diego on May 8, 1854. Officially charged with “violat[ing] the Neutrality Laws of the United States,” Walker nevertheless became an instant San Francisco Bay Area celebrity, with “the greatest excitement prevail[ing] throughout California.”\footnote{Well 37.} While awaiting trial, Walker’s temporary boarding room was frequented by some of the most powerful and influential San Franciscans, many of whom were notably excited to hear of Walker’s potential filibustering plans.\footnote{Well 37, 39-40.} Acquitted of all charges, Walker later resumed his well-funded pirating activities in Nicaragua, only to be executed by firing squad on September 12, 1860 in Trujillo, Honduras by the Honduran Army.

As a territory well “renowned for its mineral wealth,” Sonora was coveted by various commercial mining operations.\footnote{Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper Collins, 1988) 84.} Charles D. Poston, owner of the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, evidently exploited the already-strained Mexican/Apache situation by negotiating a number of expedient treaties with Apache leaders. These arrangements essentially guaranteed
Natives the so-called permission to raid adjacent Sonoran territory with impunity, even promising United States military protection in the event of a Mexican retaliation.  

So conveniently disruptive were the results that entrepreneurial miner, Sylvester Mowry, offered the following commentary to the Geographical Society in New York on February 3, 1859: “The Apache Indian is preparing Sonora for the rule of a higher civilization than the Mexican. In the past half century the Mexican element has disappeared from what is now called Arizona, before the devastating career of the Apache. It is everyday retreating further south, leaving to us (when the time is ripe for our own possession) the territory without the population.”

Riding this wave of engineered destabilization, former California Whig state senator, Henry Crabb, yet another self-stylized raider of nations, conducted his own filibustering expedition in Sonora on March 26, 1858. According to historian Moisés González Navarro, Crabb and 104 armed volunteers “notified the prefect of Altar of [their] intention” to settle Sonora “under the laws of colonization.” Unlike his predecessor, William Walker, Crabb was afforded less time to formalize official negotiations. After disregarding repeated requests to vacate, Governor Pesqueira and his troops attacked and defeated Crabb’s “Arizona Colonization Company,” executing the great majority of survivors on the spot. As both an act of ultimate defiance and a warning to all future raiders, the Sonoran Army decapitated Crabb and preserved his head in alcohol as a military keepsake.

**Sonora: The City of Lost Angels Re-visited**

As we have seen, far from being the potential haven promoted in the pages of *El Clamor Público*, Sonora was instead a cauldron of strife caught between on-going Apache-based territorial disputes and the expansionist intentions of Anglo Americans bent on a presumed second annexation. For Ramírez, this latter point must have proved not only especially disheartening but also eerily familiar to what had previously transpired in Los Angeles. One can only speculate as to whether Ramírez’s motivations for moving southward likewise included an underlying desire to not only historically witness and document but also to cover journalistically the further annexation of Mexico’s northernmost territories.

140 Acuña 86.
Later-period documents do, in fact, support these suppositions, as an 1879 communiqué from Senator Sam Houston reveals:

Among other secrets, it may now be told that President Buchanan and his cabinet, at the instigation of powerful capitalists in New York and New England, had agreed to occupy northern Sonora by the regular army and submit the matter to Congress afterwards. Ben McCullough was sent out as agent to select the military line, and Robert Rose was sent as consul to Guaymas with an American flag prepared expressly to hoist over that interesting seaport upon receiving proper orders.¹⁴⁴

Much like Colonel John Fremont in 1845-46, a well-manned and armed expedition led by Charles P. Stone was sent by Washington, D.C. in 1859 to survey public lands in Sonora. However, when “Stone’s party resembled a military operation more than a survey team,” Pesqueira ordered his removal.¹⁴⁵ In swift fashion, the United States government dispatched the warship USS St. Mary’s to the Gulf of California not only to support, but also to demand the continuation of Stone’s overland survey.¹⁴⁶ Had it not been for the pending complications leading up to American Civil War, which ultimately took overriding precedence, the United States/Mexico southern border may well have existed south of the Guaymas seaport today.¹⁴⁷

An extension of the destabilization forces that culturally and politically overturned Los Angeles, Sonora merely reflected the same Anglo-based expansionist designs that Ramírez both retreated from and opposed in El Clamor Público. In this way, the Sonoran colony can be conceptually re-defined as not only an idyllic haven but a provisional political refugee site — that is, an alternative community that was moving southward in anticipation and ahead of Manifest Destiny’s pace. Unlike Liberia, Sonora did not lie separated by an ocean but rather connected by what many United States presidents and congressmen regarded as a tenuous and re-negotiable southern border line, as was made quite clear by the 1853 Gadsden Purchase as well as various U.S.-sanctioned filibustering expeditions conducted during this period. Moreover, it was the 1856 election of pro-slavery Democratic candidate, James Buchanan,

¹⁴⁴ Acuña 87.
¹⁴⁵ Acuña 87-88.
¹⁴⁷ Carey McWilliams further comments on the unfortunate design of the southern US/Mexico border: “Economically, the [existing border] line made very little sense. By [not] including Guaymas in the Mexican [territorial] zone . . . , the interior basin was deprived of what might have become an extremely important seaport and the naturally advantageous and long-established commerce [which previously existed] between Sonora and Arizona was disrupted.” Carey McWilliams, North From Mexico: The Spanish-speaking People of the United States (New York: Greenwood P, 1968) 59-60.
along with the subsequent 1857 Dred Scott decision which further galvanized the national urgency to seek and annex lands that were potentially suitable to the expansion of slavery.

These combined factors more precisely situate Ramírez’s self-exile as occurring within the ever-changing currents of an expansionist rip tide. While Ramírez may have certainly departed a Los Angeles tinged with pro-slavery, Know-Nothing Party allegiances, he nonetheless later found himself living squarely within the tidal flow of the same Democratic-based, expansionist philosophies in Sonora, only 600 miles southward. Perhaps Ramírez had, after all, anticipated the inevitable, and “link[ed] the situation in California, Arizona’s Gadsden Purchase and filibustering in Sonora to the destiny of all Latin America.” If so, Ramírez accurately foretold a (manifest) destiny that would have continued unabated had it not been for the American Civil War as implied in the following March 3, 1857 El Clamor Público commentary: “. . . in the end, Mexico w[ill] disappear from the catalog of nations, [and] like a batch of briar patches, [will be] sold at retail by the piece and by the yard . . . , like slices of cheese.”

The realities that awaited both Russwurm and Ramírez in Liberia and Sonoma were challenging as well as disappointing. I would now like to examine how cultural survival was yet obtainable to those who did not emigrate abroad. To that end, I will examine the militant campaigns of both David Walker and Juan Flores — two outlaws who chose to confront and defy Anglo-based institutional subjugation directly. I will also review some rhetorical strategies of double-talk that were regularly deployed in both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público as defensive counter-tactics against sociocultural erasure. Finally, I will examine the ways in which Russwurm and Ramírez established an enduring legacy of narrative subjectivity within Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público — a process that ultimately reasserts the right to own one’s voice, in spite of a dominant culture that otherwise demands complicity.

148 Kanellos "Resisting the American Empire" 15-16.
149 El Clamor Público March 3, 1857; Kanellos, “Resisting the American Empire” 15.
Chapter 4 – ‘If We Stay, Then What?’: Recourses for Surviving Nineteenth-Century America

Part 1: Black and Brown Militancy: David Walker and Juan Flores

For those individuals who did not opt for the utopia homelands of Liberia or Sonora, a central question yet remained: how does one survive in an increasingly hostile, Euro-centric America? How does one create social meaning and identity in an environment which systematically denies one’s humanity and dignity? As we shall see, both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público documented abundant examples of individuals who not only resisted but also refused to “ape” — to use John Pendleton Kennedy’s term — or emulate the cultural ideals of Anglo-America.¹ Nineteenth-century history has labeled them “radicals” and “outlaws.”

David Walker: Immediate Emancipation By Any Means Necessary

Unlike Russwurm and Cornish, not all African Americans in the nineteenth century shared a gradual emancipationist viewpoint. By the 1820s, Black anti-slavery rhetoric had indeed become frequently confrontational, if not outright radical.² Militant activists even went so far as to sometimes “disregard . . . the Constitution in [their] zeal to liberate the slave” — an option that, to immediate emancipationists such as David Walker and William Lloyd Garrison, seemed entirely justifiable, if not unavoidable.³

Involved with Freedom’s Journal from the outset, Walker became a principal publication agent for the journal and repeatedly sponsored meetings with influential African American merchants and businessmen in order to raise needed resources for the newspaper.⁴ Firmly grounded in the principles of African American self-help and solidarity, Walker was also a frequent and outspoken contributor to Freedom’s Journal, often publishing critical commentaries that were forthright and uncompromising in their stance.⁵

¹ In John Pendleton Kennedy’s popular plantation novel, Swallow Barn, Mark Littleton at one point philosophically reflects upon the African American slave’s ability to mimic the mannerisms of their Anglo masters: “The younger ones are equally to be remarked for aping the style of the present time.” John Pendleton Kennedy, Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion (New York: The Knickerbocker P, 1893) 453.


⁴ Brewer 46.

⁵ Bacon 113.
None of Walker’s *Freedom’s Journal* commentaries would equal the dangerously seditious tone of his later independently published 1829 *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Written as a protest-like, literary treatise, Walker’s *Appeal* challenged white notions of Black complicity while rigorously asserting the sovereign right to seek and procure immediate emancipation — through violence if necessary. The overall effect was manifold. For whites, it represented a mutinous call to arms; for African Americans, it was a summons to awaken their critical consciousness regarding slavery’s associated ills.\(^6\)

Essentially impelling his slumbering brethren to ponder well the “details of [their own] domination” — to borrow Genaro Padilla’s phrase — Walker’s *Appeal* not only became an instant milestone in African American resistance-based protest but also, as some scholars would argue, the very birthplace of Black militancy.\(^7\)

In reading the *Appeal*, it is not difficult to ascertain why it generated a corresponding flurry of protest amongst southern slave owners. For one thing, similar to Sterling A. Brown’s “Slim in Hell,”\(^8\) Walker metaphorically regards white racism and persecution as “demon-like” in nature: “The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and bloodthirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority . . . and we see them acting more like devils than accountable men.”\(^9\) The *Appeal* also situates demon-likeness as ultimately manifesting in the self-deprecating behavior of Blacks themselves — or, as Suzanne Lipsky has argued, in patterns of internalized oppression.\(^10\) Viewing these self-imposed patterns as long-standing or endemic pathologies, Walker further proposes that they socially exist as sophisticated and self-regulating artforms of veiled self-hatred.\(^11\)

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9 Walker 37.


11 “Have you [Anglo-Americans] not, on the contrary, entered among us, and learnt us the art of throat-cutting, by setting us to fight, one against another, to take each other as prisoners of war, and sell [Black slaves] to you for small bits of calicoes, old swords, knives . . . [in order] to make slaves for you and your children?” Walker 62.
In addition, Walker points to cultural ignorance as the principal catalyst that both synthesizes and connects Anglo-based oppression to African American intra-racial combativeness. Referencing his own experience, Walker is here alluding to Russwurm’s fall from grace, and how he bore personal witness to multiple intra-racial attacks on the once-popular editor of *Freedom’s Journal*. This was apparent in April 1828 at a Boston meeting intended to determine whether *Freedom’s Journal* was in fact being administered in ways that were satisfactory to the African American community. Although Walker and others firmly advocated on behalf of Russwurm’s editorial abilities, there yet remained fierce African American opposition by many who were apparently overtly antagonistic to the editor. For better or worse, a berated Russwurm departed for Liberia shortly afterwards, completely without fanfare.

**Redeeming Manhood and Community through Militancy**

There is still another way to re-contextualize intra-racial hostility, and Walker actually considers alternate contexts for Black aggression in the second (and most controversial) half of the *Appeal*. Specifically concerning in-fighting, the author poses the following questions: at what point do the oppressed expressly conclude that they themselves constitute the sole target of their aggression — as opposed to their oppressors? Are there alternative ways to envision a constructive militancy, especially as it concerns slavery, where such aggression is justifiably redirected towards the underlying source one’s oppression?

Throughout the *Appeal*, Walker peppers his treatise with particularly vicious examples of intra-racial antagonism. In the following excerpt, we find Walker yet again allegorically re-emphasizing the critical costs of racial in-fighting:

> [W]e may see there, a son take his mother, who bore almost the pains of death to give him birth, and by the command of a [slave master] tyrant, strip her as naked as she came into the world, and apply the cowhide to her, until she falls a victim to death in the road! He may see a husband take his dear wife, not unfrequently in a pregnant state, and perhaps far advanced, and beat her for an unmerciful [slave master] wretch, until his infant falls a lifeless lump at her feet.

Constantly maneuvering his readers to admit the unavoidable (and painful) dilemma of self-hatred, Walker eventually proposes a solution that, while immoderate, is nonetheless tactically incisive: if Anglos can initiate in-fighting among African Americans with sinister or “demon-like” intent, then proactively

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12 Walker 79.
13 Walker 41.
resisting such intent is not only biblically justifiable but also an expressed sign of true African American manhood. If such resistance involves violence, it would, according to Walker, merely constitute a wrathful coextension of God’s own divine retribution.

To be sure, as historians Hine and Jenkins argue in *A Question of Manhood*, nineteenth-century African American masculine values were uniquely tied to resistance, often involving defiance-based requisites that altogether differed in key ways from that of Anglo American men:

Despite the aims of the slaveholders, a strong and noble sense of what it meant to be a Black male developed in the eighteenth century among both slaves and free Blacks. While this conception of manliness had in some instances been transported from Africa, it was during the regime of slavery that it took deep root and flourished. The driving force behind this manhood was the idea that freedom, equality, and masculine pride were the ultimate values for a [Black] man to pursue.¹⁴

Building upon this base premise, Jacqueline Bacon likewise argues that for nineteenth-century African American males defying oppression and manhood were often so integrally connected that outward expressions of opposition-based violence were not unthinkable. In fact, *Freedom’s Journal* itself — although expressly moderate in terms of advocating violence-based resistance — occasionally published articles espousing a particular manhood that explicitly resisted one’s oppressors, even with physical force if need be.

In Article IV of the *Appeal*, Walker further broadens his definition of defiance-based manhood to include resistive action that operates in service of a larger cultural awareness, or community-based social consciousness: “Oh! My coloured brethren, all over the world, when shall we arise from this death-like apathy?—and be men!! You will notice, if we ever become men, (I mean respectable men such as other people are,) we must exert ourselves to the full.” Rising from a “death-like apathy” and “exerting [one]self to the full[est]” here involves one’s utilization of civil disobedience as a political leverage for achieving both personal redemption as a man as well as cultural enlightenment as a people. Or, to put it another way, resistive action was for Walker concurrent with one’s personal awareness regarding the aspects of his own oppression as well as a larger, collective understanding of community-based equality and justice. Black masculine assertion of individual authority was in this manner inextricably linked to community-based power as a whole.¹⁵ For these reasons, public performativity of black masculinity was also integrated into public speeches and sermons, ultimately granting African American men

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¹⁵ Bacon 123.
the authoritative latitude to articulate communal duties otherwise denied to the African American community at large.  

**David Walker’s Multi-class Resistance**

The real value — and consequent danger — of Walker’s *Appeal* came from its far-reaching circulation within the slave class itself. As mentioned earlier, this was an overriding concern to an alarmed planter class, and many steps were implemented to further prevent its distribution. Moreover, as James Horton notes in the documentary film, *Slave Catchers, Slave Resisters*, “this [wa]s their worst nightmare” because the *Appeal* was “being issued by a person outside the South that [they] cannot control.” Again, the potential for a multi-class coalition in the South was similar in many respects to the 1856 Juan Flores Revolution. However, in place of a lower and middle-class alliance, the *Appeal* instead galvanized a Northern Free and Southern Slave effort, merging two traditionally divergent caste ranks into a formidable whole.

Walker successfully smuggled three consecutive editions of the *Appeal* far into the South, which were then smuggled into various slave quarters using rather ingenious methods. As free African American sailors arrived in seaports throughout the South, many courageously concealed the *Appeal* within the loaded merchandise itself — all at a tremendous danger to themselves — especially after legislative dictates known as the “Negro Seaman Laws” were approved by Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana port authorities. While docked, Black shipmates were legally required to be “isolate[d] . . . from the rest of the Black community—free or slave.” Temporarily incarcerating free Black sailors while in port, any who were fortunate enough to forego provisional imprisonment were often open game for slave hunters — regardless of the Black sailor’s free status.

Knowing full well the seditious nature of his treatise, Walker nonetheless asks readers to ponder the following rhetorical question: “Why do they search vessels, &c. when entering the harbours of tyrannical States, to see if any of

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16 Bacon 127.
19 Slave Catchers, Slave Resisters 2005. Under the Negro Seaman Laws, “free black sailors aboard out-of-state or foreign ships calling to South Carolina ports were to be seized and imprisoned until their vessels were ready to depart. The law also provided that the ship’s captain was to be financially responsible for paying the expenses of the imprisoned seaman’s detention.” Randall Kennedy, “Dred Scott and African American Citizenship,” *Diversity and Citizenship: Rediscovering American Nationhood* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995) 107.
20 Slave Catchers, Slave Resisters 2005.
my Books can be found, for fear that my brethren will get them to read[?]”

Indeed, Walker’s so-called treasonous influence was clearly building, and the imagined collaboration between Free Northern Black sailors and Southern slaves clearly demonstrated an organizational and tactical prowess that implied an ominous potential for larger scale operations. Looming in the background, the 1791 Haitian slave rebellion was, for many southern Anglos, legitimate grounds for concern. Could a successful Haitian-like revolt be repeated on American soil? Seen as a celebration of Black self-determination, such a precedent directly contradicted or conceptually undermined the assumed preeminence of Anglo hegemonic control.

And Walker’s words left no room to doubt that he was not only playing up to Anglo apprehensions but equally to Black slave potential as well. In no unclear terms, the Appeal cautions Anglos to rethink their assumptions regarding Black complicity and that eventual retribution would be an imminent certainty: “I know that thousands will doubt — they think they have us so well secured in wretchedness . . . , that it is impossible for such things to occur. . . . The whites know this . . . ; they know that they have done us so much injury, they are afraid that we, being men, and not brutes, will retaliate, and woe will be to them; [And so they] make the best of their time, while it lasts.” Walker even goes so far as to advocate justifiable homicide as an inescapable possibility for Blacks — both free and enslaved — who are otherwise systematically barred from legally exercising their divinely ordained human and civil rights. If Anglos could indiscriminately slaughter African American slaves and freemen at will, Walker reasons, then a proportionally graded defense is not only warranted, but also dutifully required.

The potential threat of a combined Northern Free and Southern Slave coordinated plot was clearly alarming for southern whites. But why? First, similar to the “Juan Flores Revolution,” an awareness of shared persecution between different subjugated caste groups is fundamentally detrimental to the overall task of domination. If there is a collective realization of mutual loss, then the mysterious illusion of inevitability regarding one’s subordinate social position is no longer as certain. Second, it redirects internalized or self-hate based aggression onto its originating source. And third, it thoroughly destabilizes the inducement that Free Blacks have “availed [themselves] of a

21 Walker 91.
22 Bacon 18.
23 Walker 91, 81.
24 “If you commence (to escape), make sure work—do not trifle, for they will not trifle with you—they want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us in order to subject us to that wretched condition—therefore, if there is an attempt by us, kill or be killed . . . ;] and believe this, that it is no more harm for you to kill a man, who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty.” Walker 45-46.
more progressive sociocultural national experience,” causing members of the
Free Black class to reconsider the hidden costs of caste-based divisiveness. Inculcating such influence was inherently dangerous, however, and Walker admitted that much: “I expect some will try to put me to death, to strike terror into others, and to obliterate from” the Northern Black and Southern Slave “minds the notion of freedom.” Less than one year after the publication of the Appeal, Walker was found dead on the doorsteps of his Boston home. Some scholars have speculated murder, while others conclude that he died of natural causes (tuberculosis). Regardless, this looming threat to Anglo hegemonic control had been, in a rather expeditious manner, effectively silenced.

“A Strange Metamorphosis”: From Rural Peasant to Insurgent

When Leonard Pitt noted that 1850s Los Angeles was nearing the brink of a race war, he was specifically referring to the collective sense of bitterness and resentment that had long been brewing in Mexican American communities across California. Working-class Latinos, of all nationalities, who lacked the monetary and political resources to augment their life chances, were particularly vulnerable to social discontent. Such was apparent to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, California’s former military commander in 1833, who in his famed Recuerdos Históricos y Personales Tocantes a la Alta California observed that “most of the young who had been so unjustly despoiled, thirsty for vengeance, filled the ranks of [outlaw] Joaquín Murrieta, and under his leadership were able to revenge some of the insults that the North American people had inflicted upon them.” Even more intriguing, however, is the process by which these former peasants were transformed into guerilla fighters.

Many historians have noted the curious transfigurative change that took place within the Latino working class circa 1850, and especially the contrasting differences between their now-insubordinate and/or radical conduct and their previously rural mannerisms. In his 1915 historical sketch, A History of California and an Extended History of Los Angeles, historian James Miller Guinn describes the following:

25 Padilla 32.
26 Walker 42.
28 “. . . la mayor parte de los jóvenes que son tanta injusticia habían sido despojados, sedientos de venganza, se dirigieron a engrosar las filas de Joaquín Murrieta y bajo las ordenas de ese temido bandido pudieron desquitar parte de los agravios que la raza norte americana les había inferido.” Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Recuerdos Históricos y Personales Tocantes a la Alta California (UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library, 1769–1849) MS., Vol 5, 237.
A strange metamorphosis took place in the character of the lower classes of the native Californians after the conquest . . . . Before the conquest by the Americans they were a peaceful and contended people. There were no organized bands of outlaws among them . . . [However,] the Americans not only took possession of their country and its government, but in many cases they despoiled them of their ancestral acres and their personal property . . . . They were often treated by the rougher American element as aliens and intruders, who had no right in the land of their birth.  

Except for the Californio landed gentry who were at times able to temporarily fend off a comparatively moderate dispossession, the great majority of working-class Mexican Americans were completely overwhelmed by the economic and political divestment from the outset. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Mexican American upper-class more often than not actively facilitated the already fast-paced disenfranchisement of their Mexican American working-class brethren by forging solid political alliances with Anglo-based repressive and ideological state apparatuses. Other factors aside, it was principally this well-placed and formidable “schism between establishment Mexicans and cholos [lower-class Mexican Americans]” that not only foiled a potential multi-class opposition movement, but also ultimately undermined the socioeconomic prospects of the Mexican American working-class as well — a social group who stood to lose the most during the post-1848 transition.

In strictly economic terms, the cholo was already tenuously tethered at the bottom rung of the pre-1848 Mexican economy, and the American occupation afterwards seemed only to exacerbate further his economic dilemma. In fact, most Mexican American laborers not only remained disproportionately concentrated in these lower-paid sectors but also within specific cattle-based industries — sequestered to traditional Californio markets that were otherwise irrelevant in a then-emerging capitalist economy. As Tomás Almaguer aptly notes, “Mexican workers were a belated addition to the capitalist labor market. From 1850 to 1880, numerous Mexican workers in southern California, for instance, remained largely tied to occupations in the traditional Mexican economy. Many continued to work on Mexican ranchos in the seasonal rodeos (roundups) and matanzas (slaughters).” Yet it was

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precisely because Mexican Americans were thoroughly and integrally tied to this Mexican-era “pastoral economy,” they posed no danger to the Anglo laboring classes — at least throughout the 1850s and 60s. It was only later, during the 1870s and 1880s, that a corresponding deluge of displaced — and unskilled — Mexican American laborers flooded the California market as the large-scale cattle industries became less and less relevant to the newly-formed agricultural and urban economies.\textsuperscript{33}

**The Rebel with a Cause: Juan Flores and his Multi-class Raiders**

The eventual fallout associated with this long process of working-class disenfranchisement was resisted on a collective level — either passively or actively. That is to say, if the Mexican American elite, or *gente de razón*, favored the wholehearted assimilation of the Anglo-based culture, then the Mexican American working-class, by contrast, “often preferred defiance or, at least, retention of their Hispanic tradition and cultures.”\textsuperscript{34} Such was the case with Juan Flores, a 21-year old San Quentin fugitive and part-time revolutionary.\textsuperscript{35}

Assembling a company of insurgent volunteers, the “Juan Flores Revolution” attracted and retained a most interesting assortment of recruits.\textsuperscript{36} We know from historical accounts that an appreciable number of Latinos from upper socio-economic standing actually crossed over and took up arms alongside Flores. Leonard Pitt, for instance, observed that a sizable contingent of “decent and orderly men” flanked Flores for the unspecified “generalized cause” of possibly redressing land loss issues. This much was substantiated by Almaguer’s own assessment of 1850s California when he argues that even “renowned” and elite “local families such as the Castros, Sepulvedas, Vallejos, Amadors, and Lugos” at one time or another — and through obvious desperation — became involved in rebellion-based activities that could otherwise be viewed as subversive.\textsuperscript{37}

It was the multi-class union of desperados that both surprised and alerted Anglo Los Angelesños to a possible larger looming agenda. The Flores Band in October 1856 set up garrison at Los Angeles, where they reportedly

\textsuperscript{33} Almaguer 72.


\textsuperscript{37} Almaguer 65.
fortified their ranks with members of the Mexican American laboring classes. Much more intriguing, however, is Bell’s 1881 account, which specifically details the intentional conscription of potential upper-class dissidents immediately afterwards: “Arriving” in San Juan Capistrano, “Juan [Flores] raised the standard of revolt [and] dispatched couriers to notify the rancheros and invite them to his standard.” Although the precise number of upper-class ranchero volunteers may never be known, they nonetheless combined forces with an otherwise socially-disaffected and unassimilable mestizo band. Potentially relinquishing their middle-class status permanently, the Flores incident marked the use of an oppositional strategy that deployed a multi-class resistive force — an element that apparently shook California Anglo presumptions regarding the Californio elite and its associated middle-class minions.

Historically remembered — and vilified — for the vengeful murder of Sheriff Barton and his assistants, the Flores multi-class insurgents aroused an Anglo response that anticipated a corresponding all-out Mexican American uprising. On the apparent basis of one Anglo witness who reportedly “overheard grim references to 500 confederate Mexicans lurking in the hills,” many Angeleños imagined the upstart of a potential revolution that surely would culminate in an immense southland offensive. Most noted for their pro-slavery, Democratic sympathies, the El Monte Rangers were all too eager to inflame alleged reports, claiming that Flores fully vowed to indiscriminately assassinate any and all Anglo inhabitants. All this lent an added veneer of legitimacy to the Ranger’s wholesale slaughter of Mexican Americans that soon followed — resembling more “an outdoor sport in Southern California,” according to Carey McWilliams, than the extra-legal, vigilante-based terrorism already in place.

**Momentary Multi-class Solidarity**

The violence-based campaign of the 1856 Flores incident — and, for that matter, the Joaquin Murrieta (1854) and Tiburcio Vasquez (1871-75) campaigns as well — clearly underscore and emblematize the desperate plight of the Mexican American working-class in California. But the Murrieta and Vasquez insurgent forces were comprised, for the most part of a unified underdog class which could be dismissed as the ongoing disgruntlement of the

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38 Griswold del Castillo 110.
40 Almaguer 65; Pitt 167.
41 Pitt 168.
42 Both Joaquin Murrieta and Tiburcio Vasquez organized violent guerilla-based campaigns throughout California, mostly to protest the collective mistreatment suffered at the hands of Anglos.
marginalized classes. On the other hand, the Flores incident historically documents and strongly implies the potential for a collective middle and under-class resistance.

It was, then, this multi-class phenomenon that drew the following joint-response from a multi-ethnic coalition of California vigilantes, as Pitt’s description demonstrates in the following excerpt:

In a burst of good faith, a band of Californios, supplied with sixty horses by Tomás Sanchez and Andrés Pico and led by General Pico himself, rode away from the [Sheriff Barton] funeral to flush out the Mexicans and Californians from their lair. The “El Monte boys” followed Pico’s rangers on Tuesday morning, as did a party of French and German settlers, another [group] of gringos from Los Angeles, and still another from San Bernardino. Charged with coordinating the assault, the General enlisted the aid of Indian scouts, who quickly located the enemy camp below San Juan [Capistrano].

During the ensuing chase, not only was each vigilante heavily armed, but both Californio elite and Anglo were collaboratively determined to lynch any Mexican American, if only as a warning to any potential subversives in the making.

Despite the repeated and predictable assistance of the Californio elite, the multi-class Flores incident represented a crucial turning point in Mexican American/Anglo race relations in California. The “Juan Flores Revolution” in essence conjoined the collective efforts of both middle and working classes to confront the systematic disenfranchisement of the Latino populace as a unified whole. But it is important to note here that the “Juan Flores Revolution” also created the perfect conditions to justify a further galvanization of the already deep-seated rift existing between the Californio upper/middle and working/under classes.

With the subsequent construction of Southern Pacific railroad in the late 1860s, a new Anglo middle-class emigrated in from the Midwest, and by the 1890s, the political allegiances of either the upper or middle-class Mexican Americans — who by that time were already aged, economically displaced, and culturally irrelevant — was neither needed nor requested.

The “Juan Flores Revolution” did present, however briefly, a small hopeful moment when a multi-class coalition not only existed but also acted. And, as with many other resistance-based uprisings, the moment was extinguished as swiftly as it was sparked. To more broadly understand the multi-class dynamics of mid-nineteenth-century Californios as a whole, Padilla’s following analysis becomes particularly useful:

43 Pitt 169.

44 Bell Reminiscences of a Ranger 390-391.
Where there is dissent from sectors of the subjugated group, perhaps from those who occupy the lower social strata and whose resentments are not compromised by having to protect their class status, the dominating culture must bring the precolonial elites into closer proximity with its structures of power, must make these disposed elites deceive themselves into thinking they occupy positions of authority, must turn that carefully monitored authority against those sectors that openly resist.”

While perhaps not entirely suffering the violence-based persecution of the Mexican American working and under-classes, the landed Californio middle-class on October 1856 nevertheless saw all their collective destinies tied to one another. And it was precisely this awareness of a shared persecution that was not only dangerous, but indicting to the allied Anglo/Californio upper-class elite as well. “As in all wars of conquest,” Padilla further observes, “the dominant culture” must inevitably ensure that “the subjugated” middle and working classes “forget the details of its” shared “domination as a way of making it believe that it has not surrendered so much as availed itself of a more progressive sociocultural national experience.”

A combined class coalition obfuscates prescribed social boundaries and, in this way, heightens the possibility of a shared awareness regarding their mutual domination — a collective consciousness that is otherwise easily dampened. In October 1856, both the Mexican American middle and working classes indeed refused to overlook the “details” of their subjugation — and paid dearly for it.

Part 2: Duplicitous Discursive Strategies: Black and Brown “Double-Talk”

For those not opting for the utopist homelands of Sonora or Liberia, another option — besides militancy — yet remained. Padilla’s concept of “contestatory rhetorical strategies” — or, the passive-aggressive act of pragmatically appeasing dominant culture norms while simultaneously remaining resistive to absolute submission — will be helpful here in clarifying the workings of this next option. While Padilla’s text concerns itself primarily with Mexican-American autobiography, his discussion of duplicitous written strategies nonetheless remains useful as a critical lens through which to examine the written modes present in both El Clamor Público and Freedom’s Journal.

Concurrent and synchronized strategies of appeasement and resistance were in fact present throughout Freedom’s Journal. We know that Freedom’s Journal adopted what scholars term a gradualist approach to emancipation, and that much is readily apparent when reading its pages. But Russwurm and Cornish also went beyond gradualism and additionally rejected any drastic

45 Padilla 33.
46 Padilla 32.
approaches or solutions that were altogether politically divisive, opting instead to circumvent any oppositional or Anglo dissention through methods that were, for lack of a better critical term, “passively-aggressive.” Such a method was clearly articulated in the following March 23, 1827 Freedom’s Journal commentary: “In the discussion of political subjects . . . , it shall never be our object to court controversy, though we must at all times consider ourselves as champions in defense of oppressed humanity.” The following question then remains: in what ways could Freedom’s Journal become champions of the oppressed while likewise remaining politically neutral or passive? And in what ways was the balance between political passivity and militant assertiveness achieved?

Soft Militancy: Conduct-based Resistance

Thomas Beal offers us an insightful observation that addresses these questions above: “The [Freedom’s Journal] editors encouraged readers to fight prejudice by living morally up-right lives. They could not immediately hope to eliminate the racist [or slave] system, but all self-directed efforts at moral reform would help undermine commonly held misconceptions and stereotypes about African-Americans.” Bacon pushes this notion further by reframing Beal’s argument in a slightly different way, arguing that the association connecting prejudice and moral character comprised a particularly significant dilemma for antebellum African Americans. That is, was racism in fact intrinsically tied to biological phenotype (racial stock), or did it fundamentally stem from social environmental factors (behavior) — and could the latter overcome it?

Bacon and Beal’s analyses illustrate the two-fold relation between Black praiseworthy conduct and the bigotry-inducing effect of Blackness that was a recurring concern for both Russwurm and Cornish. In fact, in a July 13, 1827 Freedom’s Journal editorial entitled “PROPRIETY OF CONDUCT,” the editors straightforwardly pronounce that “of the many important subjects which merit our consideration . . . , none deserve[s] more notice than propriety of conduct.” Utilizing one of the few means within an African American’s control, behavioral modification itself comprised a form of conduct-based defiance or resistance that sought to simultaneously offset the effects of racism while yet appearing politically moderate. “Surrounded with enemies,” a June 29, 1827 Freedom’s Journal commentary argued, “we ought not to give such an

49 Bacon 101.
50 Freedom’s Journal July 13, 1827.
occasion” to scrutinize any potentially ill-mannered behavior and in this way allow them to “speak reproachfully of us.”

On July 13, 1827 the editors further reflected on the importance of self-monitoring one’s public demeanor. At the epicenter of social scrutiny, Russwurm warned that appropriate social bearing was not only imperative for African Americans, but that behavioral delinquency from even one Black would correspondingly result in negative repercussions for the entire racial cohort.

More than this, a March 23, 1827 Freedom’s Journal article proclaimed conduct-based resistance as a form of soft militancy, a proactive way of “disarm[ing] prejudice of the weapons . . . too successfully used against [Blacks],” as well as “strengthen[ing] the hands of our friends in their efforts” to neutralize racism “in our behalf.”

Unlike typical strategies of combativeness, which often involve overt-styled confrontation, conduct-based activism instead cunningly deactivated the apparatus of prejudice in a more clandestine manner — all while disguising the overall intent of the maneuver. Forming an outward veneer of agreeable and good conduct, such compliant behavior was at once a self-preserving shield and a foundational base for prospective subversive action.

**Behavioral Recalibration**

If the “language of the oppressor could” in fact “become the tool of the oppressed,” as Bacon aptly notes, here it is actually the behavior of the oppressor that is tactically re-appropriated for seditious purposes. Or is it? I ask this question because there is an underlying premise to the conduct-based militancy model that I will further explore here. As I earlier noted, when African American contributors in Freedom’s Journal exclaimed that “the eyes of the world are upon us” and that “our enemies watch us narrowly to catch each failing,” they prescribed behavioral modifications that were both tactically moderate yet subtly resistant toward the racial parameters that bound them — conduct-based or soft militancy.

However, there is evidence in Freedom’s Journal to suggest that, in recalibrating their behavior, African Americans likely over-valorized white mannerisms and inadvertently denigrated their own organic demeanor as somehow inferior or not quite befitting of a cultured individual. Behavioral recalibration, after all, begins with the stigmatization of Blackness as a social detriment. It also assumes that African Americans themselves have absorbed the negative values associated with this artificial codification. Note the

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51 Freedom’s Journal July 29, 1827.
52 Freedom’s Journal July 13, 1827.
54 Freedom’s Journal July 13, 1827.
55 Bacon 87-88.
following excerpt from the March 23, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal*: “It is for us to convince the world by uniform propriety of conduct, industry and economy that we are worthy of esteem and patronage.” Reconstituting one’s “esteem,” then, required the act of likewise recalibrating one’s performance-based conduct to match more closely the behavioral norms that Anglos — and African Americans — assumed were innately and culturally advanced. That is, esteem or intrinsic worth for African Americans was no longer assumed but externally and thus artificially determined.

And therein lies the inherent contradiction of conduct-based soft militancy. In one sense it does in fact liberate, but only after one is thoroughly bound to an assumption of cultural insufficiency, which must itself be resolved through externally determined and emulative behavior. On the one hand, Walker’s overt or hard militancy assumed the inherent and unmitigated value of Blackness, even demanding that it co-exist laterally alongside Anglo-centric reality — by any means necessary. Freedom’s Journal, conversely, argued for refashioning oneself in both the cultural image and behavioral likeness of a standard that would, unfortunately, remain untenable for most African Americans, to say nothing of the slave class.

This gleeful hope was implied in a July 13, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article where conduct itself “promise[d] well for” the African American’s “future” and would even eventually “raise their rank in society.” Pushing this idea further, the July 19, 1827 issue of *Freedom’s Journal* boldly exclaimed, “who shall say the free negro shall not yet vie with the white man in all the ennobling attributes of his nature?” Emphasis here, of course, on “his” Anglo nature. And on December 21, 1827, a similar optimism is espoused when *Freedom’s Journal* asserts the near-similarity of both Anglos and Blacks with regards to their God-given potential to succeed — provided they begin with the same preparation, and thereby the same behavioral standards. Taken together, these are all worthy objectives, no doubt. But, again, we must (and should) ask: exactly which behavioral or cultural standard licensed one to possess the socially authorized version of an “ennobling attribute”?

**The Limits of Conduct-based Militancy**

Because early nineteenth-century African Americans were afforded few other alternatives, culturally reproducing Anglo-based behavioral standards was viewed as a viable form of soft militancy. That is, for *Freedom’s Journal*, behavioral recalibration was tantamount to championing the cause of the oppressed, despite any of its accompanying contradictions. In what would afterwards be seen as a strange retraction, however, Russwurm wholly

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57 *Freedom’s Journal* July 13, 1827.

58 *Freedom’s Journal* July 19, 1827.
abandoned “the notion that African Americans could enjoy true freedom and equality in the United States, regardless of their behavior or virtue.”  

In a disclosing February 21, 1829 *Freedom’s Journal* commentary, the long-time advocate of conduct-based resistance belatedly admitted that the United States had ultimately proven itself to be a self-sustaining contradiction — a so-called democratic nation where free African Americans were actively barred from fully exercising their constitutionally-guaranteed citizenship. In the final analysis, Liberia conclusively offered African Americans, according to Russwurm, the optimal environment to “act and feel as other responsible beings,” and where Black natural ability could develop unhindered.

Closely note the above phrase “act and feel as other responsible beings.” It contains what Padilla termed a “narrative disruption” that itself reveals an alternate embedded signification altogether. Much like Ramírez who, as Gutiérrez states, “tried to bridge the two worlds that collided in the lives of his readers,” Russwurm’s conduct-based strategy of concurrent appeasement and resistance had in itself apparently failed to produce the full integration-based affect that he previously hoped. To the contrary, regardless of behavior or virtue, no amount of performativity proved sufficiently capable of dismantling what was otherwise a well-fortified ideological prison of Anglo-based discursive signs and symbols. What Russwurm sought was perhaps in part realized, which is what Padilla has aptly described as a multi-dimensional, conduct-based medium “in which pragmatic appeasement reads at one surface . . . and contestation reads at other surfaces.”

But neither appeasement nor contestation necessarily guaranteed meaningful social integration — and much less racial acceptance.

More problematic was the potentially unrealistic all-or-nothing dichotomy that the appeasement/resistant strategy presented. Note the following March 14, 1829 *Freedom’s Journal* commentary regarding Liberia, particularly the rather extreme departure here from Russwurm’s earlier advocacy of conduct-based assimilation:

> We consider it a waste of words to talk of ever enjoying citizenship in this country; it is utterly impossible in the nature of things; all therefore who pant for these must cast their eyes elsewhere. Should each of us live to the age of Methusalah, at the end of the thousand years, we should be exactly in our present situation . . . —a degraded people, deprived of all the rights of freeman; and in the eyes of the [Anglo] community, a race who had no lot nor portion with them.

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59 Bacon 107.
60 *Freedom’s Journal* February 21, 1829.
61 Padilla 34.
62 *Freedom’s Journal* February 14, 1829; March 14, 1829.
Simply put, exhausting what turned out to be the unworkable prospect of appeasement/resistant strategies left few alternatives available, and was “utterly impossible in the nature of things.” As with Ramírez, once it was apparent that not even a “thousand years” would alter their “present situation,” Russwurm opted for the only other solution that such a duplicitous strategy offered: colonization. The following scene, reprinted in Freedom’s Journal on February 7, 1829, is a close approximation of what could have been Russwurm and Ramírez’s eventual departure from their once-idealized United States:

The scene of parting was truly affecting, and would require a better pen and description than mine to do it justice. Sighs and sobs, and loud laments, were heard on all sides, and tears in abundance were shed — but still very many of their countenances seemed lightened up with hope and assisted by the confidence of bettering their condition.\(^{63}\)

Regardless of the “tears . . . shed,” they were accompanied here with the “hope” of an improved “condition” elsewhere — and such progress no longer rests on the implied assuredness of an appeasement/resistant strategy, but rather on its decisive negation. As we shall see in Part Three, however, such a drastic solution may neither have been entirely necessary and even avoided altogether.

**Schizophrenic Renderings**

Regarding the archival texts of the newly-conquered Mexican American in post-1848 California, Padilla calls our attention to the inter-textual spaces, or narrative disruptions, that in themselves contain subtle nuances of resistance-based signification embedded within the phrasing itself:

Look for disruptions in the narrative, revealed perhaps only in whispers of resistance, quelled immediately but signaling like a flash through the dense texture of language and reified memory. In such disruptions, we discover those gaps in the narrative where the native cultural “I” voices resistance against the dominant Other through the bars of the ideological prison in which it is confined. What may at first appear as ideologically subordinate speech actually constitutes multiaddressed utterance in which pragmatic appeasement reads at one surface of language and contestation reads at other surfaces. Such strategic utterance, I maintain, constitutes a form or rhetorical duplicity that first appropriates a public “voice” for an individual from an otherwise “silenced” group and then turns that voice to oppositional purpose.\(^{64}\)

\(^{63}\) Freedom’s Journal February 7, 1829.

\(^{64}\) Padilla 33-34.
Like nineteenth-century Native Americans, Californios were particularly susceptible to developing duplicitous social relations mainly because many remained on lands annexed into the United States territorial grid long after military conquest. As a result, their communication-based significations often reflected this reality, comprising a lexicon of coalescing signs and symbols that amalgamated referents from both cultures.

Regarding *El Clamor Público* in particular, Ramírez negotiated a cultural tightrope as well, and this was most certainly evident in his attempts to editorially adjust and balance the journal’s content. Ramírez, more than anything, attempted first to associate then to connect the sometimes-disparate elements of both the Anglo and Mexican American worlds. When they inevitably clashed, Ramírez editorialized on the behalf of both, desiring to amalgamate the essential components of each into a unified whole — a point made clear during the 1856 murder of Antonio Ruiz as well as the 1856 Frémont/Buchanan presidential election. But Ramírez’s balancing act was sometimes tenuous at best, and he often simultaneously appeased and resisted his oppressors, almost as if to rhetorically delineate the contradictory geopolitical fissures that characterized Mexican American life in post-1848 California. Even within the same journal issue, Ramírez regularly “exerted resistance to Anglo-American encroachment and domination,” notes Nicolas Kanellos, while positively commemorating the United States Constitution and its democratic-based liberties simultaneously.

These kinds of schizophrenic or duplicitous renderings typified much of *El Clamor Público*, and are sometimes a point of inquiry for scholars such as Benavides and Pitt. To be sure, creating a discursive grey space was, for Ramírez, ultimately a survivalist tactic — a form of guerilla journalism that resisted racial and cultural invisibility by producing at once a consenting yet subversive text. And Padilla certainly addresses this subliminal desire to exist between the lines, as it were, when he refers to conquered peoples as sometimes “contending with social, cultural, and ideological forces” so psychologically disruptive that the subordinate subject’s sense of identity is temporarily dislodged. And yet, ironically, by rupturing identity, the self is again reconstructed “as a destabilized condition.” (Current-day psychology terms such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma-based Disassociation come to mind here.) But regardless of the terms used, a rhetorical stratagem of double-speak is unquestionably present in *El Clamor Público*, and in several different forms.

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65 Gutiérrez 21.


68 Padilla 10-11.
Assimilation-based Double-Talk

The first rhetorical construct of double-speak is tied to Ramírez’s desire to enthusiastically advocate for Euro-centric assimilation — in both language and customs — while also demanding that municipalities officially recognize and incorporate both the Spanish language and Mexican American customs. To that end, Ramírez penned the following highly passionate, pro-assimilationist editorial that appeared in *El Clamor Público* on June 18, 1859. To further drive his point, the then twenty-two year-old trilinguist wrote it entirely in English:

> From this time forward we shall endeavor to translate into English two or three columns of political matter and news items . . . and print the same side by side in our paper. We shall do this for several reasons. It must be apparent to our Castilian friends that it is not only their interest but absolute duty to give their children an English education; and to learn, if possible, to read and speak the language themselves. We are now under the American Flag, whether of our own accord or per force, and there is every probability that we shall remain so for all time to come . . . . [L]et us [therefore] divest ourselves of all by-gone [Mexican] traditions, and become Americanized all over—in language, in manners, in customs and habits.  

Ever-attempting to merge both the Mexican and Anglo American worlds, Ramírez here proposes total English language immersion as both a protective and conciliatory measure. Such a proposal is certainly a worthy and necessary survival stratagem. However, it is the method by which one survives — that is, by culturally assuming the “language” as well as the “manners” and “customs and habits” of the then-ruling Anglo establishment — that is somewhat suspect, if not outright problematic.

First, it is interesting to note that Ramírez is attempting didactically to domesticate the English language for a native Spanish-speaking readership that, in all likelihood, cannot yet readily decipher the well-intentioned language lesson. Again, the effort is noteworthy, and no doubt necessary for eventual assimilation, but it underscores the almost impossible task of domesticking or culturally acclimatizing an native population to a new foreign tongue and culture. A process that requires ethnically restructuring oneself to a new ideological consciousness through its language is perhaps most pernicious when it threatens to supersede — and thereby make obsolete — one’s original or native worldview. Padilla would likely consider Ramírez’s proposal as indeed tenuous — as mired in a sociodiscursive “terrain of uncertainty” — while

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70 Padilla 40.
Gutiérrez would see the daring editor is unavoidably “caught in the middle . . . between two nations and two cultures.”\(^{71}\) A willing and sometimes reluctant intermediary, Gray likens Ramírez to a “perennial outsider” who is actually attempting to arbitrate a thorny compromise between two competing symbol systems, neither one of which seeks mutual resolution.\(^{72}\)

Moreover, in setting up his assimilation-based proposal, Ramírez lays the groundwork for some potentially faulty assumptions as well. That is to say, by culturally appropriating Anglo or Euro-based “language,” “manners,” and “customs” as a way of “becom[ing] Americanized all over,” one assumes that these prescribed elements, taken together, comprise the sole collective requisites for cultural and societal validation in post-1848 California. More than this, however, we must also ask how exactly do people “divest [them]selves” of dark skin color or indigenous phenotypic features — both of which are physical attributes that signify additional grounds for social exclusion? For example, Pablo de la Guerra, a prominent yet dark-hued “landholding \textit{Californio},” was evidently prosecuted “in 1870 for trying to exercise the rights of a white person” — solely on the basis of his skin color.\(^{73}\)

Regardless of how much Mexican Americans emulated the “language,” “manners,” “customs and habits” of the ruling Anglo establishment, not all Euro-cultured and English-speaking Californios were able to transform themselves in the manner envisioned by Ramírez.

All the same, Ramírez continued to call for both Euro-culture and English language acquisition, at least until it became apparent that neither side was interested. Anglos were usually reluctant to accept such cultural converts, and Mexican Americans were usually resistant of the conversion-through-imitation process altogether. Attempting to elevate his countrymen while exposing the combined advantages and disadvantages of a Euro-centric cultural system proved to be a daunting, if not awkward, task. At times resembling a bewildering mix of counter messages, \textit{El Clamor Público} would occasionally extol the advantages of Anglo culture and the indisputable brilliance of its European origin in one issue (as a way of inviting Californios to avail themselves of their newly-adopted political system), only to later denounce the innate corruptness of British expansionism in another. In June 18, 1859, for instance, Ramírez wrote (in English) that “the fixed institutions” of his reader’s newly adopted country “have an English origin, running back to the time of Alfred the Great.” Such prized institutional liberties, like “the Freedom of the Press and the right of Trial by Jury,” Ramírez went on, were in turn “founded upon the sage maxims of British Statesmen,” and even

\(^{71}\) Gutiérrez 20, 16.


\(^{73}\) Bryan Gray 42.
“transplanted to [America’s] virgin soil discovered by the genius of Christopher Columbus.”

Ramírez struck an entirely different editorial tone when in August 28, 1855 he not only concluded that the “Anglo-Saxones en su origen éran ladrones y piratas” [“Anglo-Saxons were in the beginning thieves and pirates”], but that such piratical instinct “de los antiguos Anglo-Saxones está activo todavía” [“of the precedent Anglo-Saxons is still alive today”]. And all this, according to Ramírez, was to say “nada de las conquistas Británicas en India, que son ladronicio en grand escala” [“nothing of the British conquests in India, which constitute thievery of the grandest scale.”]

Indeed, the limits of assimilation double-talk were particularly apparent — in the form of an historical culture that was not unequivocally admirable to emulate.

**Resistance-based Double-Talk**

Nowhere is the notion of double-talk exemplified quite as dramatically as in the 1856 “Juan Flores Revolution.” A cause for both Anglo and Mexican American alarm, Ramírez journalistically divided his editorial responses in a likewise diametric fashion, attempting to simultaneously appease and defend what were otherwise disparate groups at odds — all with curious results. Essentially trying to quell a potentially all-out Anglo vigilante spree, Ramírez not only editorially demanded the swift capture and punishment of Juan Flores but also “praised Andrés Pico [and Tomás Sanchez]” — two high-profile, land-owning Californios — for ultimately assisting the well-known racist El Monte Rangers in his eventual detainment.

In a highly-charged January 31, 1857 *El Clamor Público* commentary, Ramírez also justified such (re)actions as politically expedient, a nod of good faith towards the newly-established Anglo code of law: “Our society is fashioned in such a way where we are linked with indissoluble bonds with our fellow Anglo citizens.” Ramirez further called for the mutual acknowledgment of the rule of law.

Such a decree for unification was not entirely unfounded, as Mexican American misgivings regarding the equal application of the law were rather common. In fact, the Juan Flores incident and subsequent murder of Sheriff Barton were originally carried out as a retaliatory strike against the deputy’s

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74 *El Clamor Público* June 18, 1859.
75 *El Clamor Público* June 18, 1855.
76 Acuña 123.
77 “Nuestra sociedad está formada de tal modo que estamos ligados con vínculos indisolubles con los ciudadanos Americanos. Unámonos todos en esta ocasión para ver respetadas las leyes.” *El Clamor Público* January 31, 1857.
unjust imprisonment of Andrés Fontes. Still, Ramirez recommended large-scale cooperation from his readership: “Let us ‘lay aside all animosity’ toward [Anglos], forget their their past injustices, and demonstrate that we are ‘loyal citizens and good patriots’.” Mexican Americans were further instructed in El Clamor Público to refrain from aiding and abetting any collaborators associated with the Flores incident — and instead to turn all suspected outlaws into the authorities immediately.

Ramirez changed his tune when the actual tally of indiscriminate murders later became apparent. “Ransack[ing] the entire countryside,” the combined Califorino-El Monte Ranger vigilante force conducted “house-by-house” and “canyon-by-canyon search[es] at Simi, Cahuenga Pass, and . . . the San Gabriel Valley.” Mexican Americans only remotely linked to the Flores gang were nevertheless hanged on the spot — all without due legal process — in what later became history’s bloodiest chapter of vigilante violence against Latinos in California. By all estimates, fifty-two individuals were correspondingly incarcerated and many more confirmed and unconfirmed lynchings were committed across the state’s countryside as well.

Pondering the potential rationale behind El Clamor Público’s initial support of the Califorino-El Monte Ranger alliance and its later editorial criticism of the same, Acuña surmises that the only reasonable “explanation is that [Ramírez] believed the cooperation of Mexicans with the Anglos” — as well as his two-dimensional journal coverage — “would improve relations between the two peoples.” Very little of this hopeful affect was ever achieved, however. When Ramirez finally published his disapproval regarding the wanton killings committed by various Anglo vigilante groups, a later-infamous Santa Barbara lynch mob leader retorted with the following: “Every vigilante . . . was a ‘better citizen than the El Clamor editor ever can be until he plucks out that Mexican heart of his and substitutes an American one in its place.’” As to the actual town where the Barton ambush earlier occurred, Gonzales-Day states that

a resolution was [eventually] passed that “no Mexican shall hereafter reside at the above place”; any Mexicans found would be requested to leave—and receive one hundred fifty lashes to help them on their way. The entire Mexican population quickly complied and left their homes forever. . . . One newspaper noted

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78 Andrés Fontes originally joined the Juan Flores ‘rebellion’ “for specific personal movitves,” according to Pitt. Fontes “craved revenge against Sheriff Barton of Los Angeles, who supposedly [unjustly] jailed Fontes for defending an Indian woman against the sheriff’s own lust.” Pitt 167.

79 Pitt 169.

80 Acuña 123.

81 Acuña 124.

82 Pitt 178.
that Anglos were so enraged after the death of the sheriff that some were threatening to drive all Mexicans from the country.\textsuperscript{83} Unfortunately, a mutual resolution or understanding between Anglos and Mexican Americans seemed as remote in 1856 as it indeed remains today.

**Part 3: Owning Our Own Voice: The Enduring Legacy of Freedom's Journal and El Clamor Público**

Besides outright militancy and appeasement-based behavior, another option yet remained. In this final, and in many ways definitive, option, the repossessing or recovering of one’s racial or ethnic identity is realized through the self-accreditation of one’s own subcultural organic worldview. Rather than militantly revolting against a repressive set of dominant cultural standards, or attempting to behaviorally adopt the cultural mannerisms of those in power, the process of owning one’s racial and ethnic voice instead attempts to legitimate and embrace one’s indigenous sociocultural experience on its own terms. While *Freedom's Journal* and *El Clamor Público* did not wholly assume the conceptual attributes of this last perspective, they were nonetheless historical precedents that were still enormously instrumental in fostering organic subcultural consciousness in many other aspects of their journals’ rhetorical performativity.

**Freedom's Journal: My Words, Not Yours**

Just as Kanellos contends that nineteenth-century Hispanic consciousness was established with the advent of the Spanish-language newspaper, Celeste Michelle Condit argues that “the arrival of a Black national voice” in nineteenth-century America came as the result of *Freedom's Journal*'s widespread influence.\textsuperscript{84} Both a requisite for Black consciousness as well as an overriding concern for both Russwurm and Cornish, the question of autonomously controlling one’s race-based perspective was central. Such was made evidently clear in the following March 16, 1827 *Freedom’s Journal* article:

> We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the publick been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly . . . ; for though there are many in society who exercise towards us benevolent feelings; still (with


sorrow we confess it) there are others who make it their business
to enlarge upon the least trifle.\(^{85}\)

The operant phrase here is “too long,” signifying that “dece[ptions]” and
“misrepresentations” were not only disseminated over an extensive period, but
that even allies with “benevolent feelings” were likewise given to committing
similar offenses. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, African
Americans had not only developed full social awareness regarding their distinct
requirements as a people, but were also significantly more prepared to pro-
actively assert those needs as well — something for which the dominant
culture was apparently not entirely prepared.\(^{86}\)

A related issue that went beyond agency was the African American need
to wrestle narrative subjectivity from well-intentioned Anglos, many of whom
felt culturally licensed to chronicle the Black story as unsolicited surrogate
narrators. William Lloyd Garrison, for example, was unfortunately notorious in
this regard, and not only later with the abolitionist Frederick Douglass and his
periodical, the \textit{North Star}, but also much earlier during \textit{Freedom’s Journal}
tenure as well. While lending only scant support to Russwurm and Cornish,
Garrison insisted that his paper, \textit{The Liberator}, was more representative of the
Black cause — particularly after \textit{Freedom’s Journal} closure.\(^{87}\) By the late
1830s, however, Garrison’s micro-management approach had succeeded in
alienating much of the African American leadership. When Garrison
discharged his African-American agents from \textit{The Liberator} — a good many of
whom had established its Black readership — and placed Anglo representatives
in their stead, the overt message was clear.\(^{88}\) And while the early nineteenth-
century Women’s Rights movement may have indeed shared intriguing
parallels with African American oppression, Black leaders further found
Garrison’s presumed and automatic linkage of antislavery issues with Anglo
women’s rights as potentially diminishing the yet-developed range of the Black
cause itself.\(^{89}\)

Yet it was African American editors of black-owned newspapers who
articulated the most vociferous pleas for self-representation. Philip A. Bell,
editor of the African American \textit{Weekly Advocate}, for instance, proudly made the
following known in a January 14, 1837 editorial: “Where is \textit{that paper} you can
emphatically call \textit{your own}? — We give you the Advocate.”\(^{90}\) Samuel Cornish,

\(^{85}\) \textit{Freedom’s Journal} March 16, 1827.

\(^{86}\) Jacqueline Bacon, “The History of Freedom’s Journal: A Study in Empowerment and

\(^{87}\) Bella Gross, “Freedom’s Journal and the Rights of All,” \textit{The Journal of Negro History} (17.3, 1932)
252.

\(^{88}\) Bacon 267-268 (Italics in original).

\(^{89}\) Bacon 275.

\(^{90}\) \textit{Freedom’s Journal} January 14, 1837.
who not only later assumed co-editorship of *The Coloured American* but also edited the well-received *Rights of All*, expressed similar sentiments regarding Black narrative subjectivity in a March 4, 1837 commentary in *The Coloured American* commentary entitled “Why We Should Have a Paper”: “No class of men, however pious and benevolent can take our place in the great work of redeeming our character and removing our disabilities. They may identify themselves with us, and enter into our sympathies. Still it is ours to will and to do . . . in the doing of which, this journal as an appropriate engine, may exert a powerful agency.”

This push for narrative control was not solely driven by the need for self-representation alone. Rather, it was equally motivated by the conviction that African Americans themselves could definitively articulate the felt effects of racism directly.

**“The Man Struck is the Man to Cry Out”: Self-Determination on Our Terms**

One of the major underlying incongruities associated with the question of Black narrative was that Anglos were altogether exempt from the socially denigrating effects of racial oppression and were therefore viewed as indirect beneficiaries of this social order — even if they were in fact enlisted in the cause of slavery’s abolition. For this reason Douglass plainly asserts in a December 3, 1847 *North Star* commentary that Black-owned journals collectively perform a task that would “be wholly impossible for our white friends to do”—for “the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT.”

In Douglass’s estimation, an Anglo-based periodical, even though better situated with benevolent and lucrative sponsorship, could never genuinely represent a Black-owned viewpoint — the latter of which would, by default, reflect a race-scarred consciousness encoded with the memory of physical and psychological-based trauma.

This is also why Bell later states in *The Coloured American* that Blacks did not altogether discount the compassionate nature of such good-willed overtures, but rather recognized that the inevitable outcome of an Anglo-controlled narrative would be, as Padilla states, perilously imprisoned in a second-person perspective. An African American first-person or organic sub-cultural narrative would, on the other hand, constitute “a subordinate text” — one that would more actively reveal and uncover “the sociodiscursive forces that conspire for control of the text.” Michel Foucault has likewise second-person narratives as embodying the mechanisms of the “systems of exclusion

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92 Frederick Douglass, ed., *North Star* (1847-51) December 3, 1847.
93 *The Coloured American* October 5, 1839.
for the control and delimitation of discourse,’” forces that regulate and
determine which social utterances are in fact granted official legitimacy.  

This was precisely Mariano Vallejo’s concern, who in the mid-1870s
finally agreed to grant California ethnologist, Hubert H. Bancroft, rights to his
oral histories.  Refusing to deliver a hastily developed and/or second-person
[Anglo] rendition of Californio history, Vallejo states

I do not approve of this method.  I am willing to relate all I can
remember, but I wish it clearly understood that it must be in my
own way, at my own time.  I will not be hurried or dictated to.  It is
my history, not yours, I propose to tell. . . .  If I give my story it
must be worthy of the cause and of me.  

Vallejo apparently also felt that “the man STRUCK is” rightfully entitled “to CRY
OUT”—on his own terms, unhindered by narrative intentions that lay outside
the immediate dimension of direct or first-person experience.  And Bell most
aptly summarizes the stakes involved with a second-person narrative when he
states, “as long as we let them think and act for us; as long as we will bow to
their opinions, and acknowledge that their ‘word is counsel, and their will is
law,’” Anglos will continue to “outwardly treat us like men, while in their hearts
they still hold us as slaves.”  

And this concern for a self-historicizing
narrative was in no way limited to African Americans.  It continued onward to
the western frontier, becoming a similarly pressing issue for Ramírez as well.

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Educating the Masses: Creating a Medium for Cultural Awareness

D.J. Jofré, editor of the California Spanish-language newspaper, Eco del
Pacífico, wrote the following insightful commentary entitled “El Periodismo en
California” [“Journalism in California”], which was reprinted in El Clamor
Público on February 23, 1856:

Is there a need for the existence of a Latino organ which would represent
the interests of our people in the frequent and numerous instances
where the Los Angeles and California press are discussed? . . . In no
other place is the need for a Spanish-language newspaper so evidently
obvious than in California. . . .  The Latino populace is thus called upon,
then, to project and promote this press.  

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94 Padilla 207.
95 Padilla 90.
96 The Coloured American October 5, 1837.
97 “¿Es necesaria la existencia de un órgano español que sea el representante de los intereses de
nuestra raza en los frecuentes y números casos que se presentan a la discusión de la prensa de esta
ciudad y del Estado?...En ninguna parte es tan evidente la necesidad de un periódico españolcomo en
Jofré’s observations here were, of course, not only shared jointly by Ramirez but *El Clamor Público* itself frequently showcased like-styled editorials within its pages. Taken together, such exclamations were indicative of a growing sense of cultural awareness that was already taking hold within various subcultural regions of the newly conquered southwest. Essentially a product of social displacement, these other voices necessitated a form of rhetorical substantiation through which to reinstate their continued — albeit subjugated — presence.

Viewing himself as an interim ambassador of the dispossessed, Ramirez saw “the eventual enlightenment’ of all” Latino “nonliterates as the highest good imaginable, and [viewed] print culture as the primary agent of this enlightenment.”98 Such sentiment was explicitly stated in the following September 25, 1855 *El Clamor Público* commentary:

> If the root of all the evils suffered by the new States of America is the profound ignorance that can be observed in the popular masses, the most important thing leading men can occupy themselves with is to civilize the masses—to work toward improving, little by little, their intellectual, moral, and physical condition.99

And it was through culturally “enlighten[ing]” the “popular masses” that *El Clamor Público* fundamentally constructed a central — to say nothing of unprecedented — foundation for supporting and developing an organic pan-Hispanic awareness.100 Accessible to both Californio elite and working-class *cholo* alike, this consciousness attempted to unite not only a multi-class Mexican American coalition, but also ultimately a Mexican/Anglo bi-cultural joint alliance.

### From Bi-Cultural to Subcultural

The overriding reason that Ramirez “played to the hilt the role of political mentor to the Spanish-speaking,” as Pitt puts it, was due to the decisive consequences associated with California’s high rates of illiteracy within the...
dispossessed Mexican American populace itself. Only forty percent men and eighteen percent women of Latino descent were actually literate during Ramírez’s editorial tenure. 101 By both contextualizing and articulating the frustrations of a largely voiceless class, Ramírez re-channeled their antipathy by engaging them with topics that affirmatively accentuated the positive relevancy of Latino-based organic culture — in its full multi-class, international range. 102 In this fashion El Clamor Público positioned itself as both a multi-class, activist-based journal as well as an organ for common cultural themes. In a conversational yet animated manner, Ramírez weekly enthralled his audience with an assortment of poetry installments, philosophical asides, historical interests, and personal advice. 103

We must also note that Ramírez pushed this epistemological envelope still further, often posting content that extended the range of the Californio’s immediate scope of concerns. As Pitt further points out, Ramírez similarly “editorialized on bloomers and prostitution; Know-Nothings and anti-Catholicism; prison reform and death penalties; medical quakery and Mormonism; Manifest Destiny and filibusterism.” 104 While this may at first appear as a deviation from organic subcultural consciousness, one should bear in mind that sociopolitical formations were yet emergent in post-1848 California. Especially in southern portions of the state, like Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Buena Ventura, 105 social aesthetic practices were still somewhat evolving, with corollary rudiments of both Mexican and Anglo cultural systems occasionally existing side-by-side — many times not. Ramírez had apparently hoped for an eventual political merger and thereby sought to journalistically underscore the virtues of both competing world viewpoints alongside each other. As Silva-Gruesz fittingly argues in Ambassadors of Culture, El Clamor Público indeed

took on the task of training its readership in the stylized pleasures of culto [cultured] life . . . ; [Ramírez] was well aware of [his] mandate to reflect popular tastes as well as attempt to shape them.


104 Pitt 183.

The apparent elitism of his aesthetics, in other words, is cross cut (as is Longfellow’s) with a strong populism, an attempt to make the cultural capital understood to be latent in literary classics available to a wide audience.\textsuperscript{106}

As I have previously observed, this “cultural capital” was likewise encouraged through the weekly publication of artistic poems. But even more interesting is that these verses were not only frequently submitted by local Mexican Americans living in Los Angeles, but were also materially surrounded with the more pressing political issues of the day, essentially forming a bi-directional dialogue between the local and international worlds that had a correspondingly significant impact on Ramírez’s readership.\textsuperscript{107}

When Gray later asserted that Ramírez’s greatest challenge was persuading his somewhat reluctant fellow countrymen to “work together” alongside him “to see what ‘happy results’ they could produce,” he was essentially referring to the strongly anticipated amalgamation between what he hoped would be equally-valued Mexican and Anglo world viewpoints — the happy results being the concurrent co-existence of both traditional and progressive sociopolitical systems.\textsuperscript{108} It was only after such prospects became untenable that Ramírez remained defending a solely Latino-based subcultural consciousness. Up to that point, as Pitt rightly observes, both Mexican and Anglo cultural attributes “blended freely” in \textit{El Clamor Público}, creating, as Jacqueline Bacon observes about \textit{Freedom’s Journal}, a “complex dialogue, with voices countering and interacting with one another.”\textsuperscript{109}

Such rhetorical duplicity was associated with the double-speak stratagems discussed in Part 2 of this chapter. But bear in mind that behavioral recalibration was, for Ramírez, always a tentative and intermediate step to a later (and much hoped for) concurrent and bi-cultural union. This much was apparent during the infamous 1856 murder of Antonio Ruiz by William Jenkins — an event which caused a near all-out race riot in Los Angeles when Mexican Americans rose to protest Ruiz’s killing as part of a long series of race-based injustices. When the heated Californio reaction threatened to undermine the city’s tenuous stability as well as any possible sociopolitical alliances, Ramírez penned the following August 23, 1856 \textit{El Clamor Público} commentary:

\begin{quote}
Nobody will deny that (this issue) has had some ill effects on our community; but time will erase it: and we will all again return to a more harmonious existence with each (racial) class working to
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[106] Silva-Gruesz 102.
\item[107] Silva-Gruesz 103.
\item[108] Bryan Gray 25.
\item[109] Pitt 183; Bacon 4.
\end{footnotes}
firmly establish and perpetuate an atmosphere of camaraderie which must prevail in well-regulated societies.\(^{110}\)

Despite Ramírez’s optimism here, a bi-cultured community of symmetrically valued Mexican and Anglo world viewpoints was never realized. Rather, Anglo-based hegemonic dominance prevailed on almost all fronts, and a potential Latino/Anglo bi-cultural collective was instead dismembered into separate and antagonistic Anglo dominant and Latino sub-cultures.

Conclusion

Resisting the Subordination Process: Rescuing Cultural Subjectivity

While *El Clamor Público* may today appear retrospectively to some scholars as containing an over-exalted deification of all-things-Latino, it is in actuality a last-ditch attempt to safeguard native Californios from what eventually became an obvious juridical downgrade to subcultural status. It is not at all surprising then that Pitt regards *El Clamor Público* as a definitive “milestone in the evolution of the Latin-American community, if not in the history of Los Angeles journalism” — not because it benignly showcased the colorful attributes of Californio culture, but because Ramírez was instead fighting tooth-and-nail to prevent the aforementioned culture’s all-out erasure.\(^{111}\) And the rhetorical devices that Ramírez utilized to this end were indeed original and varied, ultimately instilling a landmark-awareness amongst Mexican Americans who were otherwise fast becoming segregated — and pathologized — as a separate race.\(^{112}\)

It was Ramírez who, according to Kanellos, was “the first Mexican American journalist of the West and Southwest to consistently use the press to establish a nativist perspective and to [concurrently] pursue civil rights for his people.” In addition to this distinction, he was likewise the first to deploy Mexican American nationalism as an emblematic symbol of resistance, thereby anticipating the consciousness-raising events of the 1960s Chicano Movement by nearly one hundred years.\(^{113}\) Essentially defying the structural rearrangement of Californio native culture into a hyphenated suffix, Ramirez habitually addressed his readership in the first person plural. By using phrases such as “our people” [“nuestra raza”] and “our community” [“nuestro pueblo”], *El Clamor Público* not only empathetically aligned itself with the needs

\(^{110}\) Pitt 166; “Nadie negará que ha tenido algunos malos efectos en la comunidad; pero el tiempo los borrara: y todos nosotros volveremos a vivir en armonía y trabajando cada clase por establecer firmemente y perpetuar los sentimientos fraternales que deben reinar en toda sociedad bien arreglada.”

*El Clamor Público* August 23, 1856.

\(^{111}\) Pitt 182.


\(^{113}\) Kanellos "California" 89, 91, 92.
and concerns of the Mexican American populace, but also positioned itself as the community’s representative voice as well. As mentioned earlier, Ramirez further galvanized this readership relationship by innovating additional descriptors that he used to represent his newly subjugated populace, such as *nuestros compatrias* (our compatriots), or *la raza Espanola* (the Hispanic race or people).

And while Griswold del Castillo concludes that the term “La Raza emerged as the single most important” nineteenth century “symbol of ethnic pride and identification,” I want to argue that Ramirez’s preeminent use of this charged signifier was not so much for identification as it was for re-identifying with an earlier past, an earlier historical time where Mexican American cultural subjectivity was still somewhat unified, or at least less disjointed and oppositional. The term *La Raza* did, in fact, historically demarcate the origins of a resistance-based stratagem for *El Clamor Público*, but only after a potential Latino/Anglo bi-cultural alliance was subsequently repealed in favor of total Anglo-based hegemonic governance. This last point, more than anything, activates the “metaphorically fluid” and “unifying” symbology of not only the term *La Raza*, but also other opposition-based designations discussed here. It was through the tactical use of such descriptors of resistance that *El Clamor Público* not only challenged Californios to self-accreditate and legitimate their own indigenous — and now subcultural — experience on its own terms, but to also vigorously embrace the damaged strands of their collective cultural consciousness. It would be through this process that successive generations of Mexican-hyphen-Americans would reconstruct a new identity — a new subjectivity, if you will — out of the disparate yet potential remains of that fateful 1848 geopolitical encounter.

Reclaiming African American and Mexican American Narrative Subjectivity

In 1839, the mostly Anglo New York State Anti-Slavery Society outright condemned the Black-owned *The Coloured American* journal for having the audacity to showcase articles that differed from its political positions. In a telling response, *The Coloured American* editor, Philip Bell, replied: “We are not surprised. We always knew that such was the spirit with which the white man would act toward his ‘colored brethren’.” This case exemplifies the

114 Kanellos “Resisting the American Empire” 12.
116 Gutiérrez *Walls and Mirrors* 36; Padilla 30.
117 Gutiérrez *Walls and Mirrors* 36.
118 Padilla 229.
119 Padilla 238.
120 *The Coloured American* October 5, 1839.
journalistic battles that would thereafter plague a multitude of writers and editors of color, regardless of whether they published in the east or the west coast. Nineteenth-century African and Mexican Americans, while yet wrestling with instances of narrative control, nevertheless owed much of its already-marked progress in this area to the groundbreaking efforts of both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público. As Bacon rightly concludes, the enduring legacy of Freedom’s Journal is not solely in its courageous confrontation of Anglo authorial oversight, but in its existence in spite of these obstacles. Such was the resolve to safeguard narrative control — regardless of costs — that Philip Bell exclaimed in a Coloured American commentary: “Sooner than abate one jot or tittle of our right to think, speak and act like men, we will suffer our [journalistic] enterprise to perish.” And many journals of color, for better or for worse, did just that.

But this propensity for Anglo-based micro-cultural management was more tenacious and prevalent than some scholars care to admit. It was certainly what William Watkins indirectly referred to when he asked in an 1828 letter to the Genius of Universal Emancipation why Anglos in the American Colonization Society had taken it “upon themselves to represent prejudicially the interests of thousands [of African Americans] who had never delegated them any such power.” In a later reaction to a similar sense of Anglo-based paternalism, Thomas Hamilton, African American editor of the Weekly Anglo-African journal, exclaimed in 1859 that “our cause . . . demands our own advocacy,” and thus “we need a Press—a PRESS OF OUR OWN.” In many ways, Freedom’s Journal—and El Clamor Público—established the precedent for Hamilton and others to ponder what was formerly an unthinkable prospect, the possibility of owning one’s narrative voice. And while many nineteenth-century Anglos were in fact exceedingly supportive of Black causes, African American narrative ownership, Russwurm mused, must never be allowed to become subordinate to an Anglo-based dominant text.

In 1890, when Bancroft retrospectively marveled over his now-famous seven-volume History of California series, he mused: “If I was the writer of [California] history, [Mariano Vallejo] was the embodiment of history.” Indeed, once Vallejo had handed over his extensive library of irreplaceable and original documentation — the bulk of which Bancroft later used to weave together his second-person perspective of California’s definitive history — the gleeful historian responded that “the priceless intrinsic value of these documents . . .

121 Bacon 273.
122 The Coloured American October 5, 1839.
125 Bacon 30.
126 Freedom’s Journal February 7, 1829; Bacon 111.
would forever place my library beyond the power of man to equal.” 127 The emphasis here, of course, is on the term “my.” When all was said and done, Anglos had not only acquired the Southwest but also the epistemological rights to its history as well. Interestingly, what Vallejo experienced with Bancroft was a near-mirror image of what Russwurm and Cornish had earlier experienced with Garrison, an insidious process that represented nothing less than the imperialist take over of another’s voice. 128

What, then, does it mean to be the first-person embodiment of history, but not its authoritative writer? What does it mean to have one’s historical experience narratively expropriated and showcased in a museum glass case of “editorial construction[,] with all of its customary manipulations, performative stagings, transcriptional excisions, translations (not to mention mistranslations), additions, and refashionings,” as Padilla puts it? 129 What made both Freedom’s Journal and El Clamor Público so uniquely momentous was — for the first time in journalistic history — it was our words, not theirs. And perhaps equally important, Russwurm, Cornish, and Ramírez were, in fact, actually experiencing first-hand the conditions of which they reported in their respective journals. The true enduring legacy, then, of both El Clamor Público and Freedom’s Journal was that the editors were not “apart from what [they were] reporting, but [were] a part of what [they were] reporting.” 130

128 Padilla 107.
129 Padilla 28.
130 Gutiérrez 22.
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