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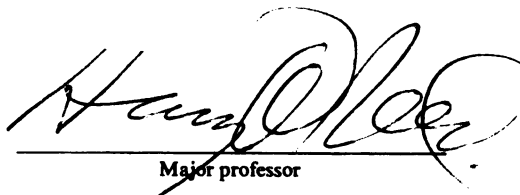
CHAOS, CONFLICT AND CONTROL:
THE RESPONSES OF THE NEWLY-FREED SLAVES
IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA
TO EMANCIPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877

presented by

Wilbert Lee Jenkins

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in History


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IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA
TO EMANCIPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877

VOLUME I

By

Wilbert Lee Jenkins

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ABSTRACT

Chaos, Conflict and Control: The Responses of the Newly-Freed Slaves in Charleston, South Carolina to Emancipation and Reconstruction, 1865-1877

By

Wilbert Lee Jenkins

Unlike the vast majority of scholarship on the experiences of Southern blacks during Reconstruction, this study focuses on how the former slave population in Charleston, South Carolina adjusted to their new status and circumstances with self-active strategies to ensure their survival against attempts by whites to regain control over them. Using autobiographies of these people, slave narratives, Freedmen's Bureau letters and papers, traveler's accounts, journals, diaries, personal letters and newspapers, this study attempts to understand how the freedmen saw themselves in the new order and to shed light on their hopes and aspirations, as well as examining the conditions of life under Reconstruction. A common thread running through this study is the determination of Charleston's freedmen to seize control over their lives in all ways possible. Charleston's black population expected full citizenship and equal economic, social and educational opportunities. Upon realizing that these expectations were not shared by the white population, they carefully plotted

their strategy to use the options available to obtain these desired ends against the resistance of the whites.

Charleston's black population exhibited their intentions for the newly developing social order through changed social customs and interactions with whites, through purchases of land, efforts to reunite scattered family members, and through the creation of their own schools, churches and social and political organizations. In this light, any lack of economic progress which Charleston's freedmen experienced was not through lack of their own desire or efforts but rather due to the limits placed on their progress by the white-dominated society. This study emphasizes, not the defeat of their aspirations, but rather the victories they won against white resistance to seize some control over their own lives, with the result that, despite attempts to reinstitute the old social order, Charleston would never be the same again.

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To my parents, Joe and Elizabeth Jenkins, who have always been a source of strength and inspiration to me. And, in memory of my Aunts, Fannie Sanders and Martha Neal, who symbolized courage and perseverance. Last, but not least, in memory of Professor Leslie B. Rout, Jr. whose spirit continues to live.

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written during the twentieth century by historians concerned with the South's experiences in the first decade after the Civil War. Most of this historical research has focused on prominent black or white political leaders.¹ Other scholars have devoted attention to middle or upper class blacks.² Few historians have studied how the illiterate black masses responded to emancipation and reconstruction on the local level in the years following the end of the Civil War, leaving a void in historical scholarship. An examination of the responses of former slaves in Charleston, South Carolina to emancipation and Reconstruction from 1865 to 1877, a period crucial to the transition of blacks from slavery to freedom, should complement the earlier studies, leading to a more complete account of the black experience during this period.

Charleston seems to hold a secondary place among the cities of the United States at the present time. With respect to population, it ranks no higher than eightieth currently, yet in 1810 it was the fifth largest U.S. city, and in 1830 it was sixth, behind New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and New Orleans. With the exception of New Orleans, no southern city was more

important than Charleston in the antebellum and immediate post-Civil War periods. It was the epitome of southern culture, wealth and commercial prosperity. It served as the training ground for many of the nation's leading professionals. At the same time, Charleston's slave population was a large proportion of the city's total population, nearly thirty-five percent on the eve of the Civil War.³ There were numerous economic opportunities for slaves in Charleston in the antebellum period, with many employed as bricklayers, coopers, shoemakers, engineers, carpenters, blacksmiths and mechanics of various types. Some slaves even worked as store clerks, and in the maritime pursuits of the city, as well as working as domestics and personal servants. Some few slaves managed to establish their own businesses as artisans. As such, slaves were the backbone of Charleston's industrial labor force in the antebellum years.

Upon emancipation, blacks continued to play a leading role in the industrial order. Some freedmen held occupations as barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, toolmakers, coopers and painters, and many worked in other skilled trades as well. Other ex-slaves labored in the salt and phosphate mines and in the cotton and rice mills too. Charleston's freedmen worked as stevedores and longshoremen; and while they received relatively good wages, the work was arduous and seasonal in nature. Some freedmen were employed

in public works jobs, as street cleaners and as construction workers building the public edifices of Charleston. Some freedmen even worked in law enforcement and as firemen. Many freedpeople continued to work in personal service work as domestics, while others used their skills to establish their own businesses.

Through thrift and ingenuity, some former slaves grew wealthy and took prominent roles in Charleston's society. A few former slaves were active in the local political scene, shaping the course of Charleston's society in the post Civil War years. Their role in the Republican Party was active and significant. Since measures such as the Black Codes and the Reconstruction Acts affected newly freed slaves more than any other single group, an inquiry into their day-to-day experiences is essential to understanding the Reconstruction period. This group of working class blacks has been virtually ignored in spite of the fact that Charleston is one of the most researched cities of nineteenth century America.

Too often scholars have written of nineteenth century southern blacks as if they were a homogeneous group. This is a fallacy since they came from a variety of economic, social, political, religious and educational backgrounds, as well as having regional and complexion differences. Former slaves in post-bellum Charleston came from many walks of life. Throughout this work, I try to distinguish between

the different groups of newly-freed blacks in Charleston. There was a wide range of skills among these former slaves. In addition, in antebellum Charleston, there existed a social hierarchy among slaves in which domestic servants of the white elites and slave artisans formed the top of the slave hierarchy while other slaves populated the lower tiers. A disproportionate number of light-skinned slaves made up the more privileged group. Having resided in an urban setting, Charleston's black population had experienced a degree of social, economic and educational freedom which rural blacks, who would migrate to Charleston in the post-bellum period, had not experienced. As a consequence, native black Charlestonians were better equipped and economically more entrenched in the affairs of the city than the rural migrants would be. The economic options to rural South Carolina slaves were more restricted with the bulk of them working on rice or cotton plantations. They also suffered more actual restrictions on their movements, because the pass and curfew laws were more strictly enforced on these rural slaves.

The systems of hiring out and living out also provided urban slaves with more social opportunities than their rural counterparts had access to. The complexities of the urban environment created educational opportunities in contradiction to the 1835 legal prohibitions against slave education. Some urban slaves were educated in secret

schools organized by free urban blacks, and this education was often passed on from the literate slave to an illiterate one. Native black Charlestonians tended therefore to be better educated than their rural counterparts, although the majority of urban slaves were not educated.

Reconstruction brought a significant wave of rural migrant freedmen to Charleston who, combined with the native urban freedman population, constituted nearly two-thirds of the city's population by 1875. While this black population was united by race, culture and marriage, it was not a monolithic group.

The crushing defeat experienced by the Confederacy at the hands of Union forces shattered the institution of slavery which had been the linchpin of the social, political, and economic system in Charleston and in the entire American South. Relations between blacks and whites were thrown into disarray and no one could say with certainty what would follow. Many white Charlestonians believed that emancipation need not drastically change the status of blacks within southern society, but most former slaves disagreed, determined to exercise their freedom to the fullest. The study to follow is concerned with how blacks adjusted during this chaotic period of transition from slavery to freedom.

This study specifically concerns itself with inquiries into the actions and attitudes of blacks in order to answer

questions relevant to American and Afro-American history. What were the attitudes that Charleston's blacks held toward emancipation and Reconstruction? What did emancipation mean to them? Was it an opportunity, something to be viewed with caution, a cause of confusion or of hope? Would they seek new allies and social relationships or cling to old ones? How did the free black class dating from the antebellum period relate to the newly freed blacks? How did the newly freed urban blacks view and relate to their rural counterparts? What impact did emancipation have on the black family? How was the black social structure affected by emancipation? Lastly, in the political responses of whites and blacks to Reconstruction, is it possible to see the origins of the urban black underclass?

This study has value for the academic community in two basic ways. First, it can be used as a model for conducting future research on other southern urban black communities during Reconstruction. Second, the detailed picture it provides of the lives of newly-freed urban blacks in Charleston might aid urban policy makers in a number of ways. This study reveals the roots of intraclass struggle in the black community as well as highlighting the black working class's own initiatives. This study may also help scholars pinpoint more accurately the origins of the Afro-American underclass. Additionally, through this study, policy makers might begin to understand that the underclass

has the ability to analyze its own problems, and therefore should be given more involvement in policy making.

It would be an historical error too write a history of blacks during Reconstruction without devoting attention to whites. As one contemporary scholar notes, "blacks were continually interacting with, influencing, and being influenced by whites."⁴ Attention to whites must also be given, because their accounts of the actions of blacks during Reconstruction can be used as some of the best sources of information about what blacks were thinking and doing, if carefully interpreted. The limited space I give to whites is primarily intended to help deduce and explain black's behaviors and attitudes. This is not a study of how blacks responded to white racism and discrimination. Rather, this study recognizes blacks as the central actors in their own lives and not as passive objects of a white-dominated society.

This study does not focus solely on politics. It emphasizes instead the crucial undertaking of the Reconstruction period: the rebuilding and reinvention of patterns of life and social and economic interaction. Former slaves in Charleston struggled tenaciously from the moment of emancipation to become independent of white control. They attempted to construct a solid economic base for themselves and their families. Freedmen pooled meager resources to establish and maintain their own schools and

churches. They struggled to rebuild shattered families and to legalize family relationships in order to protect them. Freedmen risked their own lives, at times, to protect family members from white violence.

Despite high illiteracy rates, freedpeople trained themselves in politics through active participation, consistently showing their sophistication by voting into office those who best supported their own interests.

Too often, historians have seen Reconstruction purely in political terms. In taking this approach, the emphasis has been on the failure of Radical Republicans to carry out the political, social, and economic changes in the South necessary to assure black equality and independence. Consequently, Reconstruction has been quickly labelled a failure.⁵ If one were to focus on the reordering of black life which led to the formation of independent black economic, educational and religious institutions during these years, then Reconstruction should be judged as anything but a failure.

INTRODUCTION ENDNOTES

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2. Some excellent studies of primarily upper class and middle class blacks during the Reconstruction period are: E. Horace Fitchett, "The Origin and Growth of the Free Negro Population of Charleston, South Carolina," Journal of Negro History 26[4] (October 1941) pp. 421-437; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston: A Social History, 1822-1885," (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Northwestern University, 1982); and John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 1860-1880 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
3. G.S. Dickerman, "A Glimpse of Charleston History," The Southern Workman 2 (November 1962) p. 15; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism, and Failure," p. 4. Urban Charleston's black population was always large, exceeding the number of white inhabitants from the years 1800 to 1850. Only during the last decade of the antebellum era, after a great many blacks were transferred to Charleston Neck outside the city limits or were sold to the Western planters, did the proportion of the white population to total population increase. Leonard Price Stavisky, "Industrialism in Ante-Bellum Charleston," Journal of Negro History 36[3] (July 1951) p. 309. Charleston's total population in the 1860 Census was 40,522, including 23,376 whites (or 57.6% of total), 13,909 slaves

(34.3%) and 3,237 free blacks (7.9%). Eighth U.S. Census, 1860.

4. Peter Kolchin, First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972) p. xviii.
5. For more works which advance this viewpoint, consult: W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1935); Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Land Ownership (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia; William R. Brock, "The Waning of Radicalism," and C. Vann Woodward, "The Political Legacy of Reconstruction," in Kenneth M. Stampp and Leon F. Litwack, eds., Reconstruction: An Anthology of Revisionist Writings (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969) pp. 496-515.

CHAPTER I
STANDING ON FREEDOM'S EDGE:
CHARLESTON BEFORE EMANCIPATION

Although historians long recognized that Afro-American slavery was more than a rural phenomenon, little attention was focused on the subject of urban slavery until 1964 with the publication of Richard Wade's work, Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860.¹ Wade argued that as a city grew, slavery grew; but that at some point the institution "began to lose ground in the metropolis, and though still present, it played an increasingly less important role." He asserted that this trend was "common in all Dixie's cities." Regardless of differences in settlement, region, or age, by 1860, Wade argued that slavery in southern cities was in deep trouble.²

Wade confined his study to the ten largest cities in the antebellum South. While any regional synthesis of urban slavery can yield valuable insights with respect to the peculiar institution, it can also present a problem. The scope of Wade's study is too broad to include microanalysis of any one community.

The purpose of this chapter is not to offer a critique of Wade's thesis, for scholars have already brought it under serious question.³ These scholars have tested his basic

thesis by examining urban slavery in cities or towns Wade had not examined. Preoccupied with assessing his findings, these scholars tended to concentrate mainly on the economic aspect of urban slavery. They have presented primarily tables and graphs detailing the occupations of slaves and free blacks. While the economic dimension is important, by taking this approach the truly personalized aspect of slave life seems to be lost, with blacks being reduced to mere numbers.⁴

The more important question of how the slave experience in the antebellum South helped to shape the attitudes, ideas and perceptions which enabled blacks to adjust to their post Civil War status has not been adequately addressed. This chapter will analyze not only the economic aspect of the slave experience in Charleston, South Carolina but will also deal with the social, cultural, political and religious context of that experience out of which emerged the thoughts, actions, and expectations of native black Charlestonians who had been held as slaves in the Reconstruction period. As indicated earlier, this group comprised about thirty-five percent of the total population of Charleston by the end of the antebellum period. It is also important to note that Charleston's slaves were not a homogeneous lot, but came from a variety of circumstances. What they held in common was the fact of their slavery in an urban setting. The experiences of urban slaves were also

vastly different from that of the rural slaves who migrated to Charleston in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. As slaves, rural blacks had fewer economic, social and educational opportunities than did the urban slaves.

Although the focus of this chapter is on Charleston's slaves, since free blacks formed an integral part of the black community, some attention will be given to them. Free blacks were also not a homogeneous group. The vast majority were poor and frequently socialized and intermarried with urban slaves. Most of the city's free blacks performed semi-skilled and unskilled labor, and some of them were artisans holding jobs as carpenters, blacksmiths, plasterers, coopers, etc. A few of these skilled free black workers managed to establish their own businesses. In addition, there were also free blacks who owned large amounts of property in real estate and slaves. They owned businesses that catered to a white clientele. This latter group of property owners constituted the black elite of Charleston, many of whom were mulattos who socialized and intermarried within their own small group.⁵

Owing to the very nature of city life, slaves in Charleston and other southern cities lived under fewer restraints than did those in the rural hinterland. Although prohibiting slaves from being on the city streets without passes from their masters, these laws were not usually enforced. It was inconvenient for a master to prepare a

pass every time a slave was sent on an errand in the city and it was also difficult to confine slaves to their quarters. Consequently, urban slaves experienced a considerable amount of freedom of movement because it was easier for their masters.⁶

This freedom resulted in numerous economic opportunities for both slave and free black alike in antebellum Charleston.⁷ According to the 1848 Census for the city of Charleston there was no trade from which blacks were totally excluded.⁸ Slaves did occupy the servile occupations, those jobs usually avoided by whites, and dubbed "nigger work."⁹ Charleston slaves worked in at least forty-five different occupations, and included a large number of bricklayers, coopers, shoemakers, mechanics and other skilled workers.¹⁰ Slaves with skills also found work in the milling industry. Of the 160 slaves employed by the West Point Rice Mill in Charleston, many were engineers, carpenters, blacksmiths and coopers. Slaves were also used in unskilled or semi-skilled capacities in various mills. Gibbes and Williams Steam Saw Mill, Bennett's Mill and Chisolm Mill, all relied heavily upon black labor in their day-to-day operations.

Since Charleston was a port city, many slaves found employment in the maritime occupations. The port thrived with commercial activity: tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar cane, indigo and corn were daily shipped from Charleston while more products from around the world flowed into the

port. Deep sea fishing was also a major industry with lobsters, crabs, oysters, and shrimp bringing high prices. As a result of all the port activity, slaves were employed at the strenuous and brutish work of loading and unloading ships, as wharf hands, and also as pilots on steamboats and sloops plying the coastal trade, sometimes going as far north as Washington, D.C. It was also common for slaves to serve in these capacities on ships engaged in international trade.

The Charleston Gas Light Company, the Charleston Bridge Company and the South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company also utilized slave labor.¹¹ It was also common for slaves to be employed to clean and repair the streets of the city,¹² and as common laborers and artisans in the federal arsenal in Charleston.¹³ Even the famous Charleston Courier utilized slave labor in its daily operations.¹⁴

The largest number of urban slaves were domestics. They usually lived in the master's house and performed the household chores. They prepared food, washed clothes, cleaned the house and rendered personal services to the master or mistress. They also looked after the children and the elderly, as well as caring for visitors. Of course, female domestics performed the bulk of this work in the male-dominated, sexist South; but both men and women made up the household work force. Men were sometimes valets for the masters, while others either handled the horses and

carriages or cared for the grounds and gardens. On some occasions, the duties of the male servant often took him away from the premises. Running errands in the city or surrounding areas, picking up or delivering packages and driving for his owner sometimes involved his absence for many hours, at times even causing him to remain away overnight. Male and female domestics found their work to be more than full time, having to be ready always to answer their master's or mistress' every beck and call. Servants were not even exempt on Sunday, since in some homes it was the most active day. The usual work day of the typical domestic servant started at five in the morning and ran until curfew at nine or ten at night.¹⁵

A large number of slave and free black workers were accommodated by Charleston's occupational structure. Many native black Charlestonians expected this situation to continue in the aftermath of the Civil War. In fact, now that freedmen had some measure of de facto freedom, they looked to expand their economic horizons. One of the major factors drawing rural blacks into Charleston in the immediate aftermath of the war was the notion that economic opportunities ran rampant in urban centers. Many slaves and free blacks who had been trained in skilled trades such as plastering, blacksmithing, coopering and other mechanical arts desired to continue their trades in the post-war period. Given the nature of the disastrous economic

conditions in Charleston and the rest of the South after the war, this simply was not feasible, as many whites were also living below the poverty line. All of Charleston's (and South Carolina's) banking capital was destroyed in the war, and Charleston was left in both financial and physical ruins after the war. Consequently, while Charleston's occupational structure was broad enough to provide blacks various economic opportunities in the antebellum period, it would not be able to continue to do so at the time of emancipation. As a result, visions of increased economic opportunity held by Charleston's former slaves would not be realized in the Reconstruction period.

Throughout the antebellum period, however, Charleston's occupational structure continued to expand, creating more and more employment opportunities for slaves. Blacks were afforded these opportunities because of the development of the "hiring-out" system which was essential to the survival of slavery amid the shifting needs and increasing complexities of urban economies.¹⁶ According to one scholar of the antebellum South, hiring-out seemed to combine the fluidity of the wage system with the restraints Southerners felt necessary to maintain bondage.¹⁷ As a consequence of the practice of hiring-out, if masters owned more blacks than could be employed at home or in their business, they were able to hire these slaves to short-handed employers. Hiring-out thus greatly lessened the rigidity of slavery for

slave owners and allowed a constant relocation of the labor supply according to demand.¹⁸

Hiring-out in its most general form usually involved a contract which stipulated the terms that were to be followed by all participants. These terms consisted of the amount of money to be paid for the labor, length of service, assurances that the slaves would be properly treated, as well as a description of the work to be performed. There were some variations in the arrangements made, depending on the skill involved, prevailing wage levels, and the market price of slaves. The vast majority of arrangements were made for nearly twelve months and began on January 1 of the year, leaving a short holiday around Christmas. There was variation in duration, with some arrangements lasting only a week or arranged for the duration of the job, while others were made for five years.¹⁹

Advertisements concerning the hiring-out of blacks in Charleston for the benefit of their owners were common in the Charleston newspapers. The following were taken from a single column of a Charleston newspaper:

To be hired, three able-bodied experienced Boatmen.
Inquire at this office.

To be hired, a Boy, a good Houseservant, and
capable of taking charge of horses. Apply at this
office.

To hire, a likely Mulatto Boy, Fifteen years old,
accustomed to House Work. Apply at this office.

To hire, a boy accustomed to waiting about House. Inquire at 43 Beaufain Street, opposite Coming.

To Master Tailors - To hire by the year, at very low wages, a young fellow who has served six years at the tailoring business. Apply at 112 Queen Street.

Nurse to hire. A young Wench of good disposition. Also, two prime young Wenches. Apply at this office.²⁰

These new arrangements gave rise to various laws and ordinances aimed at maintaining restrictions on the movements of slaves. As early as 1818 there was a law in Charleston requiring slaves who were hired out by day to wear a numbered brass badge, with his or her occupation on it. Owners were forced to register each person hired with the mayor's office stipulating the hireling's name, age and size. These permits came under three different categories. The first category applied to every handicraft tradesman. The second one referred to every carter, drayman, porter, or day laborer and the final one applied to every fisherman or fisherwoman.²¹ While prices for the badges varied, in an effort to discourage owners from putting old or poor workers in the market; and in order to provide enough revenue to meet some of the costs of enforcement, city officials kept these prices reasonably high. By 1843, the fees in Charleston ranged from seven dollars for the most skilled to two dollars for less skilled workers.²² Badges were not the only form of municipal regulation of this labor. The City Marshall designated a central place where prospective

workers could be stationed. The City Marshall erected stands where porters and day laborers were to wait until they were called to work. This enabled employers to find help easily when they needed it, and at the same time restricted some of the daily movement of laborers.²³

With the help of these municipal restrictions on the hiring process, the hiring-out system accomplished what it was initially designed to do. Hiring-out greatly facilitated the more efficient use of black labor, while allowing numerous blacks to move into many kinds of jobs. If a white was too poor to own a black, he could rent one. Large employers who previously had to concern themselves with the problem of housing workers could now avoid that problem, for they could engage workers by the day, month, or year. Moreover, as Richard Wade suggests,

Industrial concerns which owned steady crews could take on additional hands at the busy season. And municipalities themselves could find men for public projects without assuming the responsibilities of slaveholding. It was thus possible for urban economies to maintain a flexible colored labor force without disturbing, legally at least, the institution of slavery.²⁴

Even though the hiring-out system provided slavery with the flexibility it required in the urban setting, it nevertheless gave rise to some problems which many white Southerners thought struck a heavy blow against the institution of slavery. The system helped to loosen the bond between master and slave by introducing a third party:

the employer. As a result, a further mutation of the system quickly developed once it became easier and more profitable for owners to permit their bondsmen to find their own employment.²⁵ J. Benwell, an English traveler to Charleston in the late antebellum period, noted that:

It is the practice of the inhabitants of Charleston, in common, I believe, with all owners of slaves in towns or cities in the slave states, who have not employment sufficient for them at home, or when the slave is a cripple, to send them out to seek their own maintenance. In such cases the slave is compelled to give an account of what he has earned during the week, at his owner's house, where he attends on Saturday evenings for the purpose.

Benwell contended that most slaves were cheated and only a few were able to make worthwhile profits.²⁶

Even if Benwell's assertion is correct that slaves normally made only a small amount of profit, it does not lessen the significance of the role this new relationship played in fostering a degree of independence for blacks. Slaves now had the opportunity to choose their own employers. There was no contract which bound master and employer as had been the case in prior years, and, thus, no special public supervision governed the arrangement. In many instances owners did not know where their slaves worked. As Wade notes, "hiring their own time," brought the slave into a new relationship with his or her owner, "more like that of a tenant and landlord than bondage in the usual sense."

If slaves made their payments to their master on a regular basis, and were careful enough to avoid harassment from the police, they enjoyed a wide margin of freedom. While legally they were still slaves, in actuality they now possessed a form of de facto freedom.²⁷ For example, a resident of Alabama who owned a slave shoemaker named Samuel Robertson entrusted the wages earned to Mrs. Louisa Lord of Charleston, who forwarded them to Robertson's owner. In terms of choosing his employers and making living arrangements, Robertson exercised total freedom.²⁸ A compatriot of Denmark Vesey's, Monday Gell, operated a harness shop on Meeting Street and enjoyed "all the substantial comforts of a freeman."²⁹

The limited taste of freedom experienced as a consequence of the hiring-out system had a twofold effect on the lives of many blacks in Charleston. First, it would make them even more thirsty for liberty having now had a taste of what freedom entailed, making them more assertive in their actions toward whites. Most importantly, having experienced a small degree of independence under slavery, they would expect even more under emancipation in the larger social sense. This, in part, explains why some blacks would enter the post Civil War period with expectations of expanded economic and social opportunities. These were aspirations that would not be fully realized.

Not only did the city breed diversity in the economic

structure, but it had the same effect on the physical landscape and thus, gave rise to a situation which inevitably led to even more freedom for blacks. In the early years of the antebellum period, the compound system was the model used for housing the vast majority of blacks. Under this arrangement the housing quarters of blacks were located on the same plot as the owner's residence. The buildings were usually very close to each other, with master and bondsman normally residing only a few yards apart. In this way the slave could be kept under the watchful eye of his or her master. But, by the 1840's and 1850's the walls of this neat arrangement began to crack. According to Wade,

Masters with too many blacks to keep on their premises, commercial and industrial owners whose bondsmen were not used as domestics, and increasingly slaveholders who found it profitable or convenient to let their slaves seek lodging for themselves permitted a gradual loosening of the common arrangement. Negroes started to "live out," finding a room here, renting a room there, and in other cases simply disappearing into remote sections of town.³⁰

This new arrangement produced more opportunities for blacks to seize a small degree of freedom. With each passing year, larger numbers of urban slaves sought the relative independence afforded by renting away from the master's premises. Some chose to use legal means to do so, by acquiring the right to rent away from their masters through the permit system. However, it appears that most urban slaves "living out" either had consent from their

masters, or simply did so without any kind of permission from master or mistress.³¹ Although most of the housing acquired by urban slaves was physically inferior to that which they had on the master's premises, most nonetheless desired to live out, away from the watchful eye of the master. Residing in the enclosure had the effect of constantly driving home the fact that they were slaves.³² Blacks found the independence of living out to be a very precious commodity, for as one white Charleston woman observed,

Even if they receive wages besides their old privileges, they are not free as long as they are with their old masters, and you see them leaving their comfortable homes and living in miserable shanties, often seeking a day's work for food.³³

This same knowledge blacks would carry with them into the early stages of the Reconstruction period. This explains why, upon hearing of their freedom, numerous blacks would leave the premises of their masters, regardless of how well or poorly they were treated. In their eyes, they could not be free as long as they remained in the confines of their old masters.

Claudia Goldin maintains that almost all cities legislated in some way against the institution of living out, just as they had attempted to control hiring practices. In both cases, some legislation was written early in the history of urban slavery as well as during its last decade. This legislation was too sporadically enforced, and

complaints about these practices were voiced into the early 1860's. Goldin estimated that at least 15 percent of Charleston's slaves lived apart from their owners by 1861.³⁴

Blacks took full advantage of the opportunities afforded them by the very nature of city life.³⁵ Charleston's blacks, slave and free alike could and did develop special contacts with each other as well as with some whites. Slaves sometimes spent long hours drinking and gambling in the grog shops. They often attended parties and balls which would last into the morning hours. Many enjoyed watching horse races, and on occasion actually outnumbered the whites in attendance at the race track.³⁶ They also would sometimes loiter on the street to chat, and it was not unusual for black youths to organize and play games in the street. It was common for slaves to visit each other's homes, or visit the homes of free blacks. Slaves could buy and sell goods with little trouble.³⁷ In all likelihood, blacks cherished these opportunities to develop various contacts and relationships under slavery, and they would understandably expect an increase in these advantages when freedom came. As with so many other black expectations, they would only partially be realized in the early years of the Reconstruction period.

There were countless opportunities in Charleston for blacks to acquire a modest education. It would be almost impossible to prevent slaves who greatly desired to learn to

read and write from accomplishing their goal.³⁸ For example, Benjamin Holmes, a slave who was apprenticed at an early age to the black tailor Sam Weston, was so small that he could hardly see over the bench. He studied all the signs and all the names on the doors where he carried bundles and asked people to tell him a word or two at a time; and in a relatively short period of time he learned to read the papers through this method. He later learned to write cursive by looking in the measuring books to see how the written letters were made while in the employ of a white store owner. This same slave was often hired by white men to read the New York Tribune and the New York Herald to them. When he was later imprisoned, Holmes read Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to the slaves which led to much rejoicing among the bondsmen.³⁹

Although whites attempted to counter the efforts of slaves to learn to read and write, they were usually unable to do so. As early as 1822, Thomas Pinckney had arrived at the conclusion that it was extremely difficult to stop urban blacks from acquiring

the dangerous instrument of learning which many of them have already attained. It is probable that in spite of all endeavors to the contrary, the evil will increase rather than diminish.⁴⁰

Pinckney was correct, for the rate of literacy among urban slaves sharply increased throughout the antebellum period. As one noted scholar points out, "what the master

did not seem disposed to teach the slave [sic] so situated, they usually learned by contact with their fellow men who were better informed."⁴¹ In at least a few cases, literate free blacks and slaves would aid other blacks in acquiring education. The activities of Daniel Payne, a well-educated free black in Charleston, underscore this point. Payne operated a school for blacks from 1829 to 1835, when a bill was passed prohibiting educational instruction to all persons of color. Among Payne's students were three adult slaves whom he taught at night for one dollar a week.⁴² Despite the law, many blacks continued to seek and receive instruction. On a visit to Charleston, Mrs. Fredrika Bremer discovered a secret school for blacks.⁴³ On his second visit to Charleston, Charles Lyell observed that, despite the rigorous enforcement of laws in Charleston, blacks were often taught to read, learned a lot in Sunday schools, and were for the most part desirous of education.⁴⁴

In comparison to their rural counterparts, Charleston's slaves were often well travelled.⁴⁵ Many slaves who were employed by the Charleston and Savannah Railroad Company annually travelled to North Carolina and Virginia, where they visited both their owners and friends. Other slaves also travelled with their masters. For instance, one slave named Philander Michaw made an excursion with his master to England and, upon being offered his freedom, he elected instead to come back to Charleston. Judge Prioleau was

accompanied by his body servant Forrest in his travels throughout Europe. One slave advertisement suggested that one slave was proficient in Spanish and French and another was proficient in both French and English, suggesting that they had also been well travelled.⁴⁶

As a consequence of the level of intellectual activity which was maintained in Charleston, slaves were often very well informed. Not only did they know about events taking place in Charleston, but urban slaves were also aware of what was happening in the other parts of the country. One contemporary white Southerner

...estimated that at any given public political rally or discussion, at least 10 percent were Blacks who listened attentively. The slaves were even aware of the latest Congressional debates because as one pointed out, "what was going on was printed in all the papers so that everybody [sic] black as well as white might read it."⁴⁷

On the occasion of the funeral procession of John C. Calhoun, Fredrika Bremer observed many slaves jumping into the air with delight because, as they asserted to her, "Calhoun was indeed a wicked man for he wished that they might remain slaves."⁴⁸

That many of Charleston's blacks possessed a rudimentary education would have implications for the attitudes, actions and expectations of blacks in the Reconstruction period. Having gone to great lengths to attain education while in slavery, the strong desire of blacks for education continued under freedom. To them, education was a first step in

acquiring acceptance into American society. When freedom presented greater opportunities, they flocked to schools in droves, both young and old. The strong educational tradition of Charleston's blacks increased the likelihood that a good number would be prepared to articulate the aims and objectives of blacks during the Reconstruction period, providing the political nucleus of the black community. The existence of this group would enable blacks to move quickly and efficiently in organizing freedom parades. When blacks' efforts to acquire the fruits of equality would be rebuked by the white power structure, this group would lead a sustained and formidable protest.

Both slaves and free blacks were able to attend church services regularly. The church was of paramount importance in providing blacks with a structured social life. As one noted scholar suggested,

The black Church provided a refuge in a hostile white world. For the slave who worked and suffered in an alien world, religion offered a means of catharsis for their pent-up emotions and frustrations. Moreover, it turned their minds from the sufferings and privations of this world after death where the weary would find rest and the victims of injustice would be compensated.⁴⁹

In addition, the church served as a center for social activities. In the black church, a large number of future black political leaders received opportunities to hone their leadership skills.⁵⁰

Throughout the antebellum period in the South, both the

Methodists and the Baptists allowed slaves to attend regular services, having them sit in balconies separated from the white membership. As the black membership increased, the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists and Methodists all built separate churches in Charleston for their black members. Although under white supervision, in these separate church organizations blacks were able to conduct their services according to their own mode of religious expression.⁵¹ Blacks still desired more autonomy than this arrangement provided them, and tension sometimes ran high between blacks, both slave and free, and whites.⁵²

Despite this desire to have independent black churches, only one emerged in Charleston prior to the Civil War. This church was established in 1817 by Morris Brown, a free black who left the white Methodist church in order to form his church. In 1815, there were four thousand blacks in the Methodist church. Black members were permitted to have their own separate quarterly conference; and financial as well as disciplinary affairs were handled by black preachers and Sunday School class leaders. However, when a white preacher in charge allegedly discovered some financial irregularities, he ordered the black officers to hand over all collections to the stewards and to conduct church trials only in his presence. The black leaders resented this intrusion, and when their separate quarterly conference was abolished, it outraged them.⁵³

The black congregation began to seek out ways to form its own church. Morris Brown went to Philadelphia where he was ordained by Bishop Richard Allen and commissioned to return to Charleston to organize an A.M.E. Church. Open schism began when the white trustees of the Charleston Bethel Church insisted upon erecting a hearse house on the burial lot used by the black members. As one contemporary observer described it, "at one fell swoop nearly every leader delivered up his class papers, and four thousand, three hundred and sixty-seven of the members withdrew." Shortly thereafter, they erected a building and formed the African Church of Charleston, with Morris Brown as pastor. When some of its members were identified as participants in the Vesey insurrection, the church came under attack. Civil authorities burned the building to the ground, Morris Brown was forced to flee northward, and only after the Civil War could separate African Methodism be resurrected in Charleston.⁵⁴ In the interim, black ministers continued to preach to black congregations meeting under the auspices of whites. Throughout the antebellum period, the popularity of Methodism among blacks continued to increase. By 1860, the total number of black Methodists in Charleston reached 6,000.

While black Charlestonians continued to be attracted to Methodism throughout the antebellum period, they were not satisfied with the subordinate role which they played within

the church. The same could be said for black Presbyterians, Baptists, and Episcopalians. Blacks in all major religious denominations desired more autonomy than white churches granted them. Many blacks felt stymied in their efforts to attain full religious expression. The preaching performance of white ministers did not meet the spiritual needs of blacks. As Benjamin Mays notes,

The white minister could not speak pointedly and effectively to the needs of the Negro. He spoke from the perspective of a free man who had never really experienced what it really meant to be a slave and what it meant to be told by words and deeds that it was the will of God that he be a slave. When the white minister preached equality of the slave before God, he seldom meant that this equality should be fulfilled here and now.⁵⁵

When blacks received their freedom, they moved en masse to form their own churches. Such decisions grew out of their experience with white churches under slavery. Even during slavery, whenever opportunities to form their own churches presented themselves, blacks moved to do so, as in the case of Morris Brown and the formation of the African Church of Charleston in 1817. In spite of the problems blacks experienced in the antebellum white church, future black leaders were able to acquire some political skills, and thus were able to make valuable contributions to the struggles of blacks in Charleston and in South Carolina. The black church would be in the vanguard of organized black protest after the Civil War.

While the city afforded blacks numerous opportunities,

life in Charleston in the antebellum period was no racial paradise for blacks, slave and free alike. As Robert Starobin argues,

The townhouses and city hotels naturally offered more social life and better working conditions than did rural plantations, but the privileges granted urban domestic servants differed little from those given plantation house servants. And those privileges afforded urban domestic slaves did not necessarily mean that in the cities slavery as an institution was being transformed into freedom. Urban slavery was often characterized by the drudgery, unhealthiness, protest, and unrestrained repression similar to that which obtained on plantations.⁵⁶

In light of the historical record for Charleston, Starobin's assessment seems to be on the mark. Regardless of where a slave resided, he or she could never view it as a permanent home. Families could scarcely exist in bondage. Marriage contracts between blacks were not recognized by law, and thus de facto arrangements could be easily broken. The offspring of slaves were not the property of the parents, but rather the property of the master or mistress. Certainly, "living out" provided a degree of privacy to some which was almost non-existent in most rural areas, and urban proximity permitted wider opportunity for the choice of mates. Still, due in part to the greater instability of slavery in the cities, attachments were seldom permanent.⁵⁷ As Wade suggests,

A man might visit his "wife" in the enclosure or even live with her. Her Children called him "father." Friends considered the two a couple. Small bits of property would be shared. But these conventions masked the reality. Whatever

bond existed could easily be broken. If either master moved, one partner went with him; a variety of circumstances could lead to a sale; the owner's death might bring the disposition of all blacks in the estate. And since the union rested on the consent of some white, the permission might at any time be removed.⁵⁸

The case of one Charleston black underscores this point. This man was broken-hearted because it had been two years since he had seen his wife and two children. He had been purchased by one man, and his wife and children had been purchased by another. Although he was living in the same town with them, he never was allowed to see them. Indeed, "he would be beaten within an ace of his life if he ventured to go to the corner of the street."⁵⁹ Due to the instability of family life experienced under slavery, upon receiving their freedom in the post-Civil War period, freedmen promptly moved to make their marriages legal by signing contracts, as well as embarking on campaigns to relocate family members separated during slavery. In spite of the relative instability of family life among urban slaves, most current research shows that both urban and rural slaves exhibited strong family attachments, and lived as family units as much as slavery would permit.

Many of Charleston's bondspeople were ill-treated.⁶⁰ This belies the notion that among the servant or domestic class, relations with the masters were on the whole intimate and satisfactory. It also explains why defection was almost complete among this group in the Reconstruction period.⁶¹

The correspondence of the period is replete with instances of blacks being mistreated by their masters or mistresses. On a trip to Charleston, Mrs. Fredrika Bremer learned that a young servant girl at the house where she was boarding had been flogged by a man who helped operate the house.⁶² One owner was so cruel that "he'd lick his slaves to death." It was very rare for one of his slaves to survive a whipping.⁶³ The Englishman, James Stuart, observed at the boarding house where he resided that not a day passed without him hearing that the Mistress of the house had whipped and misused her slaves. On one such occasion, he noted,

When one of the female slaves had disobliged her, she beat her until her own strength was exhausted, and then insisted on the barkeeper, Mr. Ferguson, proceeding to inflict the remainder of the punishment. The Mistress in the meantime took her place in the barroom. She instructed him to lay on the whip severely in an adjoining room.

Stuart did not learn of another violent act committed by the Mistress until the day on which he vacated the house. When Stuart saw that the cook of the house had tears in his eyes, he asked what was the matter. The cook responded that, "he had got such a sharp blow on the cheek bone from the Mistress that it had unmanned him for the moment."⁶⁴ Stuart also found that the servants were given no beds, having instead to sleep on the floors with their clothes on. It was common for people to kick them or tread upon them as they came in.⁶⁵ An English visitor to the South also

revealed that during his stay in Charleston, he witnessed a master slapping the face and ears of his slave, appearing to take much delight in so doing.⁶⁶

Perhaps the testimony given by Angelina and Sarah Grimke is even more revealing of the nature of cruel treatment heaped upon slaves in Charleston. Sarah Grimke noted hearing one woman say that she had the eyes of her waiting maid slit for some petty theft.⁶⁷ She was also informed by a friend in whom she had much confidence that a woman in Charleston had starved a female slave to death.⁶⁸ Angela Grimke was also aware of an aged slave who was forced to eke out a bare existence by begging in the streets of Charleston, for "he was too old to work, and therefore his allowance was stopped, and he was turned out to make his living by begging."⁶⁹

If individual owners did not prefer to punish their slaves themselves then they could send them to the dreaded work-house to be punished for a small fee.⁷⁰ If slaves violated the nine o'clock evening curfew and were caught in the streets after this time, they too were taken to the guard-house for punishment.⁷¹ On his visit to Charleston, Sir William Howard Russell observed a group of blacks "shuffling through the streets in all haste in order to escape the patrol and the last peal of the curfew."⁷² When Englishman William Stuart returned to his lodgings one evening after curfew, he found the male servants of the

house already fast asleep in the hallway passages with their clothes still on.⁷³

The sufferings experienced by blacks at the workhouse were a distasteful sight.⁷⁴ Angela Grimke noted that a servant girl who had been sent by her mistress to the workhouse was whipped so severely on her back that the gashes were deep enough to have laid a whole finger in the cuts.⁷⁵ This same mistress also sent another female slave there to be imprisoned and to be worked on the treadmill for several days; for nearly a month after her return to her mistress, this slave woman was lame from this violent punishment.⁷⁶ Moreover, according to Grimke,

Her men servants were sometimes flogged there; and so exceedingly offensive has been the putrid flesh of their lacerated backs, for days after the infliction, that they would be kept out of the house - the smell arising from their wounds being too horrible to be endured. They were always stiff and sore for some days, and not in a condition to be seen by visitors.⁷⁷

Numerous slaves refused to receive these injustices passively, and they took action to circumvent them.⁷⁸ Some simply hid out in the city, others tried to pass for free or white, and still others attempted to purchase their freedom and move on to some other place where they might live as free men and women. One well known Charleston slave, somehow managed to work on the wharves for a long time without being captured by his owner. While this same owner was expending time and energy to locate him, another of his

slaves escaped into the congestion of town life.⁷⁹

Stephen, a slave who was well known in the city, left his master's house to seek the company of a free black woman with whom he lived until discovered two years later.⁸⁰ A Charleston runaway, a tailor by trade and described as intelligent by his owner, passed as free for many years by using falsified papers.⁸¹ Similarly, another runaway was described by his owner as being a bright mulatto, "so bright, that he can readily, as he has done before, pass himself for a white."⁸² Not long after his arrival in Charleston, J. Benwell met a young male slave who "was saving money for his ransom, and in two years intended to proceed to Montreal, in Canada."⁸³

In addition to these forms of resistance to bondage, there were more violent ones employed. Charleston's black community had a long tradition of being vocal and assertive of its rights, a tradition which would carry into the Reconstruction years, and which would have a great impact on the lives of both blacks and whites as well. This tradition seemed to have reached its zenith with the Denmark Vesey conspiracy in Charleston in 1822. Although Vesey was a free black, slaves like Gullah Jack and Monday Gell who were also destined to play pivotal roles in the insurrection.

In its most simple form, the plan called for the conspirators to seize the city guard and acquire control of the arsenals. Afterward, they intended to supply the slaves

from the country and surrounding islands with weapons. They would set fire to the city and slay all the whites. The leaders anticipated that some three thousand blacks would take part in the insurrection; but a few informants betrayed the plot, resulting in the arrest of some one-hundred and thirty blacks. Thirty-five conspirators were hanged, including Denmark Vesey and Gullah Jack, and another thirty-four were deported.⁸⁴

The Denmark Vesey insurrection scare increased the fear of black uprisings, and facilitated passage of a more rigorous slave code, as well as the first in a series of Black Seamen Acts, the sole intent and purpose of which was to isolate the city's large black population from the dangerous touch of free black sailors. Outward forms of vigilance were never again relaxed in Charleston.⁸⁵ Much of the correspondence of the time indicated white Charlestonians' preoccupation with the threat of slave revolt. One contemporary noted that, "the patrol guard set as regularly every night as if an invasion were expected." However, it was not the dread of foreign invasion but concern with domestic insurrection which necessitated these nightly precautions.⁸⁶ Describing the city of Charleston to his family in North Carolina in 1849, James Johnston Pettigrew was struck by the unusual military appearance of the city and remarked that

The watchmen here are not provided simply with alarming weapons, such as rattles, etc, but are

accoutred as soldiers, with muskets, uniform and bayonet, all of which you may rightly conjecture is for the black population... Such precautions are absolutely necessary in a city of which more than a majority of the population are slaves, liable [sic] in seaport town to be corrupted and tampered with in every possible manner.⁸⁷

Writing in a similar vein, another contemporary observed that

the horse guards are mounted on horseback and also armed; and they ride along, usually two together all over the city and all night long until six o'clock the next morning. By a signal given from the watch tower, these armed watchmen can be collected at a given point at almost any moment, and in half an hour or so, the whole militia, and all the independent companies of the city would be collected, and armed with these ten thousand guns for defensive purposes against the blacks, if need be.⁸⁸

Despite the more rigorous laws, attempts to enforce them, and the intimidating presence of the patrol guard, Charleston's blacks continued their long tradition of being vocal and assertive of their rights throughout the antebellum period. There were instances in which slaves retaliated against their masters or mistresses with brute force, even to the point of murder. When one hotel-keeper beat his slave cook badly, the cook took offense and nearly beat the hotel-keeper to death.⁸⁹ Visiting a prison in Charleston, Adam Hodgson saw and conversed with a slave who had murdered his master.⁹⁰

A married slave couple, Harrie and Janie, after being whipped by their master devised a plan to kill the whole family. They poisoned the breakfast one morning, killing

all but two family members, who were only saved because they overslept.⁹¹ These are just a few cases of black violence against whites, but there are others which could be presented. Black retaliation against whites under slavery, would re-emerge in the Reconstruction years as a theme. It was a central thread of the tradition of assertiveness which was deeply woven into the fabric of the black community of Charleston.

During his visit to Charleston at the dawn of the Civil War, the northern abolitionist James Redpath noted the aggressive tendencies of the blacks he found there, and the measures used to control them. In his opinion, they were aware of the slave holders' power and dreaded it, yet they were afraid to attempt to overthrow the slave aristocracy largely for two reasons. The strictly enforced city ordinances, and the fear of potential traitors among them served to keep the slaves in check, and prevented them from staging an insurrection. But, as Redpath understood from conversations he had with a number of slaves, things could change drastically.

If the guards who now keep nightly watch were to be otherwise employed - if the roar of hostile cannon was to be heard by the slaves, or a hostile fleet was seen sailing up the bay of Charleston - then, as surely as God lives, would the sewers of the city be instantly filled with the blood of the slavemasters.⁹²

Although Redpath's prediction did not become a reality, with the advent of the Civil War there were new means to destroy the slave system, with numerous documented instances of slaves escaping to freedom and providing valuable military assistance to the Union forces. William Summerson, a slave who once was employed as a boatman and was later employed stockpiling munitions at one of the arsenals in Charleston, escaped to freedom with his wife in 1862 with the aid of friends. Shortly after Summerson reached federal lines, he began to supply the Union forces with valuable information about Charleston Harbor and Confederate blockade-running operations.⁹³

Perhaps the most spectacular slave escape of all time was that conducted by Robert Smalls in 1862. That May, as pilot of the Confederate steamer Planter, Smalls convinced the black sailors to use the ship to escape to freedom. The Planter was anchored in Charleston Harbor. With the captain on shore, the black sailors secretly guided their families out to the ship. On the following day, Smalls skillfully maneuvered the ship beyond the Confederate's heavily fortified lines in Charleston Harbor to the safety of federal forces. After this heroic feat, Smalls was commissioned second lieutenant in the Union Army and given control of the Planter. He then used his knowledge of Charleston Harbor to help the Union forces break the Confederate supply lines, and remove the torpedoes which he

had helped to lay for the Confederacy while still in servitude.⁹⁴

While some of Charleston's slaves provided valuable information to the Union war effort, others showed their support by protecting Union soldiers who had escaped from Confederate prisons. One Union soldier who had escaped along with others, wrote "that Negro families stood guard while we slept."⁹⁵

Not long after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, Robert Smalls argued that black Charlestonians were anxious to fight for their liberty, and would do so if the opportunity were presented. In his view, as many as ten or fifteen black regiments could be raised in Charleston if only the United States Army had a headquarters there.⁹⁶ Smalls' assessment was accurate, for numerous black Charlestonians were among the first Union troops to enter Charleston in February 1865 during the Confederate evacuation of that city; and when Martin Delany was sent to Charleston to recruit blacks, they would flock en masse to join the federal ranks as soldiers.⁹⁷ The intense desire for freedom among Charleston's blacks carried into the Civil War and was transmitted to the Reconstruction period. Their profound desire for liberty was the driving force behind the unyielding stance which they would take in the aftermath of the war when the white power structure attempted to circumvent that freedom.

Life for free blacks in Charleston was on the whole slightly better than it was for slaves, but with time it became a difficult experience for even the wealthy free blacks. Since less than one in every five free blacks in Charleston belonged to the free black aristocracy as defined by James L. Roark and Michael P. Johnson,⁹⁸ it would be historically inaccurate to suggest that free blacks in the antebellum period ever possessed substantially more rights than did the slaves. Free blacks never enjoyed many rights, and as time passed the few rights which they did enjoy steadily began to disappear under the weight of legislation to restrict their lives. Increasingly, their status began to resemble that of the slave. Laws were passed which required every free black to have in his or her possession a certificate of freedom, otherwise they might be claimed as slaves.⁹⁹

Charleston and other local jurisdictions required the free black to have his or her name registered with the police or court authorities. By the 1830's, if migration to another southern state was not completely prohibited, it was certainly restricted. In South Carolina and most other southern states, the free blacks did not even have the right to vote. South Carolina law also prohibited free blacks from serving on juries or testifying against whites. If a free black was convicted of a crime, the punishment was much harsher than that experienced by white defendants.¹⁰⁰ It

was not unusual for convicted free blacks to be whipped prior to imprisonment or even sold into bondage. The right of assembly for free blacks was also proscribed.

There was a curfew imposed on the evening activities of free blacks, and the presence of a respectable white person was required at the meetings of either churches or benevolent societies. Because the free black was seen as a potential insurrectionist, he or she was discouraged from mingling with the slave population. A free black also needed a special license in order to legally possess either a gun or a dog, since the motives for such ownership were always questioned by whites. It was not unusual for free blacks to be identified as vagrants and sold into temporary servitude.¹⁰¹

In spite of desires to keep free and enslaved blacks apart, urban centers such as Charleston brought free blacks into close contact with their brothers and sisters in bondage. There was little social distinction made between the masses of free blacks and the slaves. They were often engaged in the same kinds of trades; they gathered and socialized in the same taverns and regularly attended church services together.¹⁰² Indeed, as M. Wikramanayake suggests,

Since many urban slaves were permitted to live away from their owners, there developed whole areas of settlement where slave and free black lived side by side. Charleston Neck, in the Northern part of the city, was such a ghetto, where free blacks and slaves, mixed freely and enjoyed the benefits of close communal living.¹⁰³

Given the similarity of circumstances for numerous free blacks and slaves, their intermarriage, their almost daily social contact, and the similar restrictions they lived under, both groups actively participated in the war to insure a union victory. The antebellum experience of the majority of free blacks in Charleston helps to explain why, when white Charlestonians in the Reconstruction years sought to deny to the former slaves the freedom entitled them as a result of the union victory, free blacks also felt threatened by this white action, and joined with former slaves to counter such moves by the white power structure. When combined, blacks opposing these initiatives amounted to a formidable foe, constituting about 97 percent of Charleston's very large Afro-American community.

Of the 3,237 free blacks in Charleston, only about 500 constituted the core of the city's free black elite, a group whose experience was distinct from that of the black masses. In most cases, members of this group owned both slaves and real estate.¹⁰⁴ The Holloways had a successful carpentry establishment which was supplemented by heavy investments in land; the Kinlocks were wealthy millwrights and owners of plantations. Thomas Small was a carpenter and real estate speculator; Charleston's best known hotelier was Jehu Jones.¹⁰⁵ Color was also an important measuring stick for this elite group: the vast majority were mulattos.¹⁰⁶ This free black elite held themselves aloof from the masses of

free blacks and slaves, choosing to socialize¹⁰⁷ and to intermarry among themselves.

Although Charleston's free black elite was sometimes subjected to the same restrictions as were the masses of free blacks and the slaves, they were usually able to escape their full impact because they established personal relations with powerful whites in the city who shielded them from persecution. They developed these relationships at work, church, and in their neighborhoods. As James L. Roark and Michael P. Johnson argue,

Leading white men were often the legal guardians of free persons of color and, in some cases, they were even linked by blood. Crowded together on the small peninsula, the white and free colored aristocracies intertwined. Without this informal, personal nexus with influential whites, the mulatto elite would not have been allowed to build their substantial social and economic accommodations during the antebellum years.¹⁰⁸

Despite this relationship with powerful whites, by the late 1850's it had become apparent that personalism could not provide permanent security. There was no solid middle ground for mulattos in the South. Because of their Afro-American ancestry, mulattos were pushed toward the status of slaves. The majority of whites saw mulattos as light-skinned blacks, not as a separate social caste. An extension of this viewpoint was that any individual with a trace of black blood should be considered a slave. As the white South moved toward secession, the mulatto elite's middle ground progressively narrowed and tilted ever more

steeply toward slavery. Their white friends refused to defend them during the enslavement crisis of the 1850's, when white South Carolinians sought to enslave all free blacks, including the free black aristocracy. The situation became so bad that they concluded that their survival required emigration.

Politics overpowered the informal bonds of personalism because the white friends of Charleston's free black elite were outnumbered by urban whites having no valued personal relationship with or sympathy for free blacks. This left the free black elite prey to their white enemies,¹⁰⁹ who consisted primarily of working class whites. There was a steady increase in the number of working class whites in Charleston during the 1850's, and by 1860 they constituted a majority. With the enlargement of their numbers came political leverage. The white working class had resented the personal relationships which bonded free blacks and white aristocrats. In many cases, white craftsmen were in direct competition with free black craftsmen, and other white working men had competed for semi-skilled and unskilled jobs with slaves and free blacks. These whites were firm believers in the doctrines of white racial superiority and determined to advance it to it's fullest. White working men were largely responsible for precipitating the enslavement crisis, a campaign to eliminate free black competition once and for all. They elected numerous

representatives to the state legislature who pledged to carry out their objective.¹¹⁰

In the midst of this crisis, hundreds of Charleston's free blacks abandoned the city.¹¹¹ However, the vast majority of the free black aristocracy elected to remain. Many felt unable to walk away from their accomplishments, and became trapped by the depreciated value of their property. Additionally, they were hampered by the business standstill brought on by secession, as well as by the increasing difficulty of getting safe passage out of the state. Most important, they remained with the hope of re-establishing their old personal connections with powerful whites once the opportunity presented itself.¹¹²

Numerous members of Charleston's free black elite actually supported the Confederate war effort, for they were deeply entrenched in the South's economic order. Barely one month after South Carolina seceded from the Union, eighty-two black Charlestonians offered their services in a petition to the state through the mayor "to be assigned any service where we can be useful." The petitions claimed that:

We are by birth citizens of South Carolina, in our veins is the blood of the white race in some half, in the other much more, our attachments are with you, our hopes of safety and protection is in South Carolina, our allegiance is due alone to her, in her defense we are willing to offer up our lives and all that is dear to us, we therefore take the liberty of asking the privilege of volunteering our services to the State at this time, where she needs the services

of all her true and devoted citizens. We are willing to be assigned to any service where we can be made useful.¹¹³

The butcher Francis Sasportas sold meat to the Confederate government in order to feed hungry soldiers.¹¹⁴ Other free blacks contributed money to the Confederate cause. For example, an issue of the Charleston Mercury indicated that the "Free Colored Men...contributed \$450 to sustain the cause of the South."¹¹⁵ The elite Brown Fellowship Society voted to donate fifty dollars to defray medical expenses for sick and injured Confederate soldiers.¹¹⁶ Not to be outdone, one group of free black women collected \$450 and presented it to the Y.M.C.A. for the Confederacy.¹¹⁷

Despite elite black support, the Confederacy crumbled, and this would have major implications for the whole of American society, and for the South in particular. The free black elite was even more determined to hold itself aloof from the masses of blacks since the middle ground they had occupied, yielding them a degree of economic and social status during the antebellum period, was now threatened. The black elite continued to form separate organizations and offered nothing to the black masses but scorn and often blame for the new predicaments facing all blacks, including the elite. Many members of the mulatto elite were livid over the fact that, upon emancipation, the white South increasingly did not distinguish between them and the black

masses, and so these elites went to great length to show whites that they were different from the black majority.

A large number of this group would continue throughout the Reconstruction period to identify with white society, and whenever opportunities arose, they would use their economic resources to gain the approval of whites. Southern whites refused to accept them into their ranks. Because this attitude was carried over into the post Civil War era, members of the black elite were not active in planning freedom celebrations and were not present when they were staged. This also explains why, in the early years of emancipation, the free black elite were not the political cadre which articulated the needs, wants and aspirations of the masses of blacks.

At the same time; the mass of free blacks was tied to slaves by blood, marriage, and religion, and also subjected to many of the same restrictions as the slaves. Upon emancipation, they were determined to seize that freedom which theoretically had been theirs in prior years, but denied to them in fact. Well-educated and well-versed in the issues confronting black Charlestonians, many among this group were very articulate. Therefore, it was from the historically free black masses that the vanguard of black protest emerged. They organized and successfully staged many of the freedom celebrations and also spoke to the concerns of the black masses.

The antebellum religious, social and educational opportunities which the city afforded the urban slaves prepared them for freedom. When freedom came, it was only logical that they would seek to expand the degree of autonomy they had already experienced. At the conclusion of the war, both the free black masses and slaves were "standing on freedom's edge," and the free black elite was wandering in the dark, licking at the economic and social wounds which the conflict had inflicted upon them.

CHAPTER I ENDNOTES

1. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
2. Ibid., VIII-IX, p. 26-27.
3. See Jonathan Beasley, "Blacks - Slave and Free - Vicksburg, 1850-1860," The Journal of Mississippi History 38[1] (February 1976) pp. 1-33; Terry L. Seip, "Slaves and Free Negroes in Alexandria, 1850-1860," Louisiana History 10[2] (Spring 1969) pp. 147-165; Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974); Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South 1820-1860; A Quantitative History (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976); and Donnie D. Bellamy, "Macon, Georgia, 1823-1860: A Study in Urban Slavery," Phylon XLV[4] (December 1984) pp. 289-310.
4. One provocative study of urban slavery which concentrates on the cultural, social, religious, political, and economic aspect of the slave experience is Paul D. Lack's: "An Urban Slave Community: Little Rock, 1831-1862," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, XLI[3] (Autumn 1982) pp. 258-287.
5. For a discussion of the role played by free blacks in Charleston society during the antebellum period, see Horace E. Fitchett, "The Free Negro in Charleston, South Carolina." (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1950); Ira Berlin, Slaves

Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973); Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, "'A Middle Ground': Free Mullattoes and The Friendly Moralist Society of Antebellum Charleston," Southern Studies 21[3] (Fall 1982) pp. 246-265; Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Charleston's Free Afro-American Elite: The Brown Fellowship Society and the Humane Brotherhood," South Carolina Historical Magazine 82[4] (October 1981) pp. 289-310; Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, eds. No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in The Old South (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984); and Larry Roger, Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860 (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 1985).

6. August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto: An Interpretative History of American Negroes (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) pp. 65-66. For an excellent discussion of the difference between urban and rural slavery, consult: Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, 1964.
7. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 28-54. There were also numerous economic and social opportunities for slaves and free blacks in other southern cities. For discussion of these opportunities in Vicksburg, Mississippi; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Macon, Georgia; consult: Jonathan Beasley, "Blacks - Slave and Free - Vicksburg," pp. 9-16; Paul D. Lack, "An Urban Slave Community," pp. 259-271; and Donnie D. Bellamy, "Macon, Georgia, 1823-1860," pp. 303-307.
8. Census of the City of Charleston for the Year 1848, pp. 34-35. This writer is aware of the inadequacies of the 1848 Charleston Census concerning it's use as an accurate account of the city's total population or of it's occupational structure, making it an invalid source for conclusions about the employment status of prewar urban blacks. Consequently, I have cited the 1848 Charleston Census only to show what occupational groups included slaves and/or free blacks. For a critique of the inadequacies of the 1848 Charleston Census, see Anne W. Chapman, "Inadequacies of the 1848 Charleston Census," Southern Historical Magazine 81[1]

(January 1980) pp. 24-34.

9. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 10.
10. Bernard Edward Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 2-3; and, Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, p. 44.
11. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 3-4. Although both slaves and free blacks were sometimes able to find employment in Southern industry, they usually had to toil long hours, under hazardous working conditions. Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) pp. 36-37.
12. Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, p. 31; Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, p. 45.
13. Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, p. 32.
14. Ibid., p. 19.
15. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 29-31.
16. Ibid., p. 38.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Quoted in James Buckingham, The Slave States of America. (London: Fisher, Son, and Company, 1842) Volume 1, p. 136.
21. Digest of Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, From the Year 1783 to July, 1818, Etc. (Charleston, 1818) p. 182.
22. Digest of Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, From the Year 1783 to October, 1844 (Charleston, 1844) p. 21. Municipal income from this source never proved very great, but it tended to grow. Charleston's collections for this item came to nearly \$114,000 in 1849. Yet the real purpose of the system was control, not revenue; and fines and punishment reflect this intent better than do the proceeds.

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Whites who hired slaves illegally ran the risk of losing up to \$50, and the bondsmen involved might suffer a severe whipping. Charleston's regulations on this question were not unusual. A black picked up without a badge received "at the public market twenty stripes on the bare back" or his owner paid \$20. An employer who used a black without the proper identification was assessed twice the price of the badge plus costs. Charleston, Digest of Ordinances, 1818, pp. 187-188.

23. Charleston, Digest of Ordinances, 1818, pp. 172 and 188. The ordinance was first enacted in 1815.
24. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 43.
25. Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, pp. 38-39; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 48.
26. J. Benwell, An Englishman's Travels in America: His Observations of Life and Manners in the Free and Slave States (London: Binns and Goodwin, 1853) p. 225. Some blacks did refuse to give their masters the wages which they had earned. Adam Hodgson, Letters From North America Written on a Tour in the United States and Canada (London: A. Constable and Company, 1824), volume 1, p. 111.
27. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 48 and 51. Wade argues that there is no way of knowing how many slaves actually acquired the privilege of hiring out their time, but the extent to which each town struggled to stop this practice is a good index of how widespread it was. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
28. Louisa Lord to Martha Riggs, November 8, 1854, and February 10, 1861, Samuel Robertson to Louisa Lord, April 15, 1857, Letters of Louisa Lord, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.
29. James Hamilton, Jr., An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection Among a Portion of the Blacks of This City Published by the Authority of the Corporation of Charleston (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1822) p. 21.
30. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 62.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67. Perhaps this new arrangement was one of the reasons why Fredricka Bremer observed in pre-Civil War Charleston that blacks were swarming in the streets. Adolph B. Benson, ed., America of the

- Fifties: Letters of Fredricka Bremer (New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1924) p. 96.
32. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, pp. 65-66; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 74.
 33. Mary Scott Saint-Amand, A Balcony in Charleston (Richmond, 1941) p. 133.
 34. Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, pp. 40-41.
 35. There are various works on the advantages that urban life held for blacks. Among the most important are: Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, p. 219; Horace E. Fitchett, "The Traditions of the Free Negro in Charleston, South Carolina," Journal of Negro History, 25 (April 1940) pp. 139, 150-151; Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow, pp. 21-22; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 81, 84-87, and 143-146.
 36. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 21. Although slaves spent long hours drinking in grog shops, a law passed in 1835 made it illegal for whites to sell, exchange or give any liquor to any slave except upon the written and express order the owner. An Act To Amend The Law in Relation To Slaves And Free Persons of Color (Charleston, 1835) pp. 5-6.
 37. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 89.
 38. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 12.
 39. John W. Blassingame, ed, Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) p. 618.
 40. Quoted in Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 173.
 41. Carter G. Woodson, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Colored People of the United States From the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War (New York: Arno Press, 1968) pp. 123-124.
 42. Clarence E. Walker, A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) pp. 21-22;

Harry V. Richardson, Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as it Developed Among Blacks in America (Garden City, New York: Anchor-Press/Doubleday, 1976) p. 105; George A. Singleton, The Romance of African Methodism: A Study of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Exposition Press, 1952) p. 35; and Daniel Payne, Recollections of Seventy Years (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968) pp. 19-40. According to the law prohibiting the instruction of persons of color, any white person found guilty of teaching either free blacks or slaves to read or write, was fined \$100 and six months imprisonment. If a free black were found guilty, the offender was to be "whipped not exceeding fifty lashes and fined not exceeding fifty dollars." Finally, if a slave were found guilty, the penalty was fifty lashes, and any informer would receive half the fine. An Act to Amend the Law in Relation to Slaves and Free Persons of Color (Charleston, 1835) pp. 4-5.

43. Frederika Bremer, The Homes of the New World; Impressions of America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1835) volume 2, p. 499.
44. Sir Charles Lyell, A Second Visit to the United States of North America (London: John Murray, 1849) Volume 1, p. 267.
45. Although there are no reliable statistics, according to written accounts, slaves in cities seem to have received better food, clothing, housing, and medical care compared to their rural counterparts. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 9.
46. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 11-12.
47. Ibid., p. 11. The slaves in various areas of the South other than Charleston seem to have known about current events which affected their lives. See especially: W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America p. 59; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) p. 27; Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1953) pp. 8-9, and Paul D. Escott, "The Context of Freedom: Georgia's Slaves During The Civil War," Georgia Historical Quarterly LVII[1] (Spring 1974) pp. 81-83.
48. Fredrica Bremer, The Homes of The New World; Impressions of America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1853) Volume 1, p. 305.

49. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1974) p. 50.
50. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 12.
51. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America, pp. 31-32; Harry V. Richardson, Dark Salvation, pp. 157-158.
52. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America, pp. 25, 31.
53. Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 204.
54. Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977) p. 203; Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion, p. 205.
55. Leonard L. Haynes, Jr., The Negro Community Within American Protestantism, 1619-1844 (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1953) p. 124.
56. Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery, pp. 9-10.
57. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 117.
58. Ibid., p. 118.
59. James Stuart, Three Years in North America (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell and Company, 1833) Volume 2, pp. 142-143.
60. Although overwhelming evidence points to a general trend of masters and mistresses mistreating their slaves, there were rare occasions when this was not the case. Fredrika Bremer, The Homes of the New World, p. 277; and Rev. G. Lewis, Impressions of America And the American Churches (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), pp. 112-113.
61. Joel Williamson found the heavy rate of defection among the servant of domestic class in the Reconstruction period astonishing, but he did not explore the possible factors which led to it. Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965) pp. 34-39.
62. Fredrika Bremer, The Homes of The New World, pp. 265-266.

63. Norman R. Yetman, Life Under the Peculiar Institution: Selection From the Slave Narrative Collection (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1970) p. 148.
64. James Stuart, Three Years in North America, pp.142-143.
65. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
66. J. Benwell, An Englishman's Travels, p. 201.
67. William Loren Katz, American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of A Thousand Witnesses (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839) p. 23.
68. Ibid., p. 54.
69. Ibid.
70. Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828 (Edinburgh: Cadell and Company, 1829) Vol. 3, p. 167; Fredrika Bremer, The Homes of The New World, p. 395; and Adolph B. Benson, ed., America of the Fifties, p.151.
71. George C. Rogers, Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969) pp. 146-147; and James Redpath, The Roving Editor: Or Talks With Slaves in Southern States (New York: A.B. Burdick, Publisher, 1859) pp. 53-54.
72. Sir William Howard Russell, My Diary: North and South (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863) p. 110.
73. James Stuart, Three Years in North America, pp. 132-133. Although some slaves did uphold the curfew, others did not. Between September 1836 and September 1837, 573 were convicted of this offense or for being at large in some illegal place. The slaves' disregard for the curfew was an even greater problem in Charleston Neck, which before 1850 was an infrequently patrolled unincorporated area just north of Boundary Street. According to the mayor, slaves violating the curfew were sometimes only fined one dollar, and where corporal punishment was meted out at all, it was usually moderate. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 19-20.
74. For descriptions of the workhouse in Charleston, see: James Stuart, Three Years in North America, pp. 143-144; James Redpath, The Roving Editor, pp. 53-54; and George C. Rogers, Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys, pp. 148-149. It was the knowledge of what

went on in the workhouse that drove Sarah and Angelina Grimke into the arms of Abolitionists. George C. Rogers, Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys, p. 149.

75. William L. Katz, ed., American Slavery As It Is, pp. 53-54.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. For an excellent piece of scholarship on runaway slaves in Charleston and in other parts of South Carolina, see: Michael P. Johnson, "Runaway Slaves and The Slave Communities in South Carolina, 1799 to 1830," William and Mary Quarterly 38[3] (July 1981) pp. 418-441. Many blacks may have taken these actions because they seemed logical under the circumstances. They had few alternatives since they could not fully use the legal system to counter white injustices. Two provocative works on the plight of blacks in the legal system in the antebellum South are: Daniel Flanigan, "Criminal Procedure in Slave Trials in the Ante-Bellum South," The Journal of Southern History, XL[4] (November 1974) pp. 537-564; and Michael S. Hindus, "Black Justice Under White Law: Criminal Prosecutions of Blacks in Ante-Bellum South Carolina," The Journal of American History LXIII[3] (December 1976) pp. 575-599.
79. Charleston Courier, September 30, 1828.
80. Charleston Courier, March 15, 1831; March 20, 1833.
81. Charleston Courier, March 20, 1833.
82. Sir Charles Lyell, A Second Visit To The United States of North America, p. 204.
83. J. Benwell, An Englishman's Travels in America, pp. 206-207.
84. Rosser H. Taylor, Ante-Bellum South Carolina: A Social and Cultural History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942) pp. 178-179; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 29-34. Vesey's hopes depended on Charleston's carelessness. This point is explored in William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965) pp. 56-57. For thorough accounts of the Denmark Vesey insurrection, see:

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- James Hamilton, Jr., An Account of The Late Intended Insurrection, pp. 1-49; and James Hamilton, Jr., Reflections Occasioned by the Late Disturbances in Charleston (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1822). A series of letters which chronicles the first hand view of a prominent white Charlestonian on the Vesey Conspiracy can be found in the Haywood Papers, the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Two excellent secondary accounts of the Vesey insurrection are: John Lofton, Insurrection in South Carolina: The Turbulent World of Denmark Vesey (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1964); and John Lofton, Denmark Vesey's Revolt: The Slave Plot That Lit A Fuse to Fort Sumter (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983). For an article which attempts to argue that the Vesey conspiracy never existed, but was rather only rumor translated into a belief of a widespread conspiracy, see: Richard C. Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History 30[2] (May 1964) pp. 143-161.
85. Steven A. Channing, Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970) pp. 45-46. The South Carolina Association was formed in 1823 to keep the black population in check as a result of the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy. This Charleston-based society counted among its members many of the most prominent men in the state. It possessed an elaborate organization, published rules and eventually a legislation charter. For a time, it boasted auxiliaries throughout the low country. Alan F. January, "The South Carolina Association: An Agency for Race Control in Antebellum Charleston," The South Carolina Historical Magazine 78[3] (July 1977) p. 191.
86. John A. Scott, ed., Journal of A Residence On A Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839, by Francis Anne Remble (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961) p. 39.
87. James Johnston Pettigrew to -----, April 16, 1849, Pettigrew Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, U.N.C., quoted in Steven Channing, Crisis of Fear, pp. 45-46.
88. Rev. Philo Tower, Slavery Unmasked: Being A Truthful Narrative Of A Three Year's Residence And Journeying in Eleven Southern States (Rochester: E. Darrow and Brother, 1856) pp. 111-113.
89. James Stuart, Three Years in North America, pp. 142-143.

90. Adam Hodgson, Letters From North America, pp. 98-99.
91. Norman R. Yetman, Life Under the Peculiar Institution, p. 149.
92. James Redpath, The Roving Editor, p. 52. At Richmond and Wilmington, Redpath found the slaves discontented, but resigned to their fate. Ibid.
93. John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony, pp. 699-702.
94. Okon Edet Uya, From Slavery To Public Service, pp. 11-20; James M. McPherson, The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War For the Union (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965) pp. 154-157; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968) pp. 91-92; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, ed., Letters From Port Royal 1862-1868 (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969) pp. 45-46; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 79-80. A different view of Smalls' abduction of the Planter is given by Allen B. Ballard: One More Day's Journey: The Story of A Family and a People (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984) p. 106. For an interview with Robert Smalls, see John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony, pp. 374-378.
95. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 270.
96. John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony, pp. 377-378.
97. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany, Sub-Assistant Commissioner, Bureau Relief of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands and Late Major 104th U.S. Colored Troops (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1868) p. 222. Slaves in Charleston also rendered service to the Confederate war effort. They were utilized to build defensive fortifications in and around Charleston. Slaves were also brought from the countryside to serve in similar capacities. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 77; and Arney Robinson Childs, ed., The Private Journal of Henry William Ravenel 1859-1887. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1947) p. 50.
98. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, eds., No Chariot Let Down, pp. 6-7.
99. August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, pp. 67-68.

100. Ibid., pp. 67-68. A study which examines the plight of free blacks in the South Carolina Court system is Donald J. Senese's, "The Free Negro And The South Carolina Courts, 1790-1860," The South Carolina Historical Magazine 68[3] (July 1967) pp. 148-153.
101. August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 68. Phillis Cox was a black woman born free in Pennsylvania, who through a tragic series of events was sold and held as a slave in Charleston. As a youth in Charleston, Daniel Payne's father met the same fate and remained a slave in Charleston until reaching adulthood and purchasing his freedom for one thousand dollars. One means by which free blacks were legally sold into slavery was nonpayment of the capitation tax or the taxes that whites were also subject to. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 66-67.
102. Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, p. 34; Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow, p. 74.
103. Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow, p. 74.
104. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, No Chariot Let Down, pp. 6-7. More than three-quarters of Charleston's free Afro-Americans were propertyless; only about one out of six heads of household owned a slave or real estate worth 42,000 or more. Ibid., p. 6. For an excellent discussion of free blacks who owned slaves in South Carolina during the Antebellum period, see: Larry Koger, Black Slaveowners.
105. Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow, pp. 78-79.
106. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, No Chariot Let Down, p. 6.
107. Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow, p. 89; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism, and Failure," p. 16.
108. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, No Chariot Let Down, p. 10.
109. Ibid., pp. 12-13. Free blacks were also under attack outside Charleston. Away from the city, free blacks were widely scattered and less capable of sustaining a community for self defense. Upcountry planters typically looked upon free blacks as ill-disciplined rogues, likely to steal corn and livestock and to set

a bad example for slaves by their free, idle, dissolute existence. Upcountry whites believed that free people of color subverted the racial subordination that was the essence of slavery, and their representatives argued in the state legislature, that nothing would be lost and much gained if freedom were prohibited to all blacks. Ibid., pp. 13-14. Richard Tansey argues that, though white patrons in New Orleans abandoned their support of free blacks in the 1850's, free blacks did not suffer a decline in their economic and social status during this period due to certain economic forces which took the place of white patronage in shielding free blacks from their adversaries. Richard Tansey, "Out-of-State Free Blacks in Late Antebellum New Orleans," Louisiana History 22[4] (Fall 1981) pp. 369-386.

110. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, No Chariot Let Down, p. 13. Although white workers failed in their efforts in Charleston to enslave free blacks, white workers in Little Rock, Arkansas garnered enough support to pass a state law which led to the elimination of the free black population from that city. Paul D. Lack, "An Urban Slave Community," pp. 283-285.
111. Ibid., p. 14; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 76. In January, 1861, several steamers arrived in New York from Charleston, South Carolina, carrying free blacks who apparently had come to the conclusion that, "Safety was to be found only in getting out of the reach of the slave power." It was estimated that no less than 2,000 had left the state of South Carolina since the threatening economic and legal restrictions which were placed upon free Southern persons of color during the war. In addition to these restrictions and the prospects of war, rumors arose that the property of the free blacks would be seized by the Confederacy and that free blacks would be sold in to slavery. Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States 1850-1925: A Study in American Economic History (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927) pp. 97-98.
112. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, No Chariot Let Down, pp. 14-15. The sixteen wealthiest free blacks in Charleston in 1859 had a combined total of 69 slaves and \$244,595 in real estate. List of Taxpayers for Charleston (Charleston: Evans and Cogswell, 1861), reprinted in William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism, and Failure," p. 15. But even the richest of the blacks were not nearly as wealthy as the well-to-do whites. The richest black person had

only one-seventh the wealth of the richest white.

113. Memorial of Free Blacks to J.H. Boatright, Mayor, City of Charleston, January 10, 1861. Papers of Francis Wilkinson Pinckens and Milledge Luke Bonham, 1837-1920, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Within a matter of days, two other nearly identical petitions had been submitted to the mayor of Charleston and then forwarded to the State legislature where no action was taken. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism, and Failure," p. 17.
114. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 78.
115. Charleston Mercury, September 5, 1861.
116. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 78.
117. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 263-264. The free black elite also supported the Confederate cause in Louisiana. As a group, free blacks in New Orleans were even more deeply entrenched in the economic order than those in Charleston. As in Charleston, many held themselves aloof from the masses of free blacks and slaves. E. Franklin Frazier, The Free Negro Family: A Study of Family Origins Before the Civil War (Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University Press, 1932) p. 33; and Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 16. It also appears that some free blacks in cities like Charleston and New Orleans might have gone into military service for the Confederacy because they saw this as the best way to insure their security, for many white southerners viewed them suspiciously, thinking they supported the Union cause. White intimidation might have played a role. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 77-78, 84; Peter Ripley, Slaves And Freedmen in Civil War Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976) p. 103; and Manoj K. Joshi and Joseph P. Reidy, "To Come Forward And Aid in Putting Down This Unholy Rebellion: The Officers of Louisiana's Free Black Native Guard During the Civil War Era," Southern Studies 21[3] (Fall 1982) pp.327-328. Free black troops in Charleston and New Orleans never fought for the Confederacy. Instead they were usually employed as military laborers. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 77-78; and Manoj K. Joshi and Joseph P. Reidy, "To Come Forward," p. 328.

CHAPTER II
THANK GOD WE ARE A FREE PEOPLE:
EMANCIPATION ARRIVES IN CHARLESTON

Many slaves, particularly those in Charleston, were aware that a Union victory would spell freedom for them, and they waited anxiously for the conclusion of the conflict.¹ When the war ended in a Union triumph, the slaves' long awaited day of liberation became a reality. The emancipation from slavery of four million black people was a monumental occurrence. The institution of slavery had been central to the social, political and economic system in the American South. With its demise, southern society was in disarray. Several questions concerning the blacks' new status were as yet unanswered. Would blacks be willing and able to provide for themselves? Would they become idlers and vagabonds? Who would they look to for political leadership? Would blacks be ruthless and violent towards whites? What did freedom really mean to the vast majority of former slaves in Charleston in their first few months of emancipation?

From the very beginning of the war to its conclusion, most Federal officials regarded Charleston as the hot-bed of rebellion.² It was bombarded by Union artillery throughout the war. In addition, Federal forces laid siege to it for nearly two years,³ until Charleston's defenses were broken

on February 18, 1865; and the mayor surrendered the city to Lieutenant Colonel A. G. Bennett, commander of the 21st U.S. Colored Troops.⁴

Shortly thereafter, the 21st U.S. Colored Troops entered Charleston, followed closely by a detachment of two companies of the 54th Massachusetts.⁵ The rest of the black soldiers who marched into the city constituted the 3rd and 4th South Carolina regiments, many having been slaves in Charleston just prior to the war. It is one of the ironies of American history that several former slaves were the first to march victoriously into the cradle of Secession.⁶ A reporter for the Boston Journal vividly described the advent of these Black troops into Charleston:

The Negro soldiers had already proved their courage and heroism on the field of battle, observed Charles Coffin, "and on this ever memorable day they made manifest to the World their superiority in honor and humanity." Here were ex-slaves "with the Old Flag above them, keeping step to Freedom's drum beat, up the grass-grown street, past the slave shambles, laying aside their arms, working the fire-engines to extinguish the Flames, and in the Spirit of the Redeemer of men, saving that which was lost."⁷

Black soldiers helped to extinguish the flames that were laying waste to Charleston, performing their duty as soldiers and preventing the destruction of southern property, which could have hurt the economic future of not only whites but also blacks.

The Massachusetts 55th, the second black regiment to be recruited under the auspices of Governor John A. Andrews,

entered Charleston roughly three days after the surrender. The arrival of black troops set off a spark of jubilation among the recently liberated black population.⁸ It was a day which the vast majority of blacks had long awaited.

As one contemporary points out, there were many interesting scenes related to the entry of the troops into Charleston. A black soldier at the head of an advancing column, rode a mule down Meeting Street with a banner in which the word "Liberty" was inscribed. He was nearly knocked off the animal by a black woman who dashed to hug him but missed her mark. Upon failing this, she hugged the mule instead, and shouted, "Thank God!! Thank God!!" This woman had gone to bed the night before as a slave faced with the possibility of being evacuated to the interior before the city fell to the Union. Several other blacks present at this scene were so overcome with emotion that they cried instead of laughing as would have happened under other circumstances.⁹

A sixty-nine year old slave woman wearing a brown dress and a roundabout accosted two newspaper reporters, grabbed their hands and began dancing, accompanying her dance with the following repetitious chant:

Ye's long been a-comin',
 Ye's long been a-comin',
 Ye's long been a-comin',
 For to take de land.
 And now ye's a-comin',
 And now ye's a-comin',
 And now ye's a-comin',
 For to rule de land.

"You are glad the Yankees are come, then?" asked one of the reporters. "O Chile," she said, "I can't bress de Lord enough. But I doesn't call you 'Jesus' aids, And I call your head man de Messiah."¹⁰

The reactions of the black woman who attempted to hug the soldier, and of the sixty-nine year old slave woman to the entry of the Union forces into the city epitomize the responses of many ex-slaves. As the 55th entered Charleston, writes a contemporary, "shouts, prayers, and blessings came from the former slave population." Most whites had evacuated the city; those who were left behind were either alarmed or indignant. In most cases they remained in their houses. The same contemporary noted:

The black people turned out en masse. Assiduously they had been taught to regard the "Yanks" as their enemies; carefully had every channel of information been closed against them: but all to no purpose. "Bress de Lord." said an old, gray-haired woman, with streaming eyes, and hands clasped and raised toward heaven, "bress de Lord, I's waited for ye, and prayed for ye, long time, and I knowed you'd come, and ye has done come at last," and she expressed the feelings of all.¹¹

When the remaining companies of the Massachusetts 54th entered Charleston on the morning of February 27, 1865, they too were given a hearty welcome by the black population.¹² Shortly after the arrival of the 54th in Charleston, General Schimmelfennig, one of the Union commanders there, left the city. The scene of his departure at the wharf, wrote a contemporary, "was perfectly indescribable; the band played

Dixie and the Negroes were perfectly wild, shouting, dancing, besides themselves with excitement."¹³

Having endured slavery, the former slaves' initial responses would be to sing, dance, pray, and shout the joy of their newfound liberty. Because the arrival of Federal troops assured emancipation, they looked upon the soldiers as their liberators. It must have been especially warming to their hearts to see blacks who had fought for their liberation lead the occupation of the city and act as the harbingers of emancipation.

Under slavery, blacks were required to wear different masks in order to survive the system. Emancipation released many emotions, frustrations and anxieties left over from bondage. To the former slave, then, freedom also meant being able to express one's feelings.

In the initial stage of emancipation, freedmen expressed their freedom in visibly emotional terms. In the near future, ex-slaves would choose other avenues to demonstrate their new freedom; but for the immediate moment, being able to shed slavery and shout, "Thank God, We Are a Free People," was sufficient.

Blacks continued to manifest feelings of joy over their newfound status in the subsequent weeks of Union occupation; but their actions took on a different form. Black Charlestonians made presentations to Union forces, passed resolutions thanking the Union Army for their liberation,

staged parades, and organized other celebrations in order to exhibit their joy and gratitude.

Blacks seemed especially interested in lavishing praise on the black Federal troops for aiding in their liberation. The former slave status of some of these troops may have engendered the sincere admiration expressed by black Charlestonians toward these troops. The bond of race was also a contributing factor, as the black troops were given presentations honoring their role in the war before the white troops were similarly honored.

Within two weeks of the Union occupation of Charleston, the black women of the city presented the three black regiments with flags. Their officers were given a bouquet of flowers as well as a white swan fan to be given to President Abraham Lincoln. The three regiments staged an exhibition drill at the conclusion of the ceremony.¹⁴ Black women made these presentations upon their own initiative, demonstrating their own independence in two respects. They were former slaves now able to perform whatever services they chose to and were also women operating independently of men in a male-dominated society.

Black Charlestonians' enthusiasm for the black troops was further emphasized upon the arrival of Martin R. Delany, a Major sent to recruit and organize black troops from the city's population. The excitement of the Confederate retreat and the Union occupation of Charleston was still

fresh in the minds of most blacks when Delany arrived.¹⁵ A contemporary described the scene:

Arriving in the city on the Sabbath, when most of the people were gathered at the various places of worship, the news soon became noised about. And from the early forenoon until long after night-fall, a continuous stream of visitors poured in upon him, eager to pay their respects to him. These composed the colored residents of both sexes, representing every age and condition; nor did this cease when their curiosity became satisfied, but grew with their acquaintance and increased with time.¹⁶

Since Delany was very well educated, many of the well-schooled among the blacks were interested in making his acquaintance, as he was a potential leader for the black community. The vast majority of Charleston blacks, both former slaves and poor free blacks, were probably drawn to Delaney for other reasons. As the highest ranking black Union Army officer, Delaney's presence among them was the crowning glory of their liberation, a symbol of the potential positions that these newly freed slaves might aspire to, and someone they could look to for guidance. He was all their dreams come true.

In only a few days, Delany was officially welcomed at Zion's Church by a large and enthusiastic crowd of nearly three thousand people in the church, its surrounding yard and the street adjacent.¹⁷ Former slaves of Charleston and many freedmen came from miles away to greet Delany whose presence seemed to verify their freedom. Zion Presbyterian Church, established prior to the war to accommodate black

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members, had a seating capacity of two thousand, and its size made it a focal point of organized activity in the black community.¹⁸

At this church, Charleston blacks met to draft the resolutions thanking the Union forces and President Lincoln for their liberation on March 29, 1865.¹⁹ The vast majority of blacks in attendance were free before the war, and represented some of the most educated blacks in the state of South Carolina. Some of them would become important political figures in the state, including Robert C. DeLarge, the secretary of this group.

Shortly after the resolutions were passed, a huge emancipation parade was staged under the organization of the black leaders of the community. The marchers assembled at noon and formed a procession of about four thousand led by two black horsemen wearing red, white and blue rosettes as well as blue sashes. Then followed the 21st U.S. Colored Troops with their splendid band; next came the butchers, then a company of schoolboys carrying a sign which read: "We know no masters but ourselves." The "car of liberty" followed bearing thirteen young girls dressed to represent the original thirteen states. Next came the preachers, elders and Sunday School teachers of the numerous congregations of Charleston, each bearing a Bible and a hymnal. Next in the procession were school children carrying several banners, one of which read: "No Caste, Or

Color."

The trades were represented by tailors, coopers, blacksmiths, painters, carpenters, wheelwrights, barbers and others. Also in the procession was a cart bearing a mock auction block. Behind the auction block came a hearse, with the "body of slavery," followed by the mourners all dressed in black. On the hearse were the following inscriptions: "Slavery is Dead," "Who owns Him? No One," and "Sumpter Dug His Grave On The 13th of April, 1861." The crowd gave their approval of the two and one half mile long procession with loud applause.²⁰ Freedmen from both Charleston and its rural environs attended this emancipation parade, showing a unity of response to the change in circumstances they experienced.

To the black people of Charleston, the parade exhibited a great deal of organizational skill and community pride.²¹ White Charlestonians thought somewhat less of the spectacle.

"The innovation was by no means pleasant," a reporter wrote of the few white onlookers, "but they had sense enough to keep their thoughts to themselves."²²

Black leaders in Charleston were not content with passing resolutions or staging celebrations to thank the Union Army for their emancipation. A few weeks after the emancipation parade, two black organizations, The Friends of the Martyrs and the Patriotic Association of Colored Men, organized a ceremony on behalf of the Union forces. Much of

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the membership of these organizations was from Charleston's historically free black community. They dedicated a burial ground for the Federal forces, laying out the ground, raising the burial mounds and erecting an elegant fence to enclose the graveyard. Dedication speeches were made followed by ten minutes of silence in commemoration of the slain Union soldiers. Subsequently, more than two thousand black school children led the crowd in a closing ceremony where the graves were laid with floral bouquets. The whole affair was noted favorably in the Charleston News and Courier.²³

Previously existing free black community organizations of Charleston were the ones best equipped to organize the various celebrations and commemorations of the Union occupation, because they constituted a comparatively well-educated and well organized black microcosm in the state. As Ira Berlin points out, most of the free blacks did not belong to the black elite and felt little sense of community with them.²⁴ Owing to their close ties to slaves through family, marriage, religious affiliation and even work milieu, the majority of free blacks in Charleston had concrete reasons to greet the emancipation of the remaining slaves with as much wild enthusiasm as did those who were emancipated.²⁵ Thus, it was predictable that the free black middle class of Charleston would assume political leadership in these festivities.

In the September and November political gatherings of blacks in Charleston, not one of the fifteen wealthiest black males of the community were present. One might think their obvious advantages of experience, background and economic standing would have induced the black elite to step forward and assume political leadership. Why did this not happen?

William Hine contends that the free black elite was not involved for three reasons: their pre-war ties to the white community, their entrenched economic standing, and the gulf that existed between them and the rest of the black community.²⁶ Unlike the free black elite, the free black middle class had similar economic interests to the black masses, with their economic standing often being threatened concurrently with that of the lower classes of blacks. The Black Code, passed months after emancipation, had proscriptions which hurt the black middle class almost as much as it hurt blacks in general. Even before the passage of the Black Code, the free black middle class recognized the unity of interests it shared with the newly freed slaves and the free black working poor.

The free black middle class activities described here are not intended to denigrate the roles played by freed slaves in these celebrations and commemorations. While organized by the black middle class, these events were greatly attended by freed slaves. Being able to congregate

in large crowds was a new fruit of liberty, particularly for rural freedmen who had lived under great restrictions, given that even small meetings without the presence of whites were prohibited to slaves by the conspiracy conscious white community. Attendance at these early commemorations indicates the speed with which freedmen moved to enjoy their freedom of association as well as being an expression of their joy.

The second facet to consider regarding the freedmen's role is that black racial consciousness was a powerful driving force to participation in these communal celebrations. Ex-slaves must have looked up to blacks such as Martin Delany, Robert DeLarge, M.G. Camplin and others who organized events on their behalf. That these important personages organized such events signalled a sense of identification with these ex-slaves. As Joel Williamson notes, these celebrations were important for more than their symbolic assertions of freedom: they gave the black population a sense of unity and awareness of their power.²⁷

Both urban and rural freedmen showed the intensity of feeling over emancipation and its resulting freedom of movement in their massing outside Charleston to witness the ceremonial restoration of the American flag over Fort Sumpter. Blacks used whatever means were available to reach the ruined fort for this ceremony, as Elizabeth Botume noted in her correspondence.

everybody around us was making preparations to be present on this great occasion. There was no adequate means of transportation for the crowd ready to go. We were on an island, and dependent upon boats which were not to be had. Many of the Colored people started off on flats and in dug-outs, trusting to have the good fortune to meet some larger crafts on the way, and to be taken aboard.²⁸

April 14, 1865 was anxiously awaited, and its arrival found Charleston nearly deserted. Most people, both black and white, were at Fort Sumpter to view the flag-raising. As one contemporary put it:

As the old silken bunting winged itself to its long-deserted staff, thousands of shouts, and prayers fervent and deep, accompanying, greeted its appearance.²⁹

Although there were many speeches given during this ceremony, as Litwack noted, more impressive than any speech was the presence of people like William Lloyd Garrison, the Northern abolitionist, and Robert Smalls, the black war hero who had courageously delivered a Confederate steamer to Union forces. Smalls, himself an ex-slave, used this same steamer to deliver three thousand blacks to Fort Sumpter for the ceremonies. Major Martin R. Delany, a former supporter of the emigrationist movement and soon to take a position with the Freedmen's Bureau of South Carolina, stood on the quarter deck of the steamer. Flanking Delany was the son of Denmark Vesey, who had been hanged forty-three years earlier for plotting a slave insurrection in Charleston.³⁰

In all likelihood, seeing such men in attendance

brought joy and pride to the hearts of former slaves. They were not just heroes, but black heroes, people such as themselves. In a real sense, by thrusting some blacks into the limelight, emancipation nurtured an increase in racial pride among numerous Southern blacks.

In addition to the admiration tinged heavily with racial identification which former slaves held for these men, were the grateful feelings they held for anti-slavery whites. In fact, a huge parade was held in honor of the white abolitionists in attendance at the flag-raising. The celebrities honored by the parade included Garrison, Joshua Leavitt, George Thompson, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, and Judge Kellogg among others.

The colored schools paraded the streets to honor these visitors, flanked by the thousands of adults, marshalled by their Superintendent and Assistants, and led by stirring bands discoursing martial music, the Citadel square densely packed, and the great Zion's Church packed to overflowing. There were speakers on the stands erected on the Square - Speakers at the Church. There were shouts for liberty and for the Union, shouts for their great liberator, shouts for the Army, rousing cheers for the Speakers, for their beloved General Saxton, and for the "black Major;" the people swayed to and fro like a rolling sea.³¹

Blacks saw these individuals as their liberators, and they used their new-found liberty to express their sincere thanks in any ways that they could. What better way to fulfill this objective than to stage a great parade? As Williamson suggests,

to the Freedman, his new liberty conveyed the right to assemble in public, to speak, and to

celebrate - the cause most often and extravagantly celebrated being freedom itself.³²

At the conclusion of the celebration on the following Saturday morning, large numbers of blacks followed the visitors to the wharf. Blacks gave their guests numerous bouquets to express their gratitude. Over and over again, blacks asked for parting words from the departing visitors, requests which Thompson, Tilton, then Garrison honored.³³ That both rural and urban freedmen shared in these celebrations suggests that their responses to emancipation were quite similar, despite any dissimilarities in their previous conditions of servitude. More comparative studies of both groups during emancipation and Reconstruction are called for to substantiate this suggested similarity.

The great celebrations would be upstaged by a traumatic event unimaginable to anyone at the time. The assassination of Lincoln occurred concurrently with the celebration in Charleston of the war's end, another tragic irony of American history. Blacks had viewed Lincoln as a hero; large numbers of them hailed him everywhere he went.³⁴ In Charleston a visit from Lincoln was hoped for, to allow them to fete him as they had other heroes of the war. In a celebration honoring Garrison, the abolitionist asked a gathering of one thousand black children in Zion Church if he should send such an invitation to Lincoln on their behalf. While there was unanimous assent, it was not to

be.³⁵

The assassination of Lincoln had a great impact on Charleston as well as in other communities. The news of the assassination was a devastating blow to the freed blacks and the troops in Charleston. Flags were put at half-mast, minute guns and tolling bells were constantly heard, Army headquarters buildings were draped in black, and officers wore black crepe on their uniforms.³⁶ a contemporary noted:

Even the rebel population united in a condemnation of so cowardly a murder; and scarcely a colored person could be met in the streets, who had not assumed, in some form or other, the badge of mourning. "Pears like we all ought to put on black for him," said a well-dressed old servant-woman to a crowd of her acquaintances, "for he was a mighty good father to us."³⁷

Blacks actively took part in the national mourning for Lincoln. In Charleston, Zion's Church was draped in black for one year. Freedmen nailed flags of black against the fronts of their dwellings or let them float from the roof.³⁸ Yet, even these attempts at mourning seemed feeble against the enormity of the loss of so great a figure.³⁹

Apparently, some former slaves were prepared to take other actions. Major Delany's quarters were besieged by black people demanding advice on what recourse should be taken. Charleston was in chaos for days, with whites of a variety of political leanings avoiding intercourse with blacks.⁴⁰ Their fears may well have been justified, by the estimates of one contemporary.

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Doubtless but for the presence of the black Major, whom they sought instantly, and whose influence over them was powerful, there would have been a most lamentable State of confusion, so determined were they to avenge the death of their friend. Some of these were actuated by fears of being returned to slavery in consequence of his death.⁴¹

These reactions to Lincoln's untimely death within the context of the times are not unreasonable responses. The prospect that liberty might be snatched precipitously from them triggered panic among former slaves. Believing that Lincoln was their personal savior and the one most responsible for their emancipation, ex-bondsmen's willingness to take violent action to preserve their freedom showed the unyielding value they held for liberty.

Freedmen responded in large numbers to Delany's recruitment efforts. When the need for their services was curtailed by Lee's surrender at Appomattox, many of the new recruits were upset. It is difficult to guess who hated this last piece of news most, Charleston's blacks or whites, although each would for different reasons. Disappointment raged in the new black battalion being trained in Charleston for war. When Major Delany gave them the news of surrender, no cheers were forthcoming from the ranks. It was difficult to convince them that the war was truly over with Lee's surrender. Instead, they clung to the hope that their camp would continue training them for battle.⁴² Since their freedom had come at the hands of the Union Army, they felt the best way to preserve that freedom was to serve in the

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Union forces and aid in defeating the Confederacy, an opportunity snatched from them by the surrender.

While the Confederate surrender signalled the end of the institution of slavery, blacks continued to stage celebrations of their emancipation throughout the Reconstruction period.⁴³ In fact, they are still conducted to the present day; while other dates are also employed for this purpose, New Year's Eve is generally designated for this type of celebration in the black community.⁴⁴

On the first New Year's Day and the second Fourth of July following their emancipation, ex-slaves from Charleston and its surrounding environs staged massive emancipation celebrations in the city. The New Year's celebration comprised over ten thousand people gathered at the race track to hear Unionist whites advise them on how to conduct themselves in their changed circumstances if they wanted to be successful in American society. There were also many emancipation songs sung in celebration.⁴⁵

Whites were often annoyed by these celebrations. While blacks saw the celebrations as an opportunity to assert their newfound freedom, whites saw them as means for blacks to be saucy and obnoxious. In other words, whites felt blacks had forgotten their "appropriate place" in the southern social order. Regarding the Fourth of July celebration of 1866, one elderly white Charlestonian wrote

The Fourth was a dreadful day for us on South Battery. The Negroes in Charleston and the county around were assembled on the battery and they kept up a minotinous chant from morning until 2 o'clock at night, varied by some dancing and a miserable show of fire-works and a poor band for about an hour in the evening. The whole affair was an outrage which would not have been permitted in a civilized community.⁴⁶

The civilized community this Charleston aristocrat was referring to was the white social order which had existed prior to the war. At least for now, that order was a thing of the past; blacks were determined to exhibit their freedom publicly in a variety of forms.

Blacks welcomed almost every opportunity to flaunt their new status. One universally agreed upon interpretation of freedom by these ex-bondsmen was that it conferred the right to ignore the infinite array of minor formal and informal regulations which they had been obliged to uphold as slaves. Now, they traveled without passes, owned dogs and guns, assumed forms of dress of their own choosing, refused to yield the sidewalks to whites, rode horses and mules in the presence of white pedestrians, and ignored the large number of "courtesies" previously required of them by whites. They conversed both in public and private with whomever they chose and entered into a variety of voluntary associations.⁴⁷ Indeed, in the summer of 1865, Charleston freedmen occupied "some of the best residences," while black school children sang John Brown's Body "within ear-shot of Calhoun's tomb."⁴⁸

Whites were outraged by the assertiveness of the freedmen which they attested to in letters, journals and diaries. An Irish woman visiting Charleston wrote

the colored persons are awful sassy in Charleston. They take the inside of the walk of a white person, and they insult you as quick as they see you, and if you say a word they make faces at you.⁴⁹

A Charleston aristocrat stopped taking his meals at the Charleston Hotel because the black waiters seemed to shun him during his visits there.⁵⁰

The tendency to ignore their old masters or to ridicule any remaining symbols of slavery was evident among the freedmen of Charleston. Ellison Capers, a white visitor who had been a native Charlestonian, wrote

Rosetta Lizzie's maid, passed me today when I was coming from church without speaking to me, she was really elegantly dressed, in King Street Style.⁵¹

Laura Towne visited Charleston to witness the ceremonial raising of the flag and took a tour of the city. Upon sighting what she believed to be the place where slaves were publicly whipped, she asked an old black woman if, indeed, that was the place. The freedwoman responded rather sarcastically, "Dat's it, but it's all played out now."⁵²

Another example comes from the personal records of Henry W. Ravenel who generally commented favorably on the conduct of the freed people. On one of his many trips to

Charleston, he observed:

It is impossible to describe the condition of the city - It is so much unlike anything we could imagine - Negroes shoving white persons off the walk - Negro women drest in the most outré style, all with veils and parasols for which they have an especial fancy - riding on horseback with Negro soldiers and in carriages. The Negro regiments have just been paid off which gives them money to indulge their elegant tastes.

He also noted that his own servant, when exposed to the city, became "excessively insolent."⁵³

So much for the fidelity of indulged servants, I bought him at his own request and he had always fared as I had. I am utterly disgusted with the race, and trust that I may some day be in a land that is purged of them.⁵⁴

Southern whites misinterpreted the actions of the freedpeople. What whites called insolence, sauciness, "and putting on airs" on the part of blacks were simply the ways which the freed people elected to demonstrate their freedom. The outright refusal to touch their hats to whites, their failure to yield sidewalks to whites, their determination to remain seated while speaking with whites, as well as the tendency to ignore their former masters and mistresses in public were not necessarily intended provocations or discourtesies. They may well have been positive assertions of the blacks' new status as free men and women.⁵⁵

Despite the fact that the vast majority of ex-slaves seized almost any opportunity to display their liberty, there were some who continued to exhibit the same respect and cordiality toward whites they had under slavery.⁵⁶ A

young planter visiting Charleston wrote to his wife,

I have been agreeably disappointed in the behavior of the Negroes. They are as civil and humble as ever. All I meet greeted me enthusiastically as 'Mass Gus.'⁵⁷

Writing in a similar vein, Ellison Capers suggested "that the Negroes behave admirably when you consider the ordeal of temptation and teaching they have passed through".⁵⁸ An elderly Charlestonian also noted that "blacks treat the whites with the utmost of respect and goodwill."⁵⁹ Carl Shurz contended that the first southern men who he met in Charleston in 1865 "designated the general conduct of the emancipated slaves as surprisingly good. Some went so far as to call it admirable."⁶⁰ Records of such positive attitudes towards the behavior of blacks by the white community are quite sparse.

The unwillingness of blacks to bow at random to whites illustrates their determination to lay claim to a larger degree of personal autonomy within American society than urban slaves had possessed. In many cases, white families had only to observe what was taking place in their own households to note the difference emancipation brought, since many servants were striking blows for freedom in their work situations.⁶¹ Some did this by redefining the rules under which they would work; others did so by refusing to remain employed by persons who had previously been their masters or mistresses. Whatever course of action was taken,

nearly all exercised freedom of choice in making their decisions, a product of emancipation.

Numerous ex-slaves refused to be treated as they had been under the old order. One Charleston servant, apparently full of rage and resentment from her experiences under slavery, unleashed some of these feelings toward her mistress. After her mistress told her to scour some pots and kettles, she shot back at her, "You better do it yourself. Ain't you smarter an me? You, think you is - Why you no scour fo you-self?"⁶² In another case, Jacob Schirmer's servant Cornelia

contended that she has as much right by virtue of her freedom, to sit to our table at meals, and use our glassware as she had been to white people besides us, where those liberties were allowed. Since these liberties were not accorded to her, she left.⁶³

One white South Carolinian advised other white ladies to be very prudent in dealing with black domestics. According to her, "colored domestics give back word for word, and even follow-up words with blows, if reprimanded too cuttingly."⁶⁴

Even when some freedpeople stayed in the employ of former owners, they sometimes indicated that this was not to be interpreted as a permanent arrangement. For example, the De Saussure family of Charleston lost every servant but the nurse, and she agreed to stay only "as a favor until they hire white servants."⁶⁵ In such circumstances, white

masters and mistresses probably believed that, in agreeing to remain, the freed blacks were fulfilling obligations learned under slavery. The former slaves might have understood their own actions in a different light, since by agreeing to stay on only temporarily, with the option to leave whenever they chose, they were invoking their freedom of choice, as well as displaying a dignity and self respect befitting them.⁶⁶

Some freed slaves did choose to continue laboring for former owners from motives of genuine loyalty and contentment.⁶⁷ When a former slave owner of Charleston returned to his large and elegant town house there, he found it still occupied by his former servants, and nothing appeared to have changed since their emancipation. The house had been kept as he would have expected it to be; and the servants were as humble, attentive and respectful as they had ever been.⁶⁸ Given his knowledge of different cases occurring for his friends, no doubt he was quite grateful.⁶⁹

In another case, when the Reverend A. T. Porter returned to Charleston after the Union occupation, he found his house stripped of furniture, allegedly requisitioned by the U.S. Government. He did not have a cent and would have starved, he wrote, "if it had not been for the old black woman whom he had left in charge of the premises." A family servant for nearly thirty-five years before the war, she

furnished him with both supper and breakfast.⁷⁰ Evidence of how long she continued to serve Reverend Porter after emancipation could not be found. Another Charlestonian wrote in September 1866, that his coachman and the coachman's wife continued to serve him faithfully after the war ended.⁷¹ Such instances were rare however and became increasingly so as Reconstruction progressed.⁷²

Instead of remaining in the employ of former owners, most ex-slaves, particularly the domestic or servant class, chose to leave. In fact, defection among the domestic class was almost universal. Their work was not so arduous as that of rural field slaves, and their relations with owners tended to be relatively intimate and satisfactory.⁷³ Yet, the desertion rate among Charleston domestics was staggering, to the point where one newspaper referred to them as "perfect nomads" who seldom remained with any family for an appreciable length of time.⁷⁴ Jacob Schirmer reported hiring no fewer than eighteen different servants in the first year following emancipation.⁷⁵ Gabriel Manigault, a wealthy rice planter, complained that upon emancipation, all seven of his servants left him, an act he considered to be ungrateful. In the first two years of Reconstruction, he found he could not retain a servant for more than a few weeks before the employee moved on.⁷⁶

The mass desertions of servants were apparently motivated by the same urges as those of other freed slaves:

the constant longing to assert and test their freedom.⁷⁷ One black cook, although satisfied in her position, resigned since "it look like old time [sic] to stay too long in one place."⁷⁸ Many whites thought these desertions were foolish on the part of freedmen, since the whites assumed that they could provide their ex-slaves with more material security than could be obtained by these freedpeople on their own.⁷⁹

The mass defections of domestics threw many white households into disarray, unaccustomed as the whites were to performing domestic chores for themselves.⁸⁰ The impact of the problem on white households in Charleston is revealed in the following paragraph:

we are literally our own servants except for cooking. We make up our own rooms and mama has been at the wash tub for two or three weeks. It almost makes me cry to see her.⁸¹

Jacob Schirmer wrote that it was discouraging to him and his family to have been without servants for such a long time.⁸²

The huge number of black servant defections puts to rest the notion of the "faithful old family retainer" who held steadfast to his or her former owner and pulled the owner through the rough spots of Reconstruction. It has been well documented that these faithful few were often either those who were bound to individuals resulting from family arrangements or the elderly, young or infirm unable to easily relocate.⁸³

The value which the newly freed slaves put on freedom

is much in evidence in the journals, diaries, letters, traveler's accounts, newspapers and other forms of correspondence of the time. The following account by Sidney Andrews, a northern correspondent who traveled throughout the South, best expresses the importance of freedom to most blacks. In the early years of freedom, he asked more than one hundred Charleston blacks if they preferred to return to their former master's employ and if they knew of any other former slave who might harbor that preference. Not a single respondent answered in the affirmative.⁸⁴ The institution of slavery, as the foundation of southern society, had stifled the slaves' pursuit of personal autonomy within American society. Therefore, when abolition arrived, blacks took various courses of action to seize the autonomy formerly denied them under slavery. A new day had dawned; blacks could now shout "Thank God. We Are A Free People."

CHAPTER II ENDNOTES

1. See for example the following works: Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in The Civil War, p. 52; C. Vann Woodward, ed., Mary Chestnut's Civil War (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981) p. 48; W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America, p. 59; Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, p. 27; Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery, pp. 8-9; Paul D. Escott, "The Context of Freedom," pp. 81-83.
2. Charles Fox, Record of the Service of the Fifty-Fifth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, July 1868) p. 57.
3. Ibid.
4. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 325-326.

5. For a history of these black troops and others, see: Luis E. Emilio, A Brave Black Regiment. History of the Fifty-fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865 (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969); Charles Fox, July 1868; Joseph T. Wilson, The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775-1812, 1861-1865 (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968); Dudley Taylor Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York: Longman's Green, 1956); James M. McPherson, The Negro's Civil War.
6. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 326.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 327. The reactions of the newly freed slaves to the entry of the union forces into Richmond and Petersburg were similar to that of the former bondsmen in Charleston. For a discussion of some of these responses, see: John T. O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond: White Restoration and Black Protest, April-June 1865," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 89[3] (July 1981); Chaplain Jas. M. Guthrie, Camp-fires of the Afro-American; or, The Colored Man As A Patriot (Philadelphia: Afro-American Publishing Company, 1899).
9. Frank A. Rollin, Life And Public Services of Martin R. Delany, pp. 198-199.
10. New York Tribune, March 2, 1865; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 121-122; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 327-328.
11. Charles Fox, Record of the Service of the Fifty-fifth Regiment, p. 56. Although for various reasons many blacks were happy to see both the black and white Union soldiers, it would be a misconception to believe that relations were always good between the former slaves and white Federal troops. This was not the case. For an in depth discussion of the relations between the former bondsmen and the white Union forces, see: George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, 19 volumes, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972).
12. Luis E. Emilio, 1969, p. 284. In his work, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877, Joel Williamson places the initial arrival of most of the Fifty-fourth

Massachusetts at Charleston as having occurred on February 18, 1865 and quotes Emilio's work, pp. 254-286, and Quarles' work, pp. 326-328 in a futile effort to document this point. However, according to Emilio, the vast majority of the companies of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts did not arrive until on the morning of February 27, 1865, and according to Quarles, only two companies of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts were among the first Union troops to enter Charleston on February 18, 1865. Further, while Quarles says it was the Fifty-fifth that marched in on February 21, 1865, and experienced the episode of the black woman hugging the mule, Williamson says this occurred shortly after the arrival of the fifty-fourth, not the fifty-fifth. Ironically, he quotes Quarles as his source for this. Finally, Williamson suggests that it was the Fifty-fourth who entered Charleston singing "John Brown's Body" while other accounts suggest it was the Fifty-fifth who sang the song. See Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 327.; The National Freedman 7[2] (March 1, 1865) p. 57; Charles Fox, Record of the Service of the Fifty-fifth Regiment, pp. 57-58. I am not suggesting that, upon their arrival at Charleston, the Fifty-fourth as well as the Fifty-fifth could not have both sung "John Brown's Body". However, the sources Williamson draws on do not support the assertion. These sources are Emilio, pp. 254-286; Frank A. Rollin, The Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delaney, pp. 198-199 and Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 326-328.

13. Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., War Letters 1862-1865 of John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1927) pp. 459-460.
14. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 328.
15. Ibid.; Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, p. 189, Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 328.
16. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 189-90.
17. Ibid., p. 192.
18. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 47.
19. Charleston News and Courier, April 3, 1865; The New York Times, April 11, 1865; and William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factrionalism and Failure," p. 33.

20. New York Tribune, April 4, 1865; The New York Times, April 4, 1865; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 192-193; and Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 47-48. Black communities in other cities also staged post-emancipation parades. For accounts of these see: Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 49; and New York Times, January 3, 1864 (re Norfolk), January 23 and August 1 (Re Savannah), July 12, 1865 (Re Louisville), July 14, 1864 (Re Raleigh); The New York Tribune, January 13 (Re Key West), July 8, 1865 (Re Mobile), and July 12, 1865 (Re Raleigh and Columbia).
21. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 193.
22. Ibid., p. 193
23. Charleston News and Courier, May 2, 1865.
24. Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, p. 391.
25. Ibid.
26. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 39.
27. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 49.
28. Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Among The Contrabands (Boston, 1893) p. 172.
29. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, p. 193.
30. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 193.
31. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, pp. 194-195.
32. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 47.
33. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, p. 195. For excellent discussion of the ceremonial raising of the Union flag over Fort Sumpter, see: Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 336-339; Okon Edet Uya, From Slavery To Public Service, pp. 27-29; and Francis Butler Simpkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1932) pp. 16-17.
34. The fact that many former slaves idolized Abraham Lincoln and really felt that God had sent him to deliver

them from bondage is made clear in George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave.

35. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 339.
36. Charles Fox, Record of the Service of the Fifty-fifth Regiment, pp. 74-75.
37. Ibid.
38. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, p. 205.; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 344-345; and Henry L. Swint, Dear Ones At Home: Letters From Contraband Camps (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966) p. 189. The great love which many blacks had for Abraham Lincoln eventually found expression in the beautiful Emancipation Monument erected with their offerings in Washington, D.C., Chaplain Jas. M. Guthrie, Campfires of the Afro-Americans, pp. 625-626. For descriptions of black reactions to the death of Abraham Lincoln in Beaufort, S.C., Michelville, S.C., Savannah, Georgia and the Sea Islands of South Carolina consult: Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 344-45; Henry L. Swint, Dear Ones at Home, p. 189, and Rupert Sargent Holland, ed., Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne: Written From The Sea Islands of South Carolina, 1862-1884 (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1912) p. 162.
39. Charles Fox, Record of the Service of the Fifty-fifth Regiment, pp. 74-75.
40. Frank A. Rollin, Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany, pp. 204-205.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 222.
43. See, for example, The Charleston News and Courier January 2, 1875. For a provocative discussion on the tradition of black freedom celebrations, consult: William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1963," Journal of Negro History, (Winter 1982) pp. 302-317.
44. William H. Wiggins, Jr., O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987). This is an impressive work which not only traces the roots of Freedom Celebrations,

but also stresses their significance to the continuing struggle of blacks from around the world.

45. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 470-471; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Among the Contrabands, pp. 204-205. For an account of an Emancipation Parade on January 1, 1866 in Richmond, see: Laura S. Haviland, A Woman's Life-Work: Labors and Experiences (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1881) pp. 401-402.
46. N.R. Middleton to his Daughter, July 6, 1866, N.R. Middleton Papers.
47. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 46-47. For some discussion of black assertiveness during the early months of the war in Richmond, see: John T. O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond," p. 263; and in New Orleans, consult: John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, p. 26.
48. Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom," Radical History Review 39 (1987) p. 94.
49. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 47.
50. Mary Abigail Dodge, Wool-Gathering (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1877) p. 221.
51. William Heyward to James Gregorie, June 4, 1868, Gregorie-Elliot Papers.
52. Ellison Capers to his wife, September 10, 1865, Ellison Capers Papers.
53. Holland, pp. 160-161.
54. Henry W. Ravenel to Augustin Louis Taveau, June 27, 1865, A.L. Taveau papers.
55. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 282.
56. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 50.
57. A.T. Smythe to his wife, August 19, 1865, A.T. Smythe Letters.
58. Ellison Capers to his wife, September 10, 1865, Ellison Capers Papers.
59. N.R. Middleton to his daughter, January 10, 1866, N.R. Middleton Paper.

60. Carl Schurz, Report On The Condition of The South (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969) p. 27.
61. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 378-79.
62. Ibid., p. 379.
63. Jacob Shirmer Diary Index, January 11, 1873.
64. Bernard Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 91.
65. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 238.
66. Ibid.
67. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 37.
68. John F. Marsazalek, ed. The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979) p. 455.
69. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 224.
70. Rev. A. Toomer Porter, The History of a Work of Faith and Love in Charleston, South Carolina (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882) p. 58-59.
71. Anonymous letter, September 2, 1866, Wilmot S. Holmes Collection.
72. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 37.
73. Ibid., p. 34. For a provocative piece of scholarship which unravels some of the factors leading to heavy defections among the domestic class, consult: Daniel E. Sutherland, "A Special Kind of Problem: The Response of Household Slaves and Their Masters to Freedom," Southern Studies, 20[2] (Summer 1981) pp. 151-166.
74. Bernard Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 90.
75. Schirmer Diary, October 1866.
76. Gabriel Manigault Diary, 1865-1868; Manigault Papers.
77. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 90.
78. Schirmer Diary.
79. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 90.

80. Ibid., p. 91.

81. Ibid.

82. Schirmer Diary.

83. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 36.

84. Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War as Shown by
Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and
the Carolinas (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866) p.
23.

CHAPTER III
WE ONLY ASK FOR A CHANCE:
THE STRUGGLE OF CHARLESTON'S FREEDMEN
FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, Charleston, once the watering place of rich cotton and rice planters in the summer months, was the picture of desolation.¹ The business district and the handsome residences in the lower half of the city were entirely uninhabited. To one white native, "Charleston seemed more like a city of the dead than anything else with its silent and deserted streets." It was difficult to find a roof that had not been shattered by a shell. In addition, a great fire in 1862 had burned a swath one-half mile wide through the center of the city, leaving only a forest of chimneys in its path. Both the Post Office and the Custom House were totally dilapidated with shell holes. Other public and private buildings were also demolished.²

In May 1865, General William T. Sherman stopped by Charleston and after viewing the destruction, said: "Anyone who is not satisfied with war should go and see Charleston, and he will pray louder and deeper than ever that the country may in the long future be spared any more war."³

In addition to the physical destruction, there was

great economic destruction at war's end. Every bank in Charleston lost its capital; many industries had been destroyed, and much of the southern railroad system was ruined.⁴ Charleston's economy was so depressed that finding work was extremely difficult. Only a relatively small number of people were able to secure work to support themselves.⁵ The vast majority of both black and white Charlestonians were unemployed and suffering. Whites whose wealth disappeared with the war were found working at jobs they would have previously disdained⁶ or surviving on government rations.⁷ As late as 1867, some prominent whites shared the hunger of the masses,⁸ and one formerly wealthy white had to be buried with the contributions of friends.⁹ Despite the efforts of aid societies and the Freedmen's Bureau, destitution among the white masses of Charleston and of South Carolina continued.¹⁰

In spite of the dire economic circumstances in the early Reconstruction era, immigration of rural black freedmen continued unabated to Charleston and other southern cities.¹¹ Many blacks left the countryside seeking city life with all its potential for new opportunities. The city gave these migrants more access to black churches and benevolent societies, to the Freedmen's schools, and to expanded economic and political opportunities. Many freedmen came to the cities seeking lost family members. Rural blacks often flocked to the cities looking for

protection from violence at the hands of southern whites who refused to accept their new status. The Freedmen's Bureau was seen as a protection for blacks and its location in the city made the urban areas even more attractive to black migrants.¹²

The city epitomized freedom and protection to the newly freed rural blacks, many of whom thought "that freedom could only be found down country," in the vicinity of Charleston; and this freedom was inseparable from the presence of the Army. Blacks were moving in large numbers towards coastal South Carolina; and when asked where they were headed, the reply was "Goin' to Char'ston." When asked by a northern correspondent what they hoped to do there, most answered "Dun know."¹³

While abandonment of the plantations by freedmen often led to violence against them, the black migration to Charleston continued. In one case, blacks on a Clarendon district plantation refused to continue working there, and six took flight for Charleston. They were apprehended by a number of whites with dogs. One was shot trying to escape and the remaining five were immediately hung by the roadside. No freedmen on that plantation attempted to leave for the next month after the incident, but the desire for real freedom was so great that many soon escaped to Charleston.¹⁴

Even blacks who whites considered loyal eventually

opted to go to Charleston to take advantage of the urban opportunities. Chloe, the servant of Miss Emma Holmes agreed to remain in her employ, but she expressed the desire to go to the city once the railroad to Charleston was finished in autumn.¹⁵ A servant of the Bees and Chisolms on their upcountry plantation moved his family to Charleston at war's end.¹⁶ Peter, the servant of Henry W. Ravenel, also moved himself and family to the city, despite his professed attachment to the Ravenels, because he felt he could do better in Charleston.¹⁷

Whites viewed the black immigration to Charleston as an invasion. Henry W. Ravenel claimed that blacks from Aiken, South Carolina were leaving in large numbers for Augusta, Georgia and Charleston, and he mused that perhaps the fields were no longer attractive to blacks.¹⁸ A visitor to the city in 1865 found it literally "full of country negroes."¹⁹ A Charlestonian complained that the city was "overrun with Negroes of all sorts and conditions."²⁰ Many whites felt that exposure to urban life corrupted the average rural black. According to one South Carolina planter, "Bob is somewhere about the City [Charleston], going to ruin."²¹ Despite the numbers of new black urbanites and contrary to the worries of white planters who depended upon rural black labor, the overwhelming majority of blacks remained in the rural areas.²²

Many black migrants to Charleston found that freedom

did not confer the anticipated economic progress in the initial phase of emancipation. In the early years of Reconstruction, destitution and disease characterized the lot of Charleston's freedmen.²³ Similar hardships plagued blacks throughout the Reconstruction South.²⁴ Charleston's freedmen were fortunate that there were some services available to alleviate some of the suffering. The Freedmen's Bureau could provide them with clothing, rations, and some medical attention, and the Charleston Hospital maintained an extension dispensary to serve the poor.²⁵ The Freedmen's Bureau established an Orphan's Home for the numbers of black children left without parents and an Old Folks' Home for the aged and infirm freedmen. Both black and white refugees at war's end were provided with relief from a number of Freedmen's Aid Societies.

In spite of the efforts of all these organizations, the suffering continued. Fortunately, many black organizations came to the aid of their less fortunate brothers and sisters. The Colored Women's Relief Association solicited cloth from the Freedmen's Bureau which they sewed into apparel for the poor. The black congregation of Zion Presbyterian Church collected and distributed clothing for the children of destitute freedmen. Similarly, the Mutual Aid Association and the Patriotic Association of Colored People distributed essential supplies to freedmen and provided burials for the indigent.²⁶ Even so, the array of

services was insufficient to reach the masses of suffering freedmen in a city desolated by war.²⁷

As the urban migration continued, the conditions of Charleston's blacks worsened. Many freedmen were forced to live in the most unsanitary sections of the city. Freedmen died of starvation, malignant disease, inertia and ignorance. Having to fend for themselves, freedmen experienced a lack of medical facilities, and difficulty in following the doctor's advice when they did find medical care. They also lived in crowded, unsanitary conditions and lacked wholesome food. As a result of these factors, the death rate among blacks rose to one hundred per week.²⁸ Many destitute freedmen were housed in Army camps around Charleston, and, a Freedmen's Bureau agent described one such camp:

I have inspected the negro Camp and find it in a filthy and dirty condition; the Negroes are crowded together as closely as they can be -- both under the street and around the wharf; obstructing the passage way; pigs, chickens, and children of all ages are in one promiscuous huddle; old clothes and bedding, which is very dirty and filthy is heaped up in different places -- vermin can be seen crawling over the inmates of this camp. They build fires under the street and around the wharf to keep themselves warm, and to cook their scanty rations.²⁹

James M. Johnson also took note of the living conditions of **Charleston's freedmen:**

Much suffering prevails among the old and infirm freedmen. They have been suffered in some circumstances to congregate in abandoned buildings, where they are dragging out a miserable existence, suffering extremely from lack

of food, clothing, fuel, proper quarters and medical attendance.³⁰

As a result, in the initial stages of emancipation, starvation, poverty, and disease stuck to many freedmen in Charleston and throughout the South like lint does to cotton. Their fates were made worse by the policies of the Freedmen's Bureau. While some blacks were attracted to the cities due to the presence of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau office, the majority of black urban migrants were faced with the reality that the federal authorities provided them with little or no protection. Most union officials advised the migrants to return to work for their former masters, who, according to these officials, knew what was best for these freedmen. Federal officials were nearly as anxious as the planters were return the freed slaves to plantation labor; and, when necessary, force was applied to accomplish this goal. Some freedmen were mistreated, arbitrarily arrested and brutalized by occupation troops, as well as having their food rations suspended by the Freedmen's Bureau.³¹ In June 1865, the Commander of Charleston's occupation force, Colonel William Gurney, issued a warning to the large number of freedmen who had congregated in the city. He apprised them of the necessity of returning to the farms; and, when they failed to take this advice, "he asked ward committees to report the names of all able-bodied idle-persons so that they might be

put to work on the streets."³²

In order to return the freed slaves to the plantations, the Freedmen's Bureau sought to find them employment and offered transportation to these jobs as well. On a visit to Charleston in the first months of emancipation, J.T. Trowbridge, a northern correspondent, observed at least fifteen hundred freedmen waiting for transportation to either their former places of servitude or other plantations that needed their labor.³³ Many Union officials believed this policy was necessary given the depression of Charleston's economy which worsened with the influx of indigent rural black migrants.

The federal government felt it should not and could not provide the services necessary to sustain the masses of freedmen. Young black orphans were sometimes sent to the North to find them homes.³⁴ Generally, only the aged, the infirm or orphaned freedmen were granted government rations,³⁵ while those who could work were forced to do so. The obvious lack of available employment in Charleston was not seen as a sufficient reason for able-bodied freedmen to be given rations by the federal authorities. The testimony of one aged freedwoman, who had been waiting two weeks for transportation back to Colleton District, underscores this point.

De jew and de air hackles we more'n anything. De rain beat on we, and de sun shines we out. My Chil'n so hungry dey can't hole up. De Gov'ment, he han't gib we nottin. Said dey would put we on

board Saturday. Some libs and some dies.³⁶

Many freedpeople seemed honestly embarrassed to need government aid, disdaining such handouts in favor of providing for themselves if at all possible. Having to need assistance from whites after emancipation may well have seemed reminiscent of slavery, under which they had to take such food and clothing as the masters "gave" them. One freedman remarked that "we wants to git away to work on our own hook. It's not a good time at all here. We does nothing but suffer from smoke and ketch cold. We wants to begin de planting business."³⁷ Another freedmen expressed similar sentiments regarding government aid, saying "Mosser told we, to go back. We'se no money, and we'se glad to git on government kindness to git off."³⁸

Due to the problems associated with the black urban migration, Freedmen's Bureau agents embarked on a campaign to dissuade or prevent other blacks from coming to Charleston.³⁹ Writing to Ralph Ely in upcountry South Carolina, O.D. Kinsman of the Freedmen's Bureau wrote:

Please by all means in your power, keep the coloured people from coming to Charleston. There is no work for them to do here and no means of transporting them to other points. And in Consequence, they are now living in great crowds along the city docks, with no shelter, in many cases with nothing to eat. And, with Smallpox raging among them to a fearful extent. Present these things to the people as simply as you can and instead of sending them down here, urge them to contract with the planters in the interior.⁴⁰

Despite the actions of federal officials to halt the influx of black migrants to Charleston, the black urban migration continued. Far too few freedmen were willing to return to the interior and contract for work on plantations. In a determined effort to force blacks to seek plantation work, and to regiment the freedmen to their new status, the white legislature of South Carolina in November 1865 enacted four separate laws known as the "Black Code." (See Appendix One).⁴¹ The laws stipulated that black children could be bound out as apprentices at the age of two and could only be released from apprenticeship at age twenty-one for males or age eighteen for females. Moderate punishment could be lawfully inflicted upon black workers by their employers. According to the code, the legal relationship between a worker contracting for work and the employer was defined as a master-servant relationship, indicating how little had changed as a result of emancipation.⁴²

Although the Code granted the freedman the right to marry, to hold and sell property, and to sue and be sued, Leon Litwack notes, "the key provisions were those which defined him as an agricultural laborer, barred or circumscribed any alternative occupations, and compelled him to work." If a freedman were found to be unemployed, he could be jailed and fined as a common vagrant. Freedmen unable to pay such fines would be hired out to an employer who would pay the fine in return for his or her labor.⁴³

In enacting these laws, southern whites sought to curtail the movement of freedmen to the cities and to ensure that the freedmen would remain a landless agricultural labor force. As such, these codes threatened the livelihood of many blacks who desired to become or already were artisans, mechanics or shopkeepers. Blacks who wished to pursue a trade had to obtain special licenses and certificates from a local judge verifying the laborer's skill, fitness, and good moral character. Black shopkeepers and peddlers had to pay an annual fee of \$100 while black mechanics and artisans were assessed a fee of \$10 each year to maintain their certificates. As indicated by William C. Hine, "this was a drastic departure from the antebellum era when no such requirement existed."⁴⁴

Up to the moment of emancipation, many skilled trades in Charleston had been dominated by free blacks.⁴⁵ The post-war codes now proscribed such employments by making it difficult if not impossible to obtain licenses to practice certain trades. How could a black person prove he or she was skillful at a trade, a competent business person, and in possession of good moral character to a southern white judge who might prefer to believe otherwise? In addition, the economic state of Charleston would have made it difficult for many black artisans to afford the fees. Consequently, the code represented an attempt to restrict or eliminate black competition in the trades and the business community

of South Carolina. Many black Charlestonians were adversely affected by the codes,⁴⁶ restricting previously free blacks as well as closing the door on the aspirations of many freedpeople.

The black community of Charleston was largely unified in their opposition to the Black Code, with only the free mulatto elite appearing unconcerned with the potential effects of the new laws on their lives. The free mulatto elite had ties of kin and support with aristocratic whites who could vouch for them and they were already well-entrenched in Charleston's economy. Many had supported the Confederate cause in the war.⁴⁷ Therefore, the mulatto elite could use its money, power and connections to counter the harsher effects of the Black Code on their own lives.

In November 1865, the black community registered its opposition to the Code at the Colored People's Convention of South Carolina, held at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charleston. A committee of Charleston blacks organized the convention and the Charleston delegation constituted twenty-two of the forty-five delegates present. The Charleston delegation was constituted largely by men who had been free, middle-class artisans before the war, a group whose livelihoods were threatened directly by the Black Code. The convention delegates passed a resolution denouncing the Black Code as class legislation. Addressing themselves to the white South Carolina legislature, "the delegates asked

very firmly that the laws enacted that apply to us on account of our color, be repealed."⁴⁸

Former slaves also made their feelings known with regard to the Black Code in letters to the Freedmen's Bureau expressing their dissatisfaction with the implications of the Code for their lives. The anxiety the Code raised in the black community constituted a serious impediment to the signing of labor contracts between them and the planters. Although the majority of blacks did not understand the exact provisions of the Code, they understood that it made distinctions between black and white laborers under the contract system. They also understood that the Code legalized harsher punishments for black workers committing an offense than it did for white workers.⁴⁹ As Reverend T. William Lewis noted, "blacks have anxious fears that class legislation will be allowed in the Negro Code Bill."⁵⁰

More than any other event in the first year of emancipation, the passage of the Black Code increased the atmosphere of black distrust of whites, reintroducing the concept of master and servant which the freedpeople had hoped would be banished under emancipation. Many blacks believed that the Code would jeopardize their chance to receive equal justice in nearly every realm of life. They correctly understood that the laws were passed to keep them in as near a state of slavery as would be permitted in the changed state of affairs.⁵¹ Black opposition to the Code

was so intense that many whites feared an insurrection in its wake.⁵²

The lack of such an insurrection can be attributed to two factors. In the black community, it was felt that an insurrection against the Code would be suicidal. One black observed:

If we did not rise when our emancipation hung on the long doubtful issues of the late war; for what should we rise now? -- If not to subject ourselves to the sharp edge of military extermination.⁵³

There was a second reason the black community did not violently rise up against the Code. Joel Williamson argues "that the Code initially was not passed easily and with little discussion as historians have previously maintained. Instead the South Carolina legislature seethed with dissention on this issue."⁵⁴ The passage of the Black Code was a careless move by the legislature, since the federal officials were appalled by the intransigence and unrepentance which these laws seemed to indicate on the part of these defeated ex-Confederates. Seeing these laws as too discriminatory and repressive, federal officials ordered many of them suspended, arguing their suspension on the grounds that freedmen should be subject to the same regulations, penalties, punishments and protections as whites were. Some state legislatures later repealed or revised the codes, and in 1866, codes passed in a number of states were less harsh.⁵⁵ Given the short duration of the

harsher provisions of the Code in South Carolina, and the threat of force against a violent insurrection, the majority of blacks chose to verbally protest the Code.

The passage of the Black Code and other policies to force blacks back to the rural areas failed to stem the steady tide of black migrants to the cities. In Charleston, whites complaining of the influx of black migrants expressed the belief that blacks had no more serious urban pursuits than loitering, abusing alcohol and committing criminal acts. Freedmen did imbibe too much alcohol. The sale of liquors was unrestrained and blacks had more money and freedom to make such purchases.⁵⁶ Some of the drunkenness may have been an attempt to assuage the pains of the bouts of unemployment, poverty, disease and social discontent from failed expectations which freedmen experienced. While it can be said that drunkenness was a social problem among freedmen, drunkenness was even more prevalent among whites in Charleston.⁵⁷

Blacks also committed crimes, but these were most often crimes against property than against persons.⁵⁸ The Charleston News and Courier frequently covered petty thefts committed by blacks. On December 22, 1866, the Courier reported that a freedman was arrested for rifling the pocketbook of another freedman containing fourteen dollars. Upon his arrest, the money was found on the thief, and he was held for trial.⁵⁹ The newspaper also published an

account of a robbery committed by Henry Diane, a freedman. Entering the premises of J. Meyer on September 18, he carried off Meyer's clothing, a gold watch and chain, a quantity of tobacco and \$660 in greenbacks. Two days later, Diane was apprehended by police.⁶⁰ In another published account of a robbery, the Courier reported that two freedmen were charged with forcefully robbing a young woman of \$17, a portion of which was found on their persons, and both robbers were locked up.⁶¹

Many of these thefts by freedmen resulted from the unemployment and starvation they were experiencing. Crime was a last resort to provide for themselves and their families. Some freedmen may have also stolen from their former masters as a form of reparations. According to some freedpeople, they were taking property which, by rights, belonged to them. In addition, a number of freedmen interpreted liberty as the right to roam the streets without seeking work. Their only support consisted of stolen clothing, food, money and other valuables. While crime was a problem among blacks, it was even more of a problem among whites in Charleston. Although whites constituted a minority of the city's population, a summary of crimes committed for the last quarter of 1869 indicates that whites committed twenty-four more crimes than did blacks in the same period.⁶²

Rumors continued to circulate among Charleston's whites

of blacks refusing to work and provide for themselves,⁶³ relying instead on government aid for their survival. The Charleston News and Courier of April 25, 1865 published the following editorial sentiments:

There are thousands of colored people in the city at the present time who are infatuated with the belief that because they are in our midst free from the rule of a master, they are, at the same time under no obligations to aid themselves. This is all wrong. The White people in the community do not expect to do so. The Government, in giving the colored people freedom, has done all that should be required of it, and now we want to see that class of the population go to work and help themselves.⁶⁴

Contrary to what whites preferred to believe about black dependency on government aid,⁶⁵ most blacks only wanted to provide for themselves, and not to use freedom as a cloak for licentiousness.⁶⁶ Most freedmen had labored hard under slavery and were prepared to work under emancipation. Freedmen argued that if any class could be considered as lazy, it would be the planters, who had lived in idleness and on stolen labor all their lives. One scholar argues that "blacks brought out of slavery a conception of themselves as a 'Working Class of People' who had been unjustly deprived of the fruits of their labor."⁶⁷

The efforts of blacks in Charleston and throughout the South to secure work under Reconstruction lends credence to their claim of being a working class of people.⁶⁸ Blacks could be found working in all areas of Charleston.⁶⁹ William Middleton and Robert Small found employment as

section hands for the Savannah and Charleston Railroad.⁷⁰ Isaac Allen was employed as a fisherman.⁷¹ Charles Hamilton⁷² and Mingo Adams worked at Hudgin's Saw Mill.⁷³ Other blacks worked packing bone dust at the Etiwon Phosphate Company.⁷⁴ Joe Simons worked as a hack driver,⁷⁵ Peter Miller was a janitor at the Military Hall,⁷⁶ and Eddie Poinsett was a porter in Fitzgibbon's Store.⁷⁷ Still other blacks washed clothes, sewed, hawked vegetables, and worked in the gardens near Charleston to support themselves.⁷⁸ Freedmen were also engaged in farming. Many hoped to secure homesteads to be able to live as independent farmers.⁷⁹ One contemporary observer wrote with regard to these black farmers that "their perseverance and earnestness in working their crops and securing means of comfort were unprecedented."⁸⁰

Blacks were determined to support themselves and avoid government or private aid.⁸¹ The economic dislocation created by the Civil War resulted in difficulties for both blacks and whites to find work. As a result, similar to southern white stereotypes of blacks, some northern white observers developed the impression that many of Charleston's whites were prone to thievery.⁸²

Blacks worked as steadily as conditions permitted. Caroline Gilman reported that a number of servants had deserted their former owners, but could be seen looking for work.⁸³ Even when rural migrants left jobs, they did so to

take employment in other places, rather than for the purpose of remaining idle. Rebecca and Andrew, two freed slaves in their former master's employ, resigned their positions with him in order to attend to their own planting.⁸⁴ A freedwoman resigned a servant's job to return to work under her former master.⁸⁵ In another case, a Charleston planter told Sidney Andrews that he had lost sixteen black workers, but didn't care because they were a nuisance. When asked what they were doing now, he indicated that he knew of two or three who had joined the Army, one who had become a chambermaid on a steamer and three who were working on the wharf.⁸⁶

Andrews asked another planter about his former slaves. Complaining that blacks were lazy and only governed by the whip, he indicated that, despite his own good treatment of them, all his ungrateful slaves had left him when the federal troops reached Charleston. Admitting that he had only seen one of them since that time, he indicated that he believed them all to be working except two who had since died. In spite of these stories, Andrews was repeatedly told that blacks could not lead productive lives as free people.⁸⁷

Not only were freedmen working, but it was argued that they were good workers when well paid.⁸⁸ As a result of their reputation as industrious workers, the movement to recruit Asian or European immigrants to replace southern

black workers never came to fruition. One planter told J.W. Alvord, "we don't want China-men." Pointing to the cabins of his black workers, he explained that "these people are used to our work, and we are used to them."⁸⁹ This attitude toward black labor reflected the view of countless planters.

In spite of the zeal with which freedmen attempted to obtain work, the economic decline and the over-abundance of labor in Charleston made acquiring steady work difficult. A white visitor touring the city was "struck by the number of men who appear to have no employment."⁹⁰ In late 1869, the City Inspector's Office, responsible for the maintenance of municipal property, announced intentions to hire fifty new street hands. Nearly six hundred men massed at the office to apply for the jobs, the vast majority of whom were skilled black workers. The job-seekers blocked the pavement around City Hall, raising fear that "the street cars would be interrupted in their trips." The crowd became unruly and the police were called to maintain order.

Under these conditions, Charleston's city government adopted a policy to provide employment to the largest number of laborers possible by filling a single job with a series of men who each worked two days a week. To supplement their incomes, some of Charleston's black workers left town to work on the railroads while others went to Aiken to help build a Catholic church.⁹¹ Although complaining of their meager incomes, most were happy to be able to work at all.

One Charlestonian noted that "the negroes are very thankful for work at even the very scanty wages our friends can now afford."⁹²

Charleston's blacks found that not only did the economic and demographic circumstances make obtaining work difficult, but also the shape of southern politics stood in their way. Many of Charleston's blacks had to either work for southern Democrats or rely on them as customers. Both blatant and subtle forms of political discrimination made black workers vulnerable. Some black workers were fired for having Republican Party preferences.⁹³ Edward P. Wall, a Charleston tailor, reportedly sought work as a Freedmen's Bureau agent since his ties to the Republican Party prevented his acquiring enough work to support his family.⁹⁴ When Charleston's black butchers publicly supported the Republican Party, the Charleston News and Courier urged whites to boycott black butchers, arguing it was time to "withdraw our patronage, custom and employment from those who would make war upon us."⁹⁵ Apparently this strategy was widely applied, as W.G. Marts wrote from Charleston in 1877 that many blacks had been refused work for months because they lacked the piece of paper verifying that they had voted the Democratic ticket.⁹⁶ In spite of these obstacles, freedpeople continued to find work, attempting to become productive free citizens of American society.

For many freedmen in Charleston and throughout the

South, the ownership of land was of paramount importance.⁹⁷ As one contemporary historian pointed out, "the ex-slaves seemed to see in land ownership, the symbolic and actual fulfillment of freedom's promise." The slogan "forty acres and a mule" epitomized the longing of ex-slaves to acquire land and, through it, economic independence.⁹⁸

In late 1865, many ex-bondspeople believed that, having set them free, the federal government would now provide them with forty acre plots taken from the plantations on which they had previously been enslaved. The seriousness with which these freedpeople regarded the land question was much commented on by northern observers. Writing to General Charles Devens, who was a Freedmen's Bureau agent, Reverend T. William Lewis noted that "the freedmen regard the ownership of land as a question of almost life or death with them and their children."⁹⁹ Admiral Dahlgren noted that in Charleston, former slaves could see little good in making them free if they were not to have the land to which their own labor had given value.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Captain Bradford of the Charleston Freedmen's Bureau wrote to Whitelaw Reid that many former slaves in that city

had again and again asked him, what good it did them to make them free, unless they were to own the land on which they had been working, and which they had made productive and valuable. "Gib us our land and we take care ouselves; but widout land, de ole massas can hire us or starve us, as they please." ¹⁰¹

While it appeared initially that the government might

in fact provide land grants to freedmen in Charleston and other parts of South Carolina, this did not become a reality for the masses of freedmen. As early as January 1865, General Sherman responded to the numbers of freedmen who flocked to his troop lines by designating all the Sea Islands south of Charleston, and all abandoned rice fields along rivers up to thirty feet deep as lands for black settlement. Black families were to be settled on forty-acre plots and given "possessory title" to the land. Similarly, reassured of the correctness of General Howard's Circular Order No. 13, General Saxton proceeded to execute the Freedmen's Bureau program of land distribution.¹⁰² These early government policies were what convinced ex-slaves in Charleston that a policy to grant land to all freedmen would be carried out. This did not materialize as President Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation of May 1865 pardoned ex-Confederate supporters and restored all their property rights to them excepting the right to own slaves.¹⁰³

Reconstruction did not resolve the land issue for freedmen for three reasons. First, as late as mid 1867, radical Republicans expended most of their energies on demonstrating southern recalcitrance since the South had rejected the Fourteenth Amendment. Second, by June 1867, most southern state governments had been wrested from the control of conservative whites by radical Republicans, and the issue of land grants to freedmen was seen as

inflammatory enough to jeopardize that control. Therefore, radical Republicans concentrated more on the issue of voting rights for blacks. When Thaddeus Stevens proposed southern land confiscation to the U.S. Congress, he could not obtain the support of the Republican Party. One scholar noted, "Congress was not committed to the idea that the former slaves could not be truly free until they were economically independent of their former masters."¹⁰⁴

The last reason Reconstruction failed to provide land redistribution was that far too few black politicians in South Carolina were in favor of it. W.E.B. Dubois argued that most black politicians believed in the petty bourgeois values of the accumulation of wealth and the exploitation of labor on which U.S. capitalism was based. As a consequence, black politicians "failed to unite black and white labor" around the issue of land redistribution.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Holt in his research on black politicians in South Carolina agreed with this assessment.¹⁰⁶ Holt's work contended that, among Charleston's blacks, a light complexion and free origins correlated strongly with other indicators of bourgeois social status. Mulattos freed before the war were more likely to own property and enjoy higher status than freedmen who owned no property. These socio-racial patterns were reflected in the General Assembly of South Carolina where legislators of slave origins were less likely to be educated, property-owners, and to have a trade or profession

than free-born black legislators.¹⁰⁷

On sensitive issues such as land reform and/or confiscation, these differences in social background and status produced differing perspectives on public policy. When Robert C. De Large introduced a resolution to halt the disenfranchisement of ex-Confederates and the dispossession of their property, a majority of the delegates opposed the resolution. Only twenty-five percent of ex-slave legislators, but nearly forty percent of free-born black legislators supported this failed resolution.¹⁰⁸

Although tax records of the property holdings of many South Carolina black legislators are not available, the 1870 tax records document the property holdings of two-thirds of the forty-seven black legislators elected from or residing in Charleston County. Since any bill in the General Assembly would need at least twenty votes from the Charleston delegation in order to be passed, this group played a crucial role in South Carolina politics.¹⁰⁹ Holt researched these records and found that twenty-one of these thirty-two legislators were paying taxes on real estate. While some were apparently farmers, others were real estate speculators, one of the few capital ventures available to the mulatto bourgeoisie in pre-war South Carolina.¹⁰⁹ The majority of these black politicians who had been free before the war continued to be involved in land speculation after the war,¹¹⁰ which may help to explain their lack of support

for any legislated land reform.

Holt argues that most of these prominent black politicians of Charleston aspired to become part of the emerging capitalist class of postwar South Carolina.¹¹¹ As a result, mulatto elite politicians voted their own best interests which did not always coincide with those of ex-slaves. The huge social and cultural distance between the mulatto elite and the emerging black working class resulted in legislative behavior which followed class rather than racial lines, with mulatto legislators abandoning the causes of ex-slaves in spite of their own dependence on the political support of ex-slave constituents.¹¹²

The freedmen of Charleston were disappointed by the government's failure to make good the perceived promise of land. Failing the aid of government, ex-slaves embarked on their own campaigns to secure this "right." Believing they were entitled to some portion of former owners' estates, and believing their own citizenship solidified that right, some Charlestonian ex-slaves occupied the estates and refused to release them to the former owners.¹¹³ Gabriel Manigault, a rice planter, returned to his farm on the outskirts of Charleston and found he was one of the victims of this practice.

Two or three men on the farm, had provided themselves with guns, which they loaded and were strutting lazily about the farm and "Moses" [one of the principal hands] stated loudly on all occasions that if ever I threatened to move him off the place, he would "shoot" me on the spot.¹¹⁴

Manigault goes on to say

Frederick [the driver] was ringleader and the head of all the iniquity committed there. He encouraged all the negroes to believe that the farm, and everything on it, now since Emancipation, belonged Soley [sic] to them, and that their former owners had now no rights or control there whatsoever. And he encouraged them to lay by seed potatoes and other things and several of them w several of them were prep land for planting on their own account.

Most of Manigault's ex-slaves agreed with this interpretation of their own history and their emancipation, holding steadfast to the plantation under Frederick's leadership.¹¹⁵

Few freedmen, however, were able to maintain control over property seized in this manner. Another strategy was for freedmen to invest their meager savings in the Freedmen's Saving Bank with the purpose of individually or collectively purchasing land. The bank was founded in the first few years following the war and was almost immediately successful, with branches in most major southern cities.¹¹⁶ In one single day, seventeen freedmen withdrew their savings from the Charleston branch to pay for farms forty to fifty acres in size, and costing \$10 per acre. In another case, ten Charleston freedmen combined their money from the sale of cotton to pay cash for a seven hundred acre Sea Island plantation being sold at the cotton merchant's auction.¹¹⁷

Similarly, two hundred Charleston freedmen established a society whose sole purpose was to obtain land and homes

for ex-slaves. In 1868, they bought a 600 acre plantation on Rewly's Point near the city, agreeing to pay a total of \$16,000. Part of this was paid in a down-payment with the rest to be paid in eighteen months. They planted 150 acres of cotton, but yielded only one bale the first year due to the destruction of part of the crop by cotton worms, and the theft of much of the rest. The next year, these freedmen planted thirty acres in Sea island cotton and about the same acreage in corn. This time, they guarded their crops day and night until they were successfully harvested.¹¹⁸ While data are sparse on this topic, the existing data seem to suggest that ex-slaves from Charleston usually wanted land, not for farming, but for homes, schools, churches and businesses. Comparative studies of the behaviors of rural and urban freedmen in acquiring land are called for to determine if generalizations should be made about differing patterns of land acquisition and use by freedmen.

The seriousness with which Charleston's freedmen saved money was commented on by contemporary observers.¹¹⁹ Robert Somers noted

that the Negro begins to deposit in the Freedmen's Bank usually with some special object in view. He wishes to buy a mule and cart, or a house, or a piece of land, or a shop, or simply to provide a fund against death, sickness or accident, and pursues his object frequently until it has been accomplished.¹²⁰

Freedmen had precious little money, yet their will to save was so great that it was of little significance to them the

size of the investment they made. More important to many of the poor, according to one scholar, "was the idea of saving towards a better life." Possession of a savings account was good for the freedman's morale; it symbolized freedom and advancement, a chance for "getting on in the world."¹²¹

In spite of the many barriers placed in their way, some of Charleston's freedmen were getting on in the world, by using their savings to make intelligent investments. Two groups of freedmen purchased steamboats, with the largest being acquired by a group of discharged soldiers. This steamer had a black Captain, and it ran from Charleston to Florida, providing first class travel for all who wished it. The second steamer, while smaller, provided a similar service for blacks travelling from Charleston to Edisto Island. The Charleston branch of the Freedmen's Bank contained \$40,000 in deposits from ex-soldiers alone, with hundreds of these depositors using their savings to begin businesses. Some ex-slaves opened grocery stores, cotton and wool stores, and other small businesses in the Charleston Market. At this market, black women kept stalls and sold fruits, candies, cakes and lemonade. Other freedmen used their savings to purchase homes and lots.¹²² Freedmen used the Freedmen's Bank and careful investment of their savings in their pursuit of the American dream.

Some of Charleston's freedmen formed labor unions as yet another means to obtain their share of the economic pie.

Ex-slaves, once organized, could use their near-monopoly over certain trades to force concessions from employers. Even before the longshoremen, destined to become the most powerful black union in Charleston, organized officially in late 1868, they had already engaged in two successful strikes. They struck first in January 1867 for higher wages, asking for an increase from \$1.75 to \$2.00 a day.¹²³ This strike was notable for the assertiveness with which these freedmen pursued their goal. Some strikers concentrated on the steps of the Post Office; and according to the Charleston Daily News, these strikers were threatening violence against anyone willing to continue working.¹²⁴ However, it appears that most of the striking longshoremen realized that a successful conclusion of the strike would be endangered by unnecessary violence, and one striker wrote to the Charleston Mercury pleading for understanding of their position: "We hope that the Community won't think that we done [sic] the act for an offense or for injury to commerce, but our condition compelled us further."¹²⁵ The strike was successfully concluded in four days, having won the demand for a two-dollar day.¹²⁶ It has been argued that they won because whites were unwilling to do the strenuous and demeaning work that the black longshoremen did, and therefore the shippers could not recruit enough "scabs" to break the strike.¹²⁷ The solidarity of black workers in not breaking the strike,

at a time when many black workers could have used the jobs, contributed to the success of this strike.

Inspired by this success, one year later, the longshoremen initiated a second strike with two to three hundred black longshoremen walking off the job and demanding a pay hike to \$2.50 a day¹²⁸ to keep pace with the cost of living and to survive the instability of this seasonal work. This strike did turn violent and the Acting Military Mayor, General W.W. Burns, had two strikers arrested.¹²⁹ Once again, the shippers' efforts to replace black longshoremen with scabs failed, and after four days, their wage demands were granted.¹³⁰

Not long after Charleston's black longshoremen began to demonstrate the success to be gained through organized labor solidarity, the journeyman tailors of Charleston also organized. In October 1869, one month after organizing a union, one hundred tailors, including a number of whites, went on strike for higher wages. This union was notable, not just because of their inter-racial solidarity, but also because they were skilled craftsmen, unlike many of the other predominantly black labor organizations of semi- or unskilled workers which would go on strike. It is probable that a number of these black tailors had been free before the Civil War. Their strike was precipitated by having learned that their wages were significantly less than those of tailors in many other cities. In order to settle the

strike quickly, the merchants employing them proposed a schedule of task rates which they argued would allow the average tailor to make between twenty-five and thirty-five dollars a week. While initially rejecting this offer, it was accepted one day later. This strike was short, orderly and without violence.¹³¹

Not all such strikes by black labor organizations succeeded in Reconstruction Charleston. The strike of the journeyman painters is a case in point. Nearly two weeks after the tailors struck for higher wages, black and white painters walked off their jobs in separate but related strikes. The main objective of the black painters was to increase their wages. First class black painters received \$1.75 a day while a white painter of equal skill earned \$2.50 daily. Second class black painters received \$1.25 daily while similar white painters earned \$2.00 a day.

The white painters were not bothered by the pay differentials by race but were upset that they did not receive as many labor contracts as the black painters did, and they made this issue central to their strike. Employers used race as a means to keep the painters divided and win the strike. After the strike had gone on for two weeks, they offered a uniform \$2.50 a day to white painters and refused a similar wage hike to black painters. This pacified the white painters, and the strike crumbled, forcing black painters back to work at their original

wages.¹³² If the white painters had united with the black painters for a uniform wage for all, it would have solved the problem of getting enough labor contracts, as it would have made black painters as expensive to hire as were white painters. Instead, this lack of solidarity resulted in wage increases for whites, which must have ultimately worsened their chances to compete for work contracts with black painters. This strike clearly illustrated both the necessity of labor solidarity across race and its failure in Reconstruction Charleston.

In the fall of 1869, the Longshoremen's Protective Union Association (LPUA) waged two more effective strikes. One scholar on black South Carolina argues that "organized labor in reconstruction South Carolina reached its high point in Charleston with the successes of the LPUA in late 1869."¹³³ The first of these strikes was in September 1869 with longshoremen demanding a wage raise to \$2.50 per day. In addition, they wanted an eight and one-half hour day mandated from October 1st to May 1st and a nine hour day from May 2nd to September 30th each year. Work done past the mandated workday was to be paid forty cents an hour in overtime, according to the LPUA demands. The strike ended in less than a week with most of the demands consented to by the shippers.¹³⁴

According to the agreement, wages were increased for a nine and one-half hour day, with the standard day stretching

from 7:30AM to 6PM with one hour off for lunch. Work after 6PM would be awarded the forty cent per hour overtime wage. The agreement also recognized a closed shop, so while the LPUA did not get its shorter workday, all other demands were met, and the union was guaranteed not to have to work alongside nonunion labor.¹³⁵ Notable in this strike was the participation of white longshoremen who had joined the union, a rarity in 19th century Charleston's labor history.¹³⁶

Only one month later, the LPUA struck again, this time for political reasons. When G.B. Stoddard was fired by the shippers for alleged Republican activities,¹³⁷ the LPUA went on strike until the shippers were forced to rehire the white LPUA union brother.¹³⁸ The LPUA's show of a united front in this matter let it be known that they were a union, and that this union would stand behind its brothers regardless of race. If the shippers' intent was to test the will and racial unity of this young union by firing the white longshoreman, the LPUA passed the test.

William C. Hine noted "as labor activities intensified and achieved some success, black and white Republican leaders sought to use this potential bloc of support to advance their own political careers."¹³⁹ In October 1869, three Republican leaders in Columbia called for a state labor convention, garnering support throughout South Carolina and especially in Charleston. The convention

passed several mild resolutions for the rights of labor which were forwarded to the state legislature; but the key purpose of the convention was to enhance the political careers of black and white Republican leaders.

Approximately forty percent of Charleston's black politicians were skilled tradesmen and half of these had been free before the war. Charleston's black labor force consisted largely of unskilled workers, a disproportionate number of whom were freedmen. As a group, the black politicians were more educated and enjoyed higher social and economic standing in the community than the black working class.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, as with issues such as land reform and confiscation, black politicians did not adopt labor issues as a primary concern, even though these were issues of concern to their constituency of freedmen.

By the early 1870s, the amount of solidarity which had existed between black and white workers had all but evaporated, due in part to the lack of Republican Party support for labor issues and the Democratic Party's success in using race to divide labor.¹⁴¹ The unions of black bricklayers and black mechanics each promoted black and white labor solidarity,¹⁴² but their pleas for labor unity fell on deaf ears.¹⁴³ White longshoremen and other white workers began to organize segregated unions.¹⁴⁴

While crippled, the labor movement of the 1870s continued to be active. The Panic of 1873 and the

subsequent depression caused the wages of longshoremen to drop from \$2.50 a day to \$1.75, triggering a strike. Some strikers attacked longshoremen who stayed on the job.¹⁴⁵ The increased tensions between black and white workers during the Panic of 1873, the frustrations of black workers, and the assertive nature of Charleston's black community resulted in strikes of a particularly violent nature in this era, and this strike was no exception.

The longshoreman's strike in the fall of 1873 acted as the catalyst for other strikes. First, workers at Chislom's Rice Mill and Steinmeyer's Lumber Mill walked out, followed closely by workers at West Point Rice Mill and at Hudgin's Lumber Mill. These strikes were quite violent, mirroring the violent nature of strikes throughout the 19th century. Roaming bands of strikers, demanding a minimum wage of \$2.50 for all black mill workers, attacked a store near Hudgin's Mill, then later assaulted two white men. The mill owners and the Charleston News and Courier bitterly assailed the police for their failure to restore order.¹⁴⁶

Walkouts spread to the phosphate works north of town, where employees of the Stono, Pacific, Atlantic and Etiwon phosphate companies went on strike.¹⁴⁷ Not wanting their actions to be misconstrued, a letter from "Many Laborers" was printed in the Charleston News and Courier justifying the actions of the phosphate workers. The letter explained that five to six dollars a week in wages was insufficient

for workers whose jobs required increased costs in work clothing and shoes, and therefore they had struck for a wage more in line with their subsistence needs.¹⁴⁸

The strikes closed most of the phosphate, rice and saw mills in the Charleston area. These strikes took on a racial character with white workers refusing to join striking black workers, and with blacks making no effort to recruit them.¹⁴⁹ Most of the workers returned to Steinmeyer's and Chislom's mills a week after the strikes had begun, while Hudgin's and West Point mills remained closed.¹⁵⁰ Many of the black strikers were undoubtedly forced back to work by economic necessity, since the depression had made job competition fierce. After the Panic of 1873, no matter how small the wages, almost any job was better than no job, so the strikers could be more easily replaced.

While labor union activity in Charleston waned in the mid to late 1870s, efforts continued to be launched to improve the economic position of freedmen. Black labor leaders were locked in a continuous battle with managers and owners of the industries in which they labored. The longshoremen's strike of 1874 was indicative of the trend after 1873 with the strike being defeated by black scabs protected by the police.¹⁵¹ Throughout the 1870s, the LPUA experienced one defeat after another,¹⁵² yet it emerged from the Reconstruction era continuing to do battle on behalf of black labor.¹⁵³

Throughout the Reconstruction period, freedmen received a great deal of advice from black and white government, civic and religious leaders, warning them not to become worthless idlers and vagabonds.¹⁵⁴ The ex-slaves were also encouraged to be thrifty, to save and invest wisely, and to purchase homesteads for themselves and their families. Such instruction on becoming productive free citizens was apparently heeded as freedmen strove to accomplish the American Dream. Most former slaves were determined to make good this opportunity. The perseverance demonstrated by freedmen against tremendous obstacles to achieve their goals is one of the most remarkable features of the Reconstruction period.

CHAPTER III ENDNOTES

1. John T. Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States; And the Work of Restoration 1865-1868 (Hartford: L. Stebbins, 1868) p. 513; Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 2; Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War 1870-71 (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1865) pp. 37-38.
2. Frederick Bancroft and William A. Dunning, eds., The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, vol. 3 (New York: McClure Co., 1908) pp. 164-65; Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., War Letters 1862-1865, pp. 459-60; Alicia Hopton Middleton, ed., Life in Carolina and New England During the Nineteenth Century: As Illustrated by Reminiscences and Letters of the Middleton Family of Charleston South Carolina and of the De Wolf Family of Bristol Rhode Island (Bristol, RI: Privately Printed, 1929) pp. 158-59; Viola Caston Floyd, "The Fall of Charleston," The South Carolina Historical Magazine 66[1] (January 1965) p. 2; Luis F. Emilio, A Brave Black Regiment, p. 284; Arney Robinson Childs, ed., The Private Journal of Henry William Ravenel 1859-1887 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1947); J. H. Kennaway, On Sherman's Track: Or the South After the War (London: Seeley, Jackson, and

- Holliday, 1867) pp. 178-79; Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War, pp. 37-38; Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 2; Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States, pp. 513-14.
3. E. Milton Burton, The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970) p. 324.
 4. D.E. Huger Smith, A Charlestonian's Recollections 1846-1913 (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1950) pp. 115-16; Luis F. Emilio, A Brave Black Regiment, p. 285; William Heyward to Gregorie Elliot, April 2, 1867, Gregorie Elliot Papers, University of North Carolina; William B. Elliot to Hal Elliot, February 2, 1868, Elliot Papers, University of North Carolina.
 5. D. E. Huger Smith, A Charlestonian's Recollections 1846-1913, pp. 115-16.
 6. David Duncan Smith, South Carolina: A Short History 1520-1948 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961) p. 556.
 7. Whitelaw Reid, After the War: A Southern Tour, May 1, 1865 to May 1, 1866 (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, 1866) p. 67; David D. Wallace, South Carolina: A Short History 1520-1948 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961) p. 556.
 8. Ibid. As late as the middle of 1867, it was estimated that 100,000 people in South Carolina had not tasted meat in thirty days. The New York Times, April 18, 1867.
 9. F. Barham Zincke, Last Winter in the United States (London, 1868) p. 97, quoted in: Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 18.
 10. Robert Goodwyn Rhett, Charleston: An Epic of Carolina (Richmond: Garrett and Massie Inc., 1940) pp. 308-309; Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina 1865-1872 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967) pp. 36 and 41.
 11. Migrants were overwhelmingly poor agricultural laborers and they almost entirely accounted for the growth of the city's black population between 1860 and 1880 which grew from 16,600 to 25,994, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population of the United States in 1860 Compiled from the Eighth Census (Washington, D.C.:

- U.S. Government Printing Office, 1864) p. 452; Charleston News and Courier, July 28, 1880. The migration of rural blacks into urban areas was a phenomenon throughout the South. See: William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day: Slavery and Servitude in Savannah 1733-1865," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Florida State University, 1979) p. 341; Jonathon Woolard McLeod, "Black and White Workers: Atlanta During Reconstruction," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1987) pp. 13-18; John T. O'Brien, "From Bondage to Citizenship: The Richmond Black Community, 1865-67," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Rochester, 1974) pp. 84-90; Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South; Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984) pp. 14-15; John W. Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto: The Making of the Black Community in Savannah, Georgia, 1865-1880," Journal of Social History 6[4] (Summer 1973) pp. 463-465; Yollette Trigg Jones, "The Black Community, Politics and Race Relations in the 'Iris City' Nashville, Tennessee, 1870-1954," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1985) pp. 41-42.
12. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 312; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 87-88; Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom, pp. 95-96; Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction, pp. 106-107; Lester C. Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee 1791-1970 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981) pp. 29-30; John T. O'Brien, "From Bondage to Citizenship," pp. 84-90.
 13. Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 97-99.
 14. Henry M. Christman, ed., The South As It Is, 1865-1866 (New York: The Viking Press, 1965) p. 223.
 15. J.F. Marszalek, ed. The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, pp. 453-54.
 16. Arney R. Childs, ed. Journal of Henry W. Ravenel, p. 281.
 17. Ibid., pp. 254-55.
 18. Ibid., p. 244.
 19. Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 24-25.
 20. Elias Harry Deas to _____, August 12, 1865, Elias Harry Deas Papers, University of South Carolina,

- quoted in Bernard Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 86.
21. Elias Harry Deas to Anne Deas, July 12 and August 12, 1865, Deas Papers, University of South Carolina, quoted in Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 316.
 22. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 314.
 23. Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969) pp. 12-13.
 24. Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 40-55.
 25. Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, The Negro in South Carolina, pp. 12-13.
 26. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 87; Jane Van Allen to Mr. Whipple, November 28, 1866; Jane Van Allen to Mr. Smith, January 1, 1867; Jane Van Allen to Mr. Smith, February 16, 1867; C. P. Wothampton to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 15, 1868; C. P. Wothampton to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 30, 1868; Elizabeth Boorn to Rev. E. P. Smith, August 29, 1868; Elizabeth Boorn to Rev. E. P. Smith, September 10, 1868; Elizabeth Boorn to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 12, 1869, American Missionary Association Papers (AMAP), Duke University and the University of Rochester.
 27. Alrutheus A. Taylor, The Negro in South Carolina, p. 13.
 28. Luis Emilio, A Brave Black Regiment, p. 312; Alrutheus A. Taylor, The Negro in South Carolina, p. 13; Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman: Life Conditions of the American Negro in the Early Years After Emancipation (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952) p. 158; Robert Somers, The Southern States 1870-1871, pp. 52-53. Not only did starvation, destitution and disease characterize the lot of freedmen in Charleston in the years after emancipation, but these also plagued blacks throughout the South during this era. See: Richard Bailey, "Black Legislators During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Kansas State University, 1984) pp. 2-3; Gail Snowden Hasson, "The Medical Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau in Reconstruction Alabama, 1865-1868," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Alabama, 1982) p. 201; Jonathon W. McLeod, "Black and

White Workers," pp. 14-15; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day," pp. 14-15; Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia, p. 111. By examining military records and those of the Freedmen's Bureau and Census Bureau, one scholar found that initially blacks did die in great numbers, especially those who resided in urban settings at war's end, Michael Anthony Cooke, "The Health of Blacks During Reconstruction, 1862-1870," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Maryland, 1983) p. iii.

29. P. Rector to Brvt. Liet. Col. A. K. Smith, January 23, 1866, Assistant Commissioner Letters Received, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records (hereafter known as FBP) National Archives, Washington, D.C.
30. James M. Johnston to A.L. Crawford, December 31, 1866. Assistant Commissioner of letter Received, FBP.
31. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 316-324. Government policies to force blacks back to the plantations under labor contracts and to prevent black urban migration appear to have been universal phenomena in the Reconstruction South. See: John Robert Kirkland, "Federal Troops in the South Atlantic States During Reconstruction 1865-1877," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1967) pp. 331-34; John T. O'Brien, Jr., "From Bondage to Citizenship," pp. 107-8, 117-20, 127-28; Penelope K. Majeske, "Your Obedient Servant: The United States Army in Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1867," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Wayne State University, 1980) pp. 34-35, 40-42; John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, pp. 50-53; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day," pp. 363-364; Derron Davis, "Against the Odds: Postbellum Growth and Development in a Southern Black Urban Community, 1865-1900," (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, SUNY-Binghamton, 1987) pp. 32-33; Jonathon W. McLeod, "Black and White Workers," pp. 19-22; Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians, pp. 110-11.
32. Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 30.
33. J. T. Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States, pp. 537-38.
34. C. P. Wothampton to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 15, 1868; C. P. Wothampton to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 30, 1868;

Elizabeth Boorne to Rev. E. P. Smith, August 29, 1968;
Elizabeth Boorn to Rev. E. P. Smith, September 10,
1868; Elizabeth Boorn to Rev. E. P. Smith, June 12,
1969; AMAP.

35. Monthly Reports of Rations, Clothing and Medicines Which Were Issued to Freed People in Charleston, South Carolina in October and November, 1868, South Carolina, Box 60, FBP; Lists of Destitutes in the Berkley, Walamasaw, Goose Creek and Cooper River Parishes of South Carolina to Home Rations Were Issued in the period of May-August 1866, South Carolina, Box 61, FBP. In addition, if relatives of the aged or infirm could be located, in order to lessen the burden on government assistance, these people were sometimes sent to reside with those relatives. Colonel William Stome to Brigadier General H.W. Smith, September 6, 1866; F. Pegre Porcher to _____, June 22, 1866; Records of the Assistant Commissioner For the State of South Carolina, Personnel Rosters, January to July 1868; Records Relating to Transportation, October 1866 to November 1868 and Other Records, 1865 to 1867, Roll 44, FBP.
36. J. T. Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States, p. 538.
37. Ibid., p. 537.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 538.
40. O. D. Kinsman to Ralph Ely, January 23, 1866, Assistant Commissioner of Letters Received, FBP.
41. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure, " p. 31; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 74-79; Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 48-52, 58-59. Other Southern legislatures passed various forms of Black Codes in 1865 and 1866. Among the most important completed works on these codes are: Theodore B. Wilson, The Black Codes of the South (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1965); Vernon L. Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890 (New York: Harper and Row, 1947) pp. 80-96; Joe M. Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877 (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1965) pp. 43, 135-36, 143, 205; C. Peter Ripley, Slaves and Freedmen in Civil War Louisiana, pp. 189-192; Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race

Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 34-35, 38, 263; Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph: Black Life and Culture in the South Since the Civil War (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976) pp. 6-7; W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America, pp. 166-181.

42. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 31; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 366-367.
43. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 367-368.
44. Ibid.; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," pp. 31-32.
45. Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 367.
46. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," pp. 31-32; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 367.
47. In his study of black politicians in Charleston during Reconstruction, William C. Hine reveals a startling observation with regard to the black delegates attending the September and November 1865 Colored People's Conventions in South Carolina. Significant in light of the November condemnation of the Black Codes, was the fact that neither meeting contained any of the fifteen wealthiest black males in Charleston. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 39.
48. The South Carolina Leader, November 25, 1865; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 74; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," pp. 38-39, 41. For a complete account of the proceedings of this convention, see: "Proceedings of the Colored People's Convention of the State of South Carolina," Charleston, SC (November 1865), Moorland-Spingarn Reading Room, Howard University.
49. General Charles Devens to BBG James C. Beecher, December 24, 1865; Colonel W. L. M. Burger to Charles Bennett, Jr., December 28, 1865; Rev. R. H. Cain to General Charles Devens, December 29, 1865; The Department of the South Letters (DSL), South Carolina.
50. Rev. T. William Lewis to General Charles Devens, December 26, 1865, DSL.

51. Rev. R. H. Cain to General Charles Devens, December 29, 1965, DSL.
52. Rev. T. William Lewis to General Charles Devens, December 26, 1965, DSL; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Among the Contrabands, p. 201.
53. Rev. William Lyall to General Charles Devens, December 27, 1965, DSL.
54. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 74.
55. Theodore B. Wilson, The Black Codes of the South, p. 139; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 370.
56. J. W. Alvord, Letters from the South Relating to the Condition of Freedmen: Addressed to Major O.O. Howard (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1870) p. 9.
57. Ibid., p. 12. According to a summary of crimes committed in Charleston from October through December 1869, seventy-two whites were arrested for public drunkenness compared to only fourteen blacks. Ibid., p. 12.
58. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 324.
59. Charleston News and Courier, December 22, 1866.
60. Charleston News and Courier, September 20, 1866.
61. Charleston News and Courier, September 3, 1866.
62. J.W. Alvord, Letters from the South, p. 12.
63. Mary Abigail Dodge, Wool-Gathering, p. 221.
64. Charleston News and Courier, April 25, 1865.
65. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 66-67.
66. The National Freedman, May 1, 1865, p. 133.
67. Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom," p. 101.
68. Charleston News and Courier, March 31, April 9, and April 21, 1873; Robert Goodwyn Rhett, Charleston: An Epic of Carolina, pp. 306, 308; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 44-46; May Alice Harris Ridley, "The Black Community of Nashville and Davidson County,

1860-1870," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1982) p. 101; John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, pp. 59-60; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and the Heat of the Day," pp. 349-350; John T. O'Brien, "From Bondage to Citizenship," pp. 79, 81-84, 251-253; Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations, pp. 63, 66, 77; Edmund Drago, Black Politicians, pp. 107-108; Stephen V. Ash, Middle Tennessee Society Transformed 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) pp. 130, 139; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, p. 218.

69. The Christian Recorder, September 30, 1865.
70. Charleston News and Courier, March 31, 1873.
71. Charleston News and Courier, April 9, 1873.
72. Charleston News and Courier, April 21, 1873.
73. Charleston News and Courier, May 22, 1873.
74. Charleston News and Courier, February 24, 1873.
75. Charleston News and Courier, January 18, 1873.
76. Charleston News and Courier, July 2, 1873.
77. Charleston News and Courier, May 31, 1873.
78. Charleston News and Courier, November 8, 1875;
Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman, p. 21.
79. The Christian Recorder, August 19, 1865.
80. The Christian Recorder, August 19, 1865.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Caroline Gilman to Eliza, September 17, 1865, Letters of Caroline Gilman, South Carolina Historical Society, quoted in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 89.
84. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 89-90.
85. Ibid., p. 90.
86. Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 24-25.

87. Ibid., pp. 25-26.
88. J.W. Alvord, Letters From the South, p. 9.
89. Ibid., p. 9. For excellent scholarship on the problem of labor and immigration in South Carolina during Reconstruction, see: Robert H. Woody, "The Labor and Immigration Problem of South Carolina during Reconstruction," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 18 (1931) pp. 195-212.
90. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston, " p. 115.
91. Ibid., pp. 115-116.
92. Ibid., p. 116.
93. Charleston Daily Republican, August 17, 1871.
94. Edward P. Wall to Brt. Major General R. K. Scott, June 22, 1868, Asst. Commissioner Letters Received, FBP.
95. Charleston News and Courier, September 21, 1876.
96. W.G. Marts to Rev. Dr. Strieby, July 7, 1877, AMAP.
97. Among the more important works on the importance of land to ex-slaves are: Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, pp. 52-65; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 54-63; Victor Ullman, Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) pp. 317-320; Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 436-445; Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, pp. 138-139; Donna Johanna Benson, "Before I Be a Slave: A Social Analysis of the Black Struggle for Freedom in North Carolina, 1860-1865," (Ph.D dissertation, Duke University, 1984) pp. 169-70, 173-74; Jacqueline Baldwin Walker, "Blacks in North Carolina During Reconstruction," (Ph.D dissertation, Duke University, 1979) pp. 63-65; Richard Bailey, "Black Legislators During the Reconstruction of Alabama 1867-1878," p. 125; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day," pp. 364-68; John T. O'Brien, "From Bondage to Citizenship," pp. 90-91; Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom," p. 102; Mary Jennie McGuire, "Getting their Hands on the Land: The Revolution in St. Helena Parish, South Carolina, 1861-1900," (Ph.D dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1985) pp. 1-2.

98. Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau, p. 52.
99. Rev. T. William Lewis to General Charles Devens, December 26, 1865, FBP.
100. Whitelaw Reid, After the War, p. 147.
101. Ibid., p. 59.
102. Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau, pp. 54-55; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 59-63; Victor Ullman, Martin R. Delany, pp. 317-319; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 400-402; Simkins and Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 227-228.
103. Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau, pp. 55-56; Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, p. 189; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 79-81; Simkins and Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 229-230. As indicated earlier, most ex-slaves were never granted land. Northern missionaries and federal officials did launch some projects at Port Royal, South Carolina and Davis Bend, Mississippi designed to demonstrate that blacks could make the transition from slavery to freedom. Tracts of land were distributed in these areas to blacks who were to make themselves economically independent through its use. See: Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (New York: Vintage Books, 1964); Janet Sharp Hermann, The Pursuit of a Dream (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Janet Sharp Hermann, "Reconstruction in Microcosm: Three Men and a Gin," Journal of Negro History LXV[4] (Fall 1980) pp. 312-335; Stephen Joseph Ross, "Freed Soil, Freed Labor, Freed Men: John Eaton and the Davis Bend Experiment," Journal of Southern History, XLIV[2] (May 1978) pp. 213-232; James T. Currie, "Benjamin Montgomery and the Davis Bend Colony," Prologue 10[1] (Spring 1978) pp. 5-21; Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau, pp. 55-56; Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, p. 189; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 79-81; Simkins and Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 229-230.
104. Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, p. 188.
105. W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America, p. 352.
106. Thomas C. Holt, Black Over White, pp. 162-164.

107. Thomas C. Holt, "Negro Legislators in South Carolina During Reconstruction," in Howard N. Rabinowitz, ed, Southern Black Leaders, p. 239. Although the vast majority of blacks who occupied state and federal elective offices under Republican administrations in South Carolina during the Reconstruction period were ex-slaves, a large number of the black leaders had been free prior to the war. Ibid., p. 43. This was also the case in many other southern states. See, for example: Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 34; Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, pp. 163-67; Lester C. Lamon, Blacks in Tennessee 1791-1970, pp. 36-37; Walter J. Fraser, Jr., "Black Reconstructionists in Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 34[4] (Winter 1975) pp. 362-382; David C. Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," The Journal of Southern History XL[3] (August 1974) pp. 417-440; Ted Tunnell, "Free Negroes and Freedmen: Black Politics in New Orleans During the Civil War," Southern Studies XIX[1] (Spring 1980) p. 28; Charles Vincent, Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).
108. Ibid., pp. 239-40.
109. Thomas C. Holt, Black Over White, p. 163. For an excellent piece of scholarship on the crucial role played by black politicians in Charleston, S.C., see: William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure."
110. Thomas C. Holt, Black Over White, pp. 163-164.
111. Ibid., p. 164.
112. Ibid., pp. 122-151. A large number of Georgia's black political leaders aspired to become a part of the capitalist class in Georgia. On such sensitive issues as land reform and confiscation, they too refused to vote on behalf of the interests of freedmen since it would have been detrimental to their own economic interests. Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia, pp. 86-91.
113. Colonel W.L.M. Burger to Charles Bennett, Jr., December 28, 1865, FBP; Reuben Thomlinson to George S. Burger, September 12, 1865, FBP; Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom," p. 103; Charleston Daily News, July 23 & 24, 1867; Victor Ullman, Martin R. Delany, pp. 325-326.

114. Gabriel Manigault Diary, 1865, Gabriel Manigault Papers.
115. Ibid. Ex-slaves in many parts of the South attempted to make good the "promise" of land through their own self-active behavior of occupying old estates, as well as showing their disappointment in the government's lack of action in other ways. See: Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau, pp. 57-60; John T. Trowbridge, The South, pp. 539-540; Charleston News and Courier, February 1 & 6, 1866; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 405-407.
116. Robert Somers, The Southern States, p. 54. For full accounts of the Freedmen's Savings Bank, consult: Walter L. Fleming, The Freedmen's Savings Bank: A Chapter in the Economic History of the Negro Race (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1927); Carl R. Osthaus, Freedmen, Philanthropy and Fraud: A History of the Freedmen's Savings Bank (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). For detailed accounts of the numerous depositors of the Freedmen's Savings Bank, see: Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874, Record group #101, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.
117. J.W. Alvord, Letters From The South, pp. 8-10.
118. New York Tribune, June 30, 1869; Hollis R. Lynch, ed., The Black Urban Condition: A Documentary History, 1866-1971 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973) p. 5; Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman, p. 43.
119. The steadily growing amount of money deposited in the Charleston branch of the Freedmen's Savings Bank chronicled in the Charleston News and Courier lends credence to the claim that freedmen were serious about saving money. Charleston News and Courier, June 27, July 18 and November 25, 1867.
120. Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War, p. 55, cited in Carl Osthaus, Freedmen, Philanthropy and Fraud, p. 126.
121. Carl R. Osthaus, Freedmen, Philanthropy and Fraud, p. 98.
122. The Christian Recorder, April 21, 1866 and August 26, 1865; J.E. Hilary Skinner, After the Storm, p. 342; Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedmen, pp. 23, 42; New York Tribune, May 31, 1871; Robert Somers, The

Southern States Since the War, p. 54. The eagerness to save and invest earnings shown by Charleston's freedmen was also exhibited by freedmen throughout the South. See: Patricia W. Romero and Willie Lee Rose, eds., Susie King Taylor: Reminiscences of My Life: A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1988) pp. 15, 123-24, 127, 138; J.W. Alvord, Letters From The South, pp. 8-10; John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, pp. 66-67; Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, pp. 159-60, 165, 167-68; Richard Bailey, "Black Legislators During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878," pp. 128-29; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, pp. 142-145; Dornoral Davis, "Against the Odds," pp. 59-63; May Alice Harris Ridley, "The Black Community of Nashville and Davidson County," pp. 134-35; John W. Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto," p. 468.

123. Charleston News and Courier, January 5, 1867; Charleston Daily News, January 5, 1867; The New York Times, January 8, 1867.
124. The Charleston Daily News, January 5, 1867.
125. Charleston Mercury, January 7, 1867.
126. Charleston News and Courier, January 8, 1867; Charleston Daily News, January 8, 1867.
127. William C. Hine, "Black Organized Labor in Reconstruction Charleston," Labor History 25[4] (Fall 1984) p. 505.
128. Charleston News and Courier, February 25, 1868.
129. Charleston Daily News, February 25, 1868.
130. Charleston Daily News, February 29, 1868; Charleston News and Courier, February 27 and 29, 1868; Charleston Mercury, February 27, 1868.
131. Charleston Daily Republican, September 27 and October 14, 1869; Charleston Daily News, October 14, 1869.
132. Charleston Daily News October 27, 1869; Charleston Daily Republican, October 27 and 28, and November 5, 1869.
133. William C. Hine, "Black Organized Labor," p. 512. In the early years of Reconstruction, black longshoremen and other black workers engaged in strikes throughout the South. See: Jenell H. Shofner, "Militant Negro

Laborers in Reconstruction Florida," Journal of Southern History XXXIX[3] (August 1973) pp. 395-408; Herbert Northrup, "The New Orleans Longshoremen," Political Science Quarterly LVII[4] (December 1942) pp. 527-528; Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931) pp. 182-183; Edmund Drago, Black Politicians, p. 124; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 482-483; Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, p. 130; Howard Rabinowitz, Race Relations, pp. 69-75; Joe M. Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, pp. 69-70; Peter Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, pp. 38-44; Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988) p. 107.

134. Charleston Daily News, September 27 and October 5, 1869; Charleston Daily Republican, October 1 and 5, 1869.
135. Charleston Daily News, October 7, 1869; Charleston Daily Republican, October 6 and 7, 1869.
136. Black and white workers after the Civil War generally viewed each other as competitors; as a result, membership of both races in a single union local was a rarity. This pattern continued into the twentieth century. Consult: Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 16-35; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, pp. 156-89; Wilbert L. Jenkins, "The Relationship Between Blacks and the American Trade Union Movement as Presented Through the Editorial Pages of the Crisis Magazine, 1917-1936," (Unpublished paper, 1984).
137. Charleston Daily Republican, October 27 and 29, 1869.
138. Charleston Daily Republican, November 2, 1869.
139. William C. Hine, "Black Organized Labor," pp. 510-11.
140. Ibid., pp. 511-12.
141. Ibid., pp. 512-13.
142. Charleston Daily Republican, December 8, 1869 and January 20, 1870.
143. Charleston Daily Republican, January 20, 1870.

144. Charleston Daily Republican, November 23, 25, 26 and 30, and December 3 and 4, 1869.
145. Charleston News and Courier, September 3, 1873.
146. Charleston News and Courier, September 9-11, 1873.
146. Charleston News and Courier, September 11-12, 1873.
147. Charleston News and Courier, September 15, 1873.
149. Charleston News and Courier, September 12 and 15, 1873.
150. Charleston News and Courier, September 11, 15, 16 and 20, 1873.
151. Charleston News and Courier, January 31, 1874.
152. Charleston News and Courier, February 6, 13, 16 and 19, 1877.
153. William C. Hine, "Black Organized Labor," p. 517.
154. The South Carolina Leader, December 9, 1865; Charleston News and Courier, May 13, 1865; Whitelaw Reid, After the War, pp. 83, 581-86; Elizabeth Botume, First Days With The Contrabands, p. 205; The South Carolina Leader October 7, 1865; L. Maria Child, The Freedmen's Book (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865) pp. 260-261.

CHAPTER IV
WE GOTTA GET US SOME BOOK LERNIN':
THE ROLE OF BLACK CHARLESTONIANS IN FREEDMEN'S LITERACY

W.E.B. Dubois asserted that the quest for education by blacks "was one of the marvelous occurrences of the modern world; almost without parallel in the history of civilization."¹ This describes accurately the leading role that freedmen took in providing literacy for themselves and their children, despite the recent nature of their freedom, their lack of economic resources and their lack of political power. Freedmen went to great lengths to acquire education: paying school tuition, purchasing books, hiring and providing for school teachers, and building and maintaining school buildings, not to mention other costly and sometimes dangerous activities necessary to provide education for their children in the Reconstruction era.²

The central focus of this chapter is on the former slaves of Charleston, rather than focusing on the schools and the activities of northern white school teachers and missionaries, as has already been done by historians of American education.³ A large number of revisionist historians of Reconstruction, while filling a void in the literature, have also tended to stress the sympathetic energies which northern whites expended in bringing

education to southern freedmen.⁴ Abundant evidence, however, suggests that the freedpeople themselves played a central role in building, financing and operating these schools. The commitment to education displayed by the former slaves laboring under adverse conditions is a testimonial to their strength and determination as a people.

Post Civil War educational activism by black Charlestonians should be understood as a normal extension of their efforts to establish schools under slavery. For example, Daniel Payne, a free black of Charleston, established a small school in which he taught three free black children during the day and three slaves at night. Each student paid fifty cents tuition per month for this service. Since this was not sufficient income to sustain him, a slave woman provided for many of his wants in order to support his educational efforts.⁵ Frederika Bremer discovered another small secret school for blacks on one of her visits to Charleston.⁶

Miss "L" of Charleston used the guise of a sewing school to secretly teach black children to read and write, and was successful in this effort for many years. Her "sewing school" was under suspicion by whites and the police would investigate it from time to time. The school survived these investigations partly through the protection of blacks who guarded the school from suspicious whites and partly due to the precautions the students took. They always kept a

piece of sewing at hand, "hiding their books before a white could make a successful entrance to the school."⁷

Domestic slaves often used the circumstances of their servitude to acquire an education. Mamie Garvin Field's great-great uncle Thomas, a valet for the sons of a wealthy white Charlestonian family, attended some of the young white men's classes with them; and when they were sent to Oxford, England to study, Thomas accompanied them. While at Oxford, Thomas became proficient in Hebrew and Greek, and later taught his skills to his sons. These sons, Abram and James B., taught their sisters who subsequently taught other slaves. One person who benefited from this slave-generated literacy campaign, Anna Berry, later organized her own clandestine school for slaves in Charleston.⁸

Since education was both formally and informally prohibited to slaves, under emancipation, education became one of the prizes withheld under slavery that freedpeople now struggled to acquire. Most ex-slaves were cognizant of the practical virtues of literacy as well. Through their daily interactions with whites, they had observed the advantages which education conferred to educated whites. Since the Freedmen's Bureau insisted on formal written contracts between planters and former slaves in the Reconstruction era, these workers needed basic literacy in order to protect themselves against fraud. Freedmen did not assume that education would provide easy riches or equality.

Instead, as one scholar suggested, education was perceived by many ex-slaves as "a means to economic protection" and an important part of their strategy to prevent racist exploitation. It was one way that freedpeople could "give substance to their liberty."⁹

The leaders of these freedpeople heartily endorsed public schooling as a goal for the postwar period in South Carolina. A resolution passed in one of the early conventions of freedpeople declared that "knowledge is power." However, as has been shown with other issues, the representatives of the black population were split on their reasons for supporting education. A large number of the free mulatto elite of South Carolina favored literacy and poll taxes as requirements for suffrage, as they believed it would encourage literacy among the black masses. In order to become enfranchised, the uneducated freedmen would have to go to school and become literate. The poll taxes levied on voters would, in turn, pay the cost of maintaining education.

Black political leaders of slave origins saw the issue differently. According to them, "a literacy requirement would be political suicide for a largely illiterate black electorate," and believing that such a requirement would be enforced, they demanded public education for blacks immediately. Despite differences in their reasons for supporting literacy, legislation was successfully passed

establishing schools for all.¹⁰

Despite the passage of laws in South Carolina establishing public schools for all regardless of race, state financial support for the education of blacks was considerably less than what was needed. The Freedmen's Bureau did not provide federal monies for education of freedmen until the summer of 1866, and this support amounted to only one half million dollars.¹¹ Northern benevolent societies and the Freedmen's Bureau provided valuable services toward the education of freedmen, particularly in the early stages of Reconstruction. Thousands of dollars were donated to build schools and more than a thousand people were sent to the South to teach freedmen. Northern benevolent societies also donated books and paid the salaries of many teachers as well.

Government support for the education of blacks continued to lag behind the actual need, and the charitable efforts of northerners also were insufficient. Consequently, the twin burdens of financing and operating the freedmen's schools fell in some part on the shoulders of the ex-slaves themselves.¹²

In this endeavor, freedmen were sometimes assisted by free blacks. Countless black Charlestonians who had been free before the war came to the aid of freedmen by volunteering their services as teachers. Only five days after the Charleston schools opened in March 1865 under the

direction of James Redpath, blacks accounted for twenty-five of the forty-two teachers employed, with the majority being native Charlestonians. Most of the teachers were light in complexion and members of Charleston's black aristocracy. Many of these teachers had been educated in the antebellum period in Charleston and had operated private schools for blacks in the pre-Civil War period. Representative of these teachers was Mary F. Weston who had been previously jailed for operating an illegal school.¹³ Under the persuasion of Francis L. Cardozo, a freeborn Charlestonian and preeminent educator,¹⁴ other freeborn black Charlestonians such as William O. Weston, Joanna Weston, Francis Rollin, Amelia A. Shrewsbury, Margaret J. Sasportas, Henry S. Spencer, Harriet Holloway and Richard Holloway were employed by the AMA to instruct freedmen.¹⁵

Free black teachers from the North were also instrumental in Charleston's freedmen education campaign. Several women graduates of the Philadelphia Institute for Colored Youth staffed the Old Zion Church School in Charleston.¹⁶ Jonathon C. Gibbs, a Presbyterian minister from Philadelphia founded the Wallingford Academy for blacks in Charleston. Franklin Randolph, a Methodist minister educated in Ohio, served as Assistant State Superintendent of Education. While serving in this capacity, Randolph played a leading role in securing teachers for the freedmen's schools and also established schools for freedmen

on plantations around Charleston.¹⁷

Many of these black teachers possessed a strong racial consciousness which translated into a firm commitment to freedmen's education.¹⁸ This is graphically illustrated by Benjamin F. Randolph's application for employment by the Freedmen's Bureau. Randolph wrote that "I don't ask position. But I ask a place where I can be most useful to my race. My learning, my experience as a Teacher [in the] North, and my faithful service as a Chaplain demand that I seek such a place among my race."¹⁹ Similarly, Richard Cain, a black minister from Brooklyn, New York who had moved his pastorship to Charleston, organized a freedmen's school there. He wrote:

We must take into our hands the education of our race. Honest, dignified whites may teach ever so well, it has not the effect to exalt the black man's opinion of his own race.²⁰

William O. Weston, a member of Charleston's free mulatto elite and an A.M.A. teacher, agreed with this principle of race consciousness in the education of freedmen. He thought it wonderful that slaves previously denied education could now obtain it as freedmen. In his opinion, it would be a sin in the sight of God for an educated black person to refuse to come to the aid of their black brethren seeking literacy.²¹ Helping to prepare the newly-freed slaves for their new position in society merely reflected the long-standing tradition of racial self-help

maintained by North American blacks.²²

The determination to make any sacrifice in pursuit of education was mirrored in the behaviors of both black adults and children in Charleston. One white northern teacher wrote from Charleston: "With few exceptions, I find the parents hardworking, very poor, and exceedingly anxious that the children should get lernin',[sic] and willing to make any sacrifice to that end."²³ Another Charleston area teacher noted: "I find a general pressure for money, but in the lowest cabins, they all show the same thanksgiving for freedom and are ready to sacrifice much that their children may learn to read and write." Despite losing one hundred dollars of Confederate money when the Union soldiers took Charleston, one woman intimated that she didn't care because she had received, in exchange, freedom and the possibility for her children to become educated. This was a common attitude among freedmen.²⁴ For many of them, education was yet another way that their previous shackles would be broken, giving them a degree of autonomy denied to them under slavery. Education represented one important facet of emancipation to ex-slaves.

The children, as well as their parents, made substantial sacrifices to attend school. Young black pupils sometimes worked odd jobs and saved the pennies they earned for their tuition. Many also went ragged, skipped meals, and travelled countless miles in pursuit of education.

Rural freedmen often had to walk to town in order to receive instruction.

While evidence to differentiate the factors driving rural and urban freedmen to seek education is sparse, the data available indicated that both social groups realized the importance of education. However, it appears that rural ex-slaves may have been even more motivated to pursue literacy than their urban counterparts. One possible explanation for such a disparity between rural and urban freedmen may be the greater restriction historically on slave education in the rural areas before emancipation. Prior to the Civil War, urban slaves more often were able to illegally receive an education than were rural slaves. Another possible explanation might be that rural freedmen may have perceived themselves as less sophisticated than their urban counterparts, and, identifying education as the factor which made this so, pursued education more diligently in order to fill this void. Comparative studies on the factors driving urban and rural freedmen, respectively, to pursue education are called for to clarify these issues. Until such studies are done, it can only be said that freedmen in the Charleston area struggled mightily to attain education.

Although Charleston Public Schools were tuition-free, the task of providing books and supplies usually fell to the pupils and their families. Owing to the steadily worsening

economic conditions of Charleston during Reconstruction, this posed a major obstacle for poor students. Attempting to alleviate this problem, teachers would sometimes loan books to a few of their students, and the benevolent societies would sometimes provide slates and books. Even so, these efforts fell far short of relieving this economic obstacle to the education of freedmen. Many children of freedmen surmounted this difficulty by working odd jobs, often with insufficient clothing on their backs, in order to pay their own school expenses.²⁵ This did not go unnoticed, as one northern correspondent for the New York Times wrote:

Most students find it necessary to work at odd jobs early and late, when out of school and often go barefooted and hatless saving their pennies for the purchase of some necessary volume.²⁶

Poverty was not uncommon to some of the students of the Avery Institute, the school most frequented by Charleston's mulatto elite. When economic hardship threatened to force three of Avery's best students to leave school, Mortimer Warren, the school's principal, arranged their board, tuition, and clothing in exchange for work as janitors, allowing these young scholars to continue their education.²⁷ Until 1870 when the A.M.A. changed its policy, some students supplemented the costs of their education by washing the clothes of their A.M.A. teachers.²⁸ There were other students not so fortunate in securing employment. "William D.", a gifted black orphan was willing to work his way

through school, but could find no work. He was forced to live with an aunt, who could not provide him his meals, having to feed her own children first.²⁹

Some of the sacrifices made by freedmen to obtain literacy are unprecedented in American history. Some elected to go without their dinners in order to raise money for an education. Mary Brown, a ten year old from the Charleston area, and her younger brother lived with their grandmother who was barely able to afford hominy to feed them. These children were depressed over not being able to pay the school tax, and so their grandmother offered them the choice of paying the tax or eating dinner. The children made the difficult decision to forego dinner in favor of being able to attend school. When Mary's teacher asked her how she could get along without her dinner, she said "O, we don't mind, for we go to bed soon and then we forget all about it."³⁰

A.M.A. officials were struck by the academic progress shown by freedmen in Charleston, despite the adversity they lived with. Ragged, barefoot, and sometimes hungry, many freedmen walked several miles in order to attend school. One A.M.A. teacher wrote that "Alonzo T" had no father and a sick mother, so he worked evenings to support the family. To attend school he had to get up before sunrise and walk the long distance to school. In spite of these difficulties, the teacher wrote:

In a little more than a year he has made his way through two classes, is now further advanced than the highest, is studying Latin, and lately brought a Greek book begging for instruction in, and with a hope of going to college.

Alonzo's teacher requested aid from National Headquarters so that Alonzo might not be "prematurely broken down by hard work, night study, poor food and scant sleep."³¹

Another A.M.A. teacher recorded the case of "Paul M." Paul's father was an unemployed drunkard, his mother had been an invalid for three years, and there were three young children in the family to be provided for. Paul barely had clothes on his back and most of these had been A.M.A. donations. Despite his hardships, Paul excelled in school, teaching five adults what he had learned during winter evenings. Paul seriously considered leaving school as his family desperately needed him to work to supplement their subsistence. Paul's teacher recorded all this in a letter to A.M.A. headquarters requesting aid so that Paul could continue his studies.³²

In spite of these anecdotes indicating the need of aid in order to continue their education, it should be recognized that most freedmen did not expect handouts. Under slavery, blacks had faced a daily struggle to survive which provided them with the mental and spiritual strength to deal with the economic hardships of Reconstruction. Slaves had not expected or received much in the way of handouts from whites, having instead to fend for themselves.

Carrying this expectation of self-reliance into Reconstruction, they were appreciative of the services provided them by various benevolent agencies, but their actions indicated that the freedmen did not expect acts of charity or regard them as crucial.

Freedmen relied as much as possible on their own resources in order to become educated. Many contributed what they could to teachers, sometimes giving chickens, apples, groundnuts, candy, oranges, coke, etc. as in-kind payments of school expenses and to show their appreciation. Phoebe Alcott, an A.M.A. teacher at Charleston's Saxton School, wrote that a man, having paid his son's tuition with a pair of fowl the day before, returned and offered his son's teacher some chickens as a token of his appreciation to "the people who provides school for us."³³

The children of freedmen often brought to schools small gifts to help provide for their education and show appreciation. In addition to fruit, nuts, candies, and cakes, they often brought the teacher fancy mugs and cups. Miss Alcott wrote that "No less than five adorn my shelf." Looking at these cups, Miss Alcott wrote that

This one reminds me of the long and patient drill before Patsy became interested in her lessons, that of the brief but hard struggle before Phebe yielded and became one of my best girls. So with each one.

Miss Alcott found these gifts to be a source of pleasure for the teachers, and an additional encouragement

to work harder at becoming effective instructors.³⁴

Freedmen's Bureau records are replete with evidence of freedmen laboring on their own behalf to improve the schools. Charleston's Franklin Street School was established in 1866 largely from the funds of northern philanthropists and contributions by the Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Commission. Since these facilities were inadequate to the need, some freedmen voluntarily took reduced wages to work at renovating them.³⁵ While they were being paid by Rev. A. Toomer for this work, to do so at reduced wages rather than taking more lucrative jobs represented an important contribution to the education of freedmen. When Charleston's schools became overcrowded with freedmen, a group of blacks proposed to donate a suitable lot on which to build another freedmen's school, if the Freedmen's Bureau could appropriate the funds needed to build a school large enough for two hundred students.³⁶

Another group of Charleston's blacks requested three thousand dollars from the Freedmen's Bureau to erect a school building. They had raised one thousand dollars and expected to raise more money, but they estimated they would need the extra three thousand dollars requested to complete the building.³⁷

According to the records of John Alvord, Charleston's Superintendent of Education, freedmen often took it upon themselves to organize schools for themselves and others.

Father Haynes, "a colored man of the genuine African type," had for several months tried doggedly to have a teacher located in the Charleston area. Haynes established his own school for the children of freedmen in the areas outlying Charleston, but was able to sustain it for only one week. Some of the children continued to attend for days after the school closed, walking as far as seven miles in hopes that they would find a teacher present. Having obtained no teacher, the school remained closed, and the students had to seek education elsewhere.³⁸

Disappointments such as this may have made the hopes of freedmen sag, but they did not break their will to gain an education. Problems such as Father Haynes encountered only strengthened the conviction that only racial self-help would assure that education would be available to all freedmen. As a consequence, countless freedmen pooled their meager resources to organize schools.³⁹ Throughout the South, blacks organized "pay schools" where the teachers' salaries were drawn from the fees charged to the students.⁴⁰ Because many of the schools organized by northern benevolent societies were overcrowded or inaccessibly distant, "pay schools" provided educational opportunities for freedmen who otherwise would have none.⁴¹ Impressed with a "pay school" he saw in Charleston, John Alvord wrote: "The Freedmen's Pay School (150 pupils), with colored teachers is a landmark, showing the progress of these people. All its

expenses are met by the freedmen."⁴²

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, black churches were at the vanguard of the freedmen's educational movement, using the principle of racial self-help to provide literacy. On visiting a Charleston church, one northern traveler found that nearly all the parishioners, regardless of their poverty, put some amount of money into the collection plate being passed to fund education. According to this traveler,

Five dollar notes were plentifully handed in, and everybody present gave something. The people are keen for education, which they see to be necessary to their children in the future of equal rights.⁴³

One representative of the A.M.A. found, on his arrival at Plymouth Church in Charleston, a freedmen's school already organized and in operation with a black superintendent and black teachers.⁴⁴ Similarly, Richard Cain, a black minister, organized Cain's Institute in 1865, a school for freedmen located in Liberty Hall on Morris Street. This school was entirely staffed by blacks and its main source of financial support came from the freedmen themselves.⁴⁵ Zion School was established in the basement of Charleston's Zion Church in December 1865 by the Reverend Jonathan C. Gibbs. It also was completely staffed and maintained by the contributions of blacks.⁴⁶ In Charleston, the black Baptists, the African Methodists and the Methodist Episcopal Church each maintained freedmen's schools.⁴⁷

When, under slavery, blacks were sometimes allowed to have their own churches, these churches had been the focus of black self-help activities. Under Reconstruction, these churches continued this tradition of black self-help and extended the provision of literacy to all freedmen who wanted it.

The families of the students in these schools worked valiently to provide the schools with the necessary support. As Herbert Gutman pointed out, this "indicates some of the ways in which reciprocal obligations operated beyond the immediate family and bound together former slaves living in rural and urban communities."⁴⁸ One hundred and fifty freedmen at the Cain Institute contributed the sum of \$71.52 in tuition for June 1868.⁴⁹ Contributors to the Zion School paid \$28.79 in tuition for 164 students in January 1868.⁵⁰ In light of their poverty and the value of these sums at that time, these are much more than modest donations.

Given the policies of the northern benevolent societies and the Freedmen's Bureau which provided only limited opportunities for freedmen's education, freedmen were presented with the need to provide expanded education out of their own meager resources, and their response was beyond what could be reasonably expected. By the summer of 1866, these benevolent societies had decreased their contributions and begun to insist upon freedmen shouldering more of the burden of support for schools for their

children.⁵¹ As early as March 1865, James Redpath, Superintendent of Charleston Public Schools, insisted, "I will make them pay for their own school books."⁵² Freedmen not only bought their own books, but also donated money to establish the Shaw Memorial School. Black soldiers and residents of the Sea Islands of South Carolina contributed \$3,500 to this mission, and with additional monies raised by northern philanthropists, Shaw School was built.⁵³ This case illustrates the communal nature of the racial self-help ideal, as residents of the Sea Islands were outside the city limits of Charleston and yet they contributed to a school in the city to be attended by urban freedmen.

In spite of their poverty, freedmen continued to pay school taxes to support Shaw School, and this is documented in numerous Teachers Monthly School Reports. In November 1867, \$54.50 was paid in school taxes at Shaw School and in the next month this increased to \$66.75 paid for 271 students.⁵⁴ In 1868 a total of \$475 was collected in school taxes for the education of Shaw School students.⁵⁵ In five months in 1869, pupils paid \$258.75 in tuition for Shaw School.⁵⁶ Reports for 1870 and 1871 are incomplete but they suggest that freedmen continued to pay school taxes to support Shaw School. In January of 1870 and 1871, respectively, tuition amounting to \$62.50 and \$94.35 was collected.⁵⁷ At twenty-five cents per pupil monthly, the taxes collected were not small sums, given the bad economic

conditions of the time. As currency was scarce and poor workers often did not receive their wages in cash, the struggle by freedmen to obtain cash and use it to pay school taxes should not be underrated. These tuition payments underscore the conviction felt by freedmen that education was necessary to their success in American society.

Where freedmen didn't need to contribute to start a school, thanks to aid societies which opened some of the freedmen's schools, the freedmen contributed what they could to maintain these schools. Wallingford Academy was established in Charleston in 1865 by the Committee of Missions for Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church and the Freedmen's Bureau with each organization donating equally to the \$13,500 required to open the school.⁵⁸ Five blacks served as part of the Academy's staff in 1869.⁵⁹ J. H. Bates, Wallingford's principal, wrote in October 1868 that he tried to collect twenty-five cents each from the pupils but that none had paid tuition that month,⁶⁰ apparently due to hardship. The succeeding months were better with eighty students paying tuition in November and eighty-five paying in December 1868.⁶¹ In January, again, no students could pay their tuition but February showed improvement with sixty-eight students paying again. May 1869 was a lean month with only \$16.22 collected from students, and the following January showed only \$26.75 collected in tuition.⁶² These seasonal fluctuations in tuition payments by freedmen

show, not just their difficulties in paying, but also their determination to pay something whenever they could, in spite of their economic hardship. This perseverance in the face of adversity to get an education is one of the lasting legacies of the Reconstruction period.

The support of the Franklin Street School given by freedmen during Reconstruction illustrates their objective of getting education whenever and however they could. The Franklin Street School was opened in 1866 by the Reverend A. Toomer Porter, a white Charlestonian, with funds contributed largely by northern Episcopalians.⁶³ While the school was begun by benevolent organizations, freedmen played a leading role in its maintenance. The following table shows tuition payments and the numbers of student paying for those months where data was available, to indicate the levels at which freedmen attempted to pay their own tuition, despite economic hardship.

TABLE 1: Tuition Payments and Numbers of Students Paying by Months in Which It Was Paid, 1868, 1869, 1870

Date	Tuition Collected	# Students	Total #
October 1867	\$37.00	N.A.	
February 1868	N.A.	288	666
April 1868	35.10	140	
December 1868	12.60	51	
January 1869	18.14	75	
February 1869	20.38	90	
March 1869	33.45	148	
1870 School yr.	223.05		

Sources: Teachers Monthly School Report, October, April and December, 1868; January, February and March, 1869.

Charleston News and Courier, February 12, 1868.
Kate B. Savage to Major E.L.Deane, June 30, 1870,
FBP, Box 26.

This table indicates that there was a lot of fluctuation in the extent to which freedmen could pay their tuition of twenty-five cents per month. The principal of Franklin Street School, Kate B. Savage, reported in June 1870 that "the tuition for pupils during the year has amounted to \$223.05, which has paid the Janitor's wages; supplied fuel, stationary and defrayed some other incidental expenses of the school." According to Savage, the teacher's salaries amounting to \$2200 annually were paid "by the Protestant Episcopal Home Missions and Colored People."⁶⁴

The tuition shortfalls, which vary but appear to consistently be less than what was requested, represent moments of extreme economic hardship in the community. What is surprising is that tuition in some amount was being paid at all. Freedmen still made some contribution to sustain Franklin School despite hard times; and, given their own economic struggles, Principal Savage's comments indicate that the contribution freedmen struggled to make was important in the maintenance of the school.

Freedmen helped to support schools established by the A.M.A., many of which were staffed in some part by black teachers.⁶⁵ From its inception in 1865, Saxton School in Charleston was considered to be a first rate institution,

due largely to the efficient organizational and administrative efforts of its principal, F. L. Cardozo. As a native Charlestonian, Cardozo was popular in the city's black community⁶⁶ and received the community's support for the school. Some of the quality of the school can be attributed to the active efforts of its students and the black community in ensuring the school's success. As early as 1866, students at Saxton, three-quarters of whom were former slaves, paid for their own books.⁶⁷ In early August 1868, Cardozo wrote to Rev. S. Hunt, "you will be pleased to learn that the scholars contributed \$35.00 to the incidental expenses of the school during July." Cardozo expressed his confidence that students would continue in this practice when he wrote, "I propose asking them for another contribution during August, which I think they will give cheerfully."⁶⁸ Cardozo's confidence was validated when he reported in November 1866 that students had contributed \$105 toward their tuition.⁶⁹

Such contributions to the maintenance of Saxton School persisted in 1867 and 1868. In January 1867, parents paid ninety-five dollars in school taxes and purchased books and stationary worth seventy-seven dollars. Some students could not afford to pay the tax, and had to have it waived. Some students also found it difficult to afford to purchase text books, and teachers usually provided the books for these students. Despite the economic difficulties, at least half

of the students paid the school tax every month,⁷⁰ and so Cardozo collected \$105 in February 1867.⁷¹ According to Teachers Monthly School Reports for 1868, contributions from freedmen to Saxton School continued to be stable. For example, in March 1868, Ellen W. Pierce reported that "46 students in her class had contributed \$11.25, Lizzie F. Pratt could write that some 48 of her students had given \$11.60 and Jennie M. Paimelert reported that she had collected \$12.00 from 54 students in her class."⁷² By the time all the teachers had reported to Cardozo, the total tuition collected for March 1868 was \$97.75.⁷³

The freedmen continued to support the school after it was converted to a normal school in the fall of 1868 and changed its name to Avery Institute.⁷⁴ In October, November and December of 1868, Avery Institute received from pupils \$47.55, \$40.00, and \$37.75, respectively.⁷⁵ Avery Institute continued to receive school tax contributions from freedmen in 1869. In January 1869, A.M.A. teacher Ellen Pierce happily reported that 240 freedmen had paid a small tax.⁷⁶ Mortimer A. Warren, Avery's principal, wrote that all of the three hundred and forty-four students had either paid for or worked for their February 1869 school tuition, with \$66.09 being given in cash.⁷⁷ Warren noted that 273 students paid tuition in April 1869; 238 students contributed \$61.45 in June, and 285 paid the twenty-five cent school tax in October.⁷⁸

Mortimer Warren found overwhelming economic support for Avery Institute from freedmen in 1870 as well, with contributions continuing to rise. Two hundred and seventy-three students paid tuition in January 1870,⁷⁹ and by February, Warren could report: "My school is continuing to increase, almost against my will, and receipts from taxes for tuition increasing also."⁸⁰ In March, 244 students paid a total of \$75.29 in tuition.⁸¹ Avery continued to flourish; despite great economic distress in the spring and summer months, payments of school taxes did not taper off.

Avery Institute went through the ultimate test of its durability when in the Fall of 1870, the Federal government withdrew its financial support, requiring a tuition increase of one dollar monthly, payable in advance. In October 1870, the Charleston Daily Republican reported that "the parents (to their great honor be it said) accept the situation, and one and all seem to accede to the justice and propriety of the increase."⁸² While Avery served students from Charleston's mulatto elite who could more easily afford this increase, it should be noted that from 1868 to 1870, at least one half of Avery's students came from the ranks of ex-slaves, many of them nearly penniless.⁸³ Therefore, it was the contributions of both freeborn parents and freedmen which swelled the coffers of Avery Institute, maintaining it after the end of federal funding.

The phenomenon of both freeborn and freedmen invoking

the principle of racial self-help in support of education suggests that Charleston's black community was united in its belief in education as important for success in American society. This unity on the issue of education may well have been used to ease existing tensions within the black community, and to bridge the gap between these groups with regard to other important issues.

The black community of Charleston displayed their support for education by staging public examinations to demonstrate the outstanding academic progress of black school children and to acknowledge the excellent performance of black teachers as well. These examinations were attended by parents, relatives and friends of the students as well as interested bystanders. At these examinations the spectators were not disappointed as students repeatedly demonstrated their academic proficiency.

One such examination was staged at Zion School in the basement of Zion Presbyterian Church, attended by parents and friends of the scholars. At this examination, students ranging in age from six to seventeen years old demonstrated a remarkable proficiency in both mental and written arithmetic, grammar and other educational pursuits. Medals were distributed to students excelling in each class.⁸⁴ Shaw Memorial School similarly staged an examination at which the students demonstrated outstanding proficiency in arithmetic, grammar and spelling executed at high speed,

exhibiting not only their skill but also the skill of the teachers who had instructed them.⁸⁵

Charleston's black community also held meetings to promote education and occasionally petitioned to have schools established or maintained. Several freed black families attended a meeting at Charleston's Zion Church in Fall 1865 which emphasized the importance of education.⁸⁶ A mass meeting of Charleston's freedmen was held in Fall 1866, again with the objective of promoting education as a means of elevating the black race.⁸⁷

Many Freedmen's Bureau officials feared that the intense desire of freedmen for education would wane after the novelty wore off; but this was not to happen.⁸⁸ Freedmen continued their relentless pursuit of education throughout the Reconstruction period. For numerous freedmen, their literacy activities were soon yielding huge dividends. In the closing years of Reconstruction, black pupils were advancing as rapidly in their studies as were many of their white counterparts.⁸⁹ A reporter from the New York Times observed black students in Charleston working algebra problems, answering questions in ancient and modern history and reading literature with good comprehension.⁹⁰ The principal of Charleston's Morris Street School declared that black children learn as readily as whites and that their thirst for knowledge was actually much greater than that of whites.⁹¹ The pursuit of knowledge remained too

important to black Charlestonians for them to consider it a novelty.

Letters written by Francis L. Cardozo, an A.M.A. official and principal of Saxton School, to A.M.A. National Headquarters detail the positive impressions which the freedmen's schools made upon prominent white visitors from the North and from Europe. These letters indicate the freedmen's zeal for education and their steady progress in achieving it. In late October 1865, Major Gen. O. O. Howard and Major Gen. Rufus Saxton from the national and South Carolina offices of the Freedmen's Bureau, and Rev. Howard, Rev. Kennedy and John Alvord all toured Saxton School. The seven hundred students of the school were called to an assembly at which the visitors addressed them. General Howard commended them on their appearance and their academic progress. Mr. Kennedy remarked that these students represented one of the finest schools in the nation.⁹²

Two months later, Saxton School was visited by a Mr. Ferguson from England who was much impressed with the activities he observed. A correspondent from The Nation magazine, Mr. Dennett, was brought to Saxton School by John Alvord. Mr. Dennett observed classes in progress for several hours and appeared impressed with the progress of the scholars.⁹³ Mr. Warren Morton, Rev. Lewis Coffin and Rev. French also toured Saxton School, observing classes and conversing with the students, all of which left them

impressed with the students.⁹⁴

Northern whites continued to visit freedmen's schools in the late 1860s and commented favorably on the educational progress the ex-slaves were making. A Mr. and Mrs. Bird were so elated at the progress students at Saxton School were making that they pledged to make a substantial donation to the school. Black students continued to exhibit an excellent grasp of academics at the public examinations and northern whites were much surprised at their high level of academic performance.⁹⁵ Their progress would not have been an object of surprise if northern whites had known the importance of education to freedmen who needed every tool available to increase their likelihood of success against what were often insurmountable odds.

John Alvord, Charleston's Superintendent of Education, toured eight Charleston schools serving roughly 2500 students. He found the schools in good condition with the possible exception of one or two. While Alvord recommended some improvements be made at Morris Street School, he still indicated that its eight hundred pupils and staff were an honor to the city. Shaw Memorial School and Avery Institute were ranked highly by Alvord, who argued that Avery was the best black school in the entire state.⁹⁶ On a typical day at Avery, the school's advanced scholars would transpose, analyze and parse passages from Milton's "L'Alegro." Avery students enrolled in and excelled at such courses as general

history, political economy, civil government, botany, geometry, bookkeeping and rhetoric.⁹⁷

Black Charlestonians were so successful in their educational endeavors that some of their southern white critics had to acknowledge this achievement,⁹⁸ albeit reluctantly in some cases. Many whites argued that the achievements of students at Saxton School, later known as Avery Institute, did not constitute a true representation of the educational progress of Charleston's blacks, since the mulatto elite sent their children to that school.⁹⁹ This class-based argument did not hold up under scrutiny, as "Cardozo found no difference in the intellectual capacity of freemen and freedmen." While freeborn blacks were above freedmen in their class status, this was due to their earlier educational advantages¹⁰⁰ and not superior intellect. The progress that visitors to the schools for blacks saw was that of freemen and freedmen alike.

Distinctions between freeborn and freedman pupils were sometimes made by educators themselves, and these distinctions often were expressed in terms of color, since historically lighter color correlated often with free status. Mortimer Warren, the principal of Avery Institute made the following distinction.

Something of an event transpired in Room No. 10 today! An event which so far as I am aware has not been equalled in any similar school, with any similar class of pupils, in all the South. Our first class tonight finished the last example in Davies Practical Arithmetic!

You should have seen the beaming faces while I was congratulating them upon the achievement. Some of them are very black and some very white, but the blacker are the smarter. The rest of this term they spend in a review, and next term they will probably finish algebra which most of them have already begun.¹⁰¹

One interpretation of the distinction that Principal Warren made is that the darker-skinned students may well have been freedmen, and as such, had more motivation to strive, as their families had fewer advantages than the freeborn elite and more disadvantages to make up for.

Under conditions which allowed both freeborn and freedmen to pursue education, both groups performed well. The Morris Street School provides an illustration of this. According to the principal, Arthur Sumner,

It is an interesting fact among the most distinguished scholars in these classes, that those who were formerly slaves rank equally well with those who were free and had received some instruction before and during the war. The Jewel and pride of the school is a perfectly black girl, 16 years of age.¹⁰²

While relations between freemen and freedmen at the various schools were usually cordial, this was not always the case. Given the sometimes negative pre-war relations between some free and some enslaved blacks, the relations which emerged during Reconstruction sometimes mirrored the earlier relationships.

The actions of Francis Cardozo, Charleston's leading educator, as well as those of some A.M.A. teachers illustrates this problem. Cardozo had been a relatively

privileged free black before the war. When economic conditions made it virtually impossible for many of the freedmen attending Saxton School to continue their education due to inability to pay the monthly school tax, Cardozo sent these students home. At one point, the pupils sent home for nonpayment numbered as many as four hundred. Upset over this, some A.M.A. teachers launched a protest on behalf of these students, which unfortunately was met by Cardozo releasing them from their teaching duties. The fired teachers responded by organizing a small school outside of Charleston to educate poor ex-slaves.¹⁰³

While Cardozo's actions can be explained as fiscally responsible administrative behavior which helped the school to survive, there were alternative actions that Cardozo might have taken. He could have reduced the number of teachers and employed poor students at maintenance tasks, thus reducing the school's expenses while helping poor students stay in school. Other school administrators took similar actions when beset by economic difficulties. Cardozo's actions appear to put the good of the school over the good of its students.

On another occasion, some northern benevolent societies sent clothing to the school's Mission House to be given to destitute freedmen. Cardozo lived at the Mission House, and he told one teacher to tell destitute freedmen to come for these things on Saturday. It appeared that, in the

meanwhile, Cardozo had ordered some of the other teachers to open the containers of clothing before Saturday. When one concerned teacher arrived on Saturday to find the clothing barrels nearly empty, she was alarmed. She suspected that Cardozo and other A.M.A. teachers had distributed the best of these items to freeborn students, some of whom were from former slave-owning families themselves. When the teacher complained to Cardozo, she was released from her teaching job, perhaps validating her suspicions.¹⁰⁴ Whatever the truth of the story, it appears that Cardozo did not take the best interests of freedmen into account when handling these charitable contributions.

This is not the only example of a problem between freemen and freedmen which occurred in these schools. As was previously mentioned, Avery Institute had a reputation for educating the light-skinned black elite of Charleston. At Avery, most freedmen who attended were concentrated in the lower grades, while the children of the mulatto elite occupied the advanced courses.¹⁰⁵ In April 1875, a dark-skinned woman named Mrs. Shaw arrived at the Mission House and it was announced that she would teach at Avery Institute. A large number of the lighter-skinned students protested her being hired, and insisted that they would leave Avery rather than be taught by a "black" teacher. Some of these students believed that her skin color indicated less ability and they worried that they would

receive an inferior education from Mrs. Shaw. Other students argued that black teachers should not be brought from outside the Charleston area but rather should be chosen from Avery's graduates.¹⁰⁶

Avery's principal at that time, James Ford, encountered so much difficulty over the employment of Mrs. Shaw that he expressed regret over the decision. He explained that "he had the impression that Mrs. Shaw was a light-colored woman like most of our school," and would not have hired her if he had known her actual skin color. Mr. Ford based his stance in the issue on his understanding that the "light-colored people in the City of Charleston was [sic] just as prejudiced against blacks as were [numerous] whites." Mrs. Shaw was allowed to continue her employment at Avery Institute and no student actually left the school because of her color.¹⁰⁷

Tensions between free-born and freedpeople of African descent continued throughout Reconstruction and sometimes these tensions resulted in the two social groups attending different schools. One northern visitor to Charleston was "told that the free blacks, as distinguished from the freed people, still cultivate a feeling of exclusiveness, and among other modes of displaying it, still send their children to private schools."¹⁰⁸

Despite these tensions within the black community, a more serious threat to the freedmen's schools in Charleston

was the white opposition to their existence. Countless white South Carolinians perceived the education of blacks as detrimental to southern society since it would allow blacks to believe that they could be equal with whites. Such an idea would not be easily tolerated by a society that had been built upon the myth of white superiority and black inferiority.

One phenomenon which exacerbated white opposition to the education of blacks was the Freedmen's Bureau practice of commandeering schools previously used by whites in order to create schools for freedmen.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting the sentiments of others, one white Charlestonian remarked sarcastically that blacks would keep these schoolhouses "until the little nigger race shall be prepared to enter college, whilst our poorer white children are growing up in Ignorance [sic] and vice."¹¹⁰ White Charlestonians also tended to blame northern white teachers for spreading education to southern blacks. Being aware of this hostility, some of these A.M.A. teachers, Phebe Alcott among others, worried that white Charlestonians might some night set fire to the Rhett House, where they lived.¹¹¹

Despite these fears, open confrontations with whites over the freedmen's schools were rare. Whites who were annoyed by the existence of these schools tended to avoid them. Francis Cardozo wrote that, of all the white visitors to his school, none of them had been Rebels. Speaking of

white opponents, he said "they pass by on the opposite side, and mutter curses as they hear the children sing..."¹¹² A few white southerners were curious about the freedmen's schools and even stopped to inquire about the school's activities. Cardozo wrote of one

woman, very finely dressed, and apparently quite lady like, stopped at the door the other day while the children were singing, and said, "oh, I wish, I could put a torch to that building. The Niggers!"¹¹³

On another occasion when the school children were practicing a patriotic song to be sung in General Saxton's honor, a prominent white male South Carolinian briskly approached the school door. When Cardozo stepped up to him and politely asked what he wanted, the gentleman remarked that "the school was a damned nuisance." The man went on to ask, "Why are you making all this noise disturbing the neighbors, didn't you know there is a lady sick next door?" Cardozo caught him off guard by assuring him that the singing was part of the school's exercises, but that if anyone was sick, the students would certainly stop singing for that person's sake. This man was so unnerved by having been politely acquiesced to that he walked off muttering the words, "damned nuisance."¹¹⁴

In addition to divisiveness within the black community and white opposition to the education of blacks, a serious obstacle to freedmen's education was the lack of sufficient financial support for freedmen's schools. While freedmen

struggled to provide as much financial support for their schools as was possible, as has been shown earlier in this chapter, the support they could give often fell short of what was needed. In the late 1860s and throughout the rest of the Reconstruction era, freedmen's schools fell on hard times as the Freedmen's Bureau and benevolent societies began to withdraw their financial support for these institutions.¹¹⁵

Schools organized by the freedmen themselves were the first to feel the pinch of economic hard times. The Cain Institute had been organized on a self-supporting basis, and therefore was particularly vulnerable when the poverty of freedmen worsened. The principal of the Cain Institute, W.D. Harris, wrote that many blacks had been thrown out of work because of their affiliation with the Republican Party. Harris observed that, as a result, "the school does not sustain itself and we have not the necessary facilities and means to make the school what we desire it to be - for instance we have only one Room - and four teachers beside myself."¹¹⁶ Despite the sacrifices of its teachers and students, the Cain Institute closed due to insufficient financial means.

Financial considerations impeded the students of schools that remained open. Many freedmen were compelled to seek employment rather than attend school. Observing a trend toward dropping out of Shaw School to take jobs,

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Arthur Sumner wrote, "one great trouble in these schools is, that the children are often taken away just when they are getting a good ground work laid."¹¹⁷ Echoing these sentiments, the principal of Avery Institute noted,

Our school opens fairly successfully but there is the constant tendency, year by year and term by term for our older pupils one by one to dropout. Unless we are on the watch they are gone before we know it. After all our patient work, year after year, we find we have been educating children to become barbers and shoemakers. And we have to preach to them (the parents especially) over and over again, about the superiority of an education to a trade.¹¹⁸

The poverty of their pupils forced the staff of some freedmen's schools to make their own sacrifices to maintain the schools and the pupil's access to education. At Avery Institute several methods were used to maintain the school during hard times. At one point, the principal decided to forego hiring a janitor, doing part of the work himself and delegating the sweeping to two young men at reduced wages. One Avery teacher elected to waive receiving her salary until the school was faring better at collecting tuition.¹¹⁹ Poverty ran rampant in Charleston in the latter months of 1871, and Avery's Principal Warren noted that as many as twelve thousand people or more were unemployed, with no relief in sight. He wrote: "Our taxes are going to come by hard grinding - they come in slowly, just now, at any rate."¹²⁰

Throughout the 1870s, the school taxes would continue

to come in slowly, reaching an all-time low by 1876, which marked the end of Radical Reconstruction in South Carolina. As a result, the vast majority of freedmen, who were Republicans, lost what poorly paid jobs they had held. Commenting on the gravity of the situation, Avery's then principal, Amos W. Farnham, wrote:

With regard to the small number in school, I think the prevailing poverty of the colored people in Charleston, is the prime cause, many lost their places (where at best they were illy paid) last fall from political differences, as the election is not yet officially decided, matters are no better. Some families are not properly fed. Finding themselves in this condition it is impossible for them to clothe their children, buy their books, and pay tuitions. The falling off is mostly in lower grades.¹²¹

The voluminous correspondence of Freedmen's Bureau officials, benevolent society officials and travelers to Charleston indicate that many Charleston freedmen fulfilled their objective of regularly attending school from 1866 to 1867. Attendance rates were high once the initial problem of a steadily changing student population was resolved.¹²² Data from scattered Teachers Monthly Reports in South Carolina underscore this point. In October 1867, for example, average attendance at both Franklin Street School and Zion School was eighty percent of those enrolled.¹²³ Attendance at Shaw School in November and December of 1867 ranged from 81 to 84 percent.¹²⁴

Despite increased poverty and economic instability as

the Reconstruction years wore on, available data suggest that the school attendance rates of freedmen remained steady, rather than tapering off, as might be expected. Charleston blacks were not alone in this enthusiasm for education. James Anderson has shown that blacks throughout the South maintained remarkable attendance rates during Reconstruction.¹²⁵ While data differentiating attendance rates for rural and urban freedmen enrolled in Charleston's schools were not available, it seems possible that, as economic hardships increased, a smaller percentage of the rural freedmen were able to maintain their school attendance. Many of these rural children were needed to supplement their parent's incomes by working with them on plantations.

Teachers Monthly School Reports for Shaw School, Avery Institute, Wallingford Academy and Franklin Street School for the years from 1868 through 1871 reveal the high attendance rates of freedmen. Shaw School experienced 88 percent attendance for six months in 1868¹²⁶ and 91 percent in part of the 1869 school year.¹²⁷ In January of 1870 and 1871, Shaw had 88 and 91 percent attendance averages, respectively.¹²⁸ Avery Institute also experienced high attendance rates. In part of 1869, Avery had 80 percent average attendance,¹²⁹ and in January and March 1870 the attendance climbed to 81 and 86 percent respectively.¹³⁰

Attendance at Wallingford fluctuated a great deal more

with a rate ranging from 80 percent to a dismal 50 percent in only three months of 1868.¹³¹ In 1869, Wallingford's attendance rate fluctuated from 65 to 85 percent in three months, averaging roughly 77 percent monthly.¹³² Few records survive for Wallingford Academy in 1870, but attendance in January of that year was 70 percent.¹³³

Unlike Wallingford Academy, Franklin Street School had consistently high attendance rates, averaging 87 percent for a four month period in 1869,¹³⁴ and reporting 85 and 88 percent respectively for January 1870 and 1871.¹³⁵ These attendance rates generally support the assertion that, despite poverty, black schools in Charleston found plenty of pupils at their doors. And despite their own poverty, freedmen were attempting to educate themselves.

Although confronted with white opposition and beset by hardships, Charleston's freedmen persisted in their quest for education. There was much work to be done. Qualified teachers had to be located and retained; school buildings had to be secured and maintained, and supplies had to be found.¹³⁶ To these ends, freedmen labored diligently, understanding as they did the importance of literacy. One contemporary scholar of education noted, "this belief was expressed in the intensity and frequency of their anger at slavery for keeping them illiterate."¹³⁷ The most feasible way to set this state of affairs right was for freedmen themselves to organize and maintain schools for themselves

and their children.¹³⁸

The efforts of these freedmen to obtain an education during Reconstruction is perhaps best memorialized by a northern traveler to Charleston near the end of Reconstruction. The traveler wrote:

education is doing its work slowly but surely; there are schools everywhere, where they (blacks) receive exactly the same training as the whites, and consequently the colored population of today is a great advance on the enslaved race of twenty years ago.¹³⁹

This is a fitting tribute to the countless black Charlestonians whose great sacrifices to acquire an education caused one visitor to Charleston to characterize the city as "a city of idle ragged Negroes who with no visible means of support, nevertheless send an astonishing multitude to school."¹⁴⁰ This was true only because most Charleston blacks understood that "they must get them some book lernin'."

CHAPTER IV ENDNOTES

1. W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction, p. 123 quoted in Ronald E. Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875 (Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980) p. 177.
2. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987) p. 260.
3. Ibid., p. 260. Some of the earlier works concerning the efforts of northern whites to educate freedmen are: Henry Lee Saint, The Northern Teacher in the South 1862-1870 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941); Elizabeth G. Rice, "A Yankee Teacher in the South: An Experience in the Early Days of Reconstruction," The Century Magazine LXII[1] (May 1901) pp. 151-154; Francis Simkins and Robert Woody,

South Carolina During Reconstruction, pp. 425-434.

4. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 260. For revisionist studies which, although excellent, still tend to focus much attention on the activities of Northern whites in Southern freedmen's schooling rather than on the efforts of the blacks themselves, see: Warren B. Armstrong, "Union Chaplains and the Education of the Freedmen," Journal of Negro History LII[2] (April 1967) pp. 104-115; John W. Blassingame, "The Union Army as an Educational Institution for Negroes, 1862-1865," Journal of Negro Education XXXIV[2] (Spring 1962) pp. 152-159; Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Half a Loaf: The Shift from White to Black Teachers in the Negro Schools of the Urban South, 1865-1890," Journal of Southern History XLV[3] (August 1979) pp. 381-402; Ronald E. Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, pp. 115-167; Peter C. Ripley, Slaves and Freedmen, pp. 126-135; William Preston Vaughn, Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South, 1865-1877 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974) pp. 1-49; Robert C. Morris, Reading, Riting and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) pp. 1-84.
5. Daniel Alexander Payne, Recollections of Seventy Years, p. 19; Harry V. Richardson, Dark Salvation, p. 105; Clarence E. Walker, A Rock in a Weary Land, pp. 21-22; George A. Singleton, The Romance of African Methodism, p. 35.
6. Frederika Bremer, Homes in the New World, vol. I, p. 399.
7. Ira Berlin, ed. Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 261; American Missionary Magazine (November 1870) p. 244.
8. Mamie Garvin Fields with Karen Fields, Lemon Swamp and Other Places: A Carolina Memoir (New York: The Free Press, 1983) p. 2. For more information on educational activism among blacks before the Civil War, consult: C. W. Birnie, "The Education of the Negro in Charleston Prior to the Civil War," Journal of Negro History XII[1] (January 1927) pp. 13-21; Janet Cornelius, "We Slipped and Learned to Read: Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865," Phylon XLIV[3] (1983) pp. 171-186; John T. O'Brien, "Reconstruction and Black Protest, April-June 1865," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 49[3] (July 1981) p. 264; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So

- Long, pp. 516-517; Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, pp. 261-262; Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, p. 80.
9. Ronald E. Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, p. 176.
 10. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 219; Thomas Holt, Black Over White, pp. 241-42. Black political leaders in South Carolina sincerely supported education for the black masses. As early as 1865, the delegates to the Zion Church Colored People's Convention passed a resolution solemnly urging "by the sad recollection of our forced ignorance and degradation in the past and by the bright and inspiring hopes of the future" that schools be established in every neighborhood and that children be "kept in regular attendance" at school. Peggy Lamson, The Glorious Failure, p. 56. The black elite throughout the South attached much significance to the acquisition of education by ex-slaves. Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia, p. 105; Charles Vincent, Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction, pp. 71-97; Walter J. Fraser, Jr., "Black Reconstructionists in Tennessee," pp. 362-382; Howard N. Rabinowitz, Southern Black Leaders of the Reconstruction Era; Leonard Bernstein, "The Participation of Negro Delegates in the Constitutional Convention of 1868 in North Carolina," pp. 391-409.
 11. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 269. The work of the Freedmen's Bureau on black education in South Carolina and throughout the South is chronicled in the following works: Martin Abbott, "The Freedmen's Bureau and Negro Schooling in South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine LVII[2] (April 1956) pp. 65-81; Martin Abbott, The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, pp. 82-98; Ronald E. Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, pp. 97-113; George R. Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (New York: Octagon Books, 1970) pp. 169-184.
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13. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 272; Robert C. Morris, Reading, Riting and Reconstruction, p. 102.
14. For a provocative piece of scholarship on Francis L. Cardozo, see: Joe M. Richardson, "Francis L. Cardozo: Black Educator During Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro Education XLVIII[1] (Winter 1979) pp. 73-83.
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16. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 272.
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19. F. Randolph to Bvt. Major General R. Saxton, August 3, 1865, Assist. Commissioner Letters Received, FBP, quoted in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 258.
20. Richard Cain quoted in Joe M. Richardson, Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890 (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) p. 246.
21. William Weston to Thomas Cardozo, June 24, 1865, AMAP, cited in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 258.
22. Thomas W. Cardozo to Rev. M. E. Stieby, April 29, 1865, AMAP; Jacqueline Baldwin Walker, "Blacks in North Carolina During Reconstruction," p. 96; The National Freedmen (May 1, 1865) p. 122.
23. Henry L. Swint, ed., Dear Ones at Home, p. 217.
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27. Mortimer A. Warren to Mr. Cravath, October 22, 1870.
28. E. J. Warren to Rev. E. M. Cravath, October 24, 1870.

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32. Ibid.
33. A. Alcott to Mr. Whipple, December 28, 1865, AMAP.
34. American Missionary Magazine (February 1866) pp. 30-31; P. A. Alcott to Mr. Whipple, December 28, 1865, AMAP.
35. A. T. Porter to Major Deane, September 28, 1869; A. T. Porter to Major Deane, October 4, 1869, Superintendent of Education, South Carolina, unentered Letters Received, FBP, Box 26.
36. Lottie and Kate Rollin to Major General R. F. Scott, January 14, 1868, Superintendent of Education, South Carolina, Letters Received, FBP, Box 25A.
37. Norm C. Smith to R.K. Scott, December 7, 1867, FBP, Box 25A.
38. John W. Alvord, Fourth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, July 1, 1867, p. 21. It was fairly common for freedmen to travel miles to obtain an education. House of Representatives, The Reports of the Committees of the House of Representatives, 39th Congress, 1865-1866, in 3 volumes (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1866) p. 239.
39. Many of the same sacrifices made by black Charlestonians to become educated were made by blacks throughout the South. See: Ira Berlin, ed. Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, pp. 260-97; James M. Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans During Reconstruction (New York: Kennikat Press, 1981) pp. 84-95; Joe M. Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 237-38; Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, pp. 92, 96-98; Donna J. Benson, "Before I Be A Slave," pp. 228-33; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day," pp. 343-48; Maxine D. Jones, "A Glorious Work: The American Missionary Association and Black North Carolinians, 1863-1880" (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Florida State University, 1982) pp. 64-72; James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) pp. 4-19; Roberta Sue

Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," North Carolina Historical Review LIII[2] (April 1976) pp. 123-32.

40. John W. Alvord discovered many of these schools during his tours through the South. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 210. Susie King Taylor, a former slave from Savannah, Georgia operated a "pay school" for freedmen in Savannah in 1866. Patricia W. Romero and Willie Lee Rose, eds., Suzie King Taylor, p. 124.
41. Jacqueline B. Walker, "Blacks in North Carolina During Reconstruction," p. 97.
42. John W. Alvord, Letters from the South, p. 7.
43. J. E. Hilary Skinner, After the Storm; or Jonathan and His Neighbours in 1865-1866 (London: Richard Bentley, 1866) p. 338.
44. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 241.
45. In June 1868, Cain Institute enrolled 260 freedmen, had six black teachers and a black principal, W. D. Harris. W. D. Harris, Teachers Monthly School Report, June 1868.
46. James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, p. 8; Christian Recorder, September 29, 1866; Charleston News and Courier, June 28, 1867.
47. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 241.
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50. N. Van Horne, Teachers Monthly School Report, January 1868.
51. Josephine W. Martin, "The Educational Efforts of the Major Freedman's Aid Societies and the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1862-1870," (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1971) p. 173; Luther P. Jackson, "The Educational Efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and Freedmen's Aid Societies, 1862-1875," p. 35.

52. Ira Berlin, ed., Herbert G. Gutman: Power and Culture, p. 272.
53. Arthur Sumner, Rough Draft of Annual Report of the Shaw School, Charleston, South Carolina For the Term Ending June 26, 1868, FBP, Box 25A; Reuben Tomlinson to R. K. Scott, July 1, 1868, FBP, Roll 29; Burchill Richardson Moore, "A History of the Negro Public Schools of Charleston, South Carolina, 1867-1942," (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1942) p. 11; Josephine W. Martin, "Educational Efforts in South Carolina," pp. 184-85; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 240.
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86. South Carolina Leader, November 25, 1865.
87. John H. Kennaway, On Sherman's Track; Or The South After the War (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Holliday, 1867) p. 58.
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89. The Reports of the Committees of the House of Representatives, p. 247; William P. Vaughn, Schools for All, p. 15.
90. William P. Vaughn, Schools for All, p. 15; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 236.
91. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 234-35; William P. Vaughn, Schools for All, p. 15.
92. Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. George Whipple, October 21, 1865, AMAP.

93. Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. S. Hunt, December 2, 1865, AMAP.
94. Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. S. Hunt, December 9, 1865, AMAP.
95. John W. Alvord, Fourth Semi-Annual Report On Schools For Freedmen, July 11, 1867, p. 19.
96. J. W. Alvord, Letters from the South, pp. 6-7.
97. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 261.
98. Christian Recorder, September 29, 1866; Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. S. Hunt, March 10, 1866, AMAP; Richard B. Drake, "The American Missionary Association and the Southern Negro," (Ph.D dissertation, Emory University, 1957) p. 230.
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100. John W. Alvord, Fouth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, p. 21; American Missionary Magazine (September 1867) pp. 207-208.
101. Mortimer A. Warren to Mr. Smith, May 21, 1869, AMAP.
102. John W. Alvord, Fourth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, p. 22; American Missionary Magazine, (September 1867) p. 208.
103. S. W. Starnsky to Mr. Smith, January 30, 1867, AMAP.
104. Jane Van Allen to Mr. Smith, February 16, 1867, AMAP.
105. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 261-62.
106. James Ford to Rev. E. M. Cravath, April 17, 1875, AMAP.
107. Ibid.
108. Henry M. Christman, ed., The South As It Is, p. 218.
109. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 243.

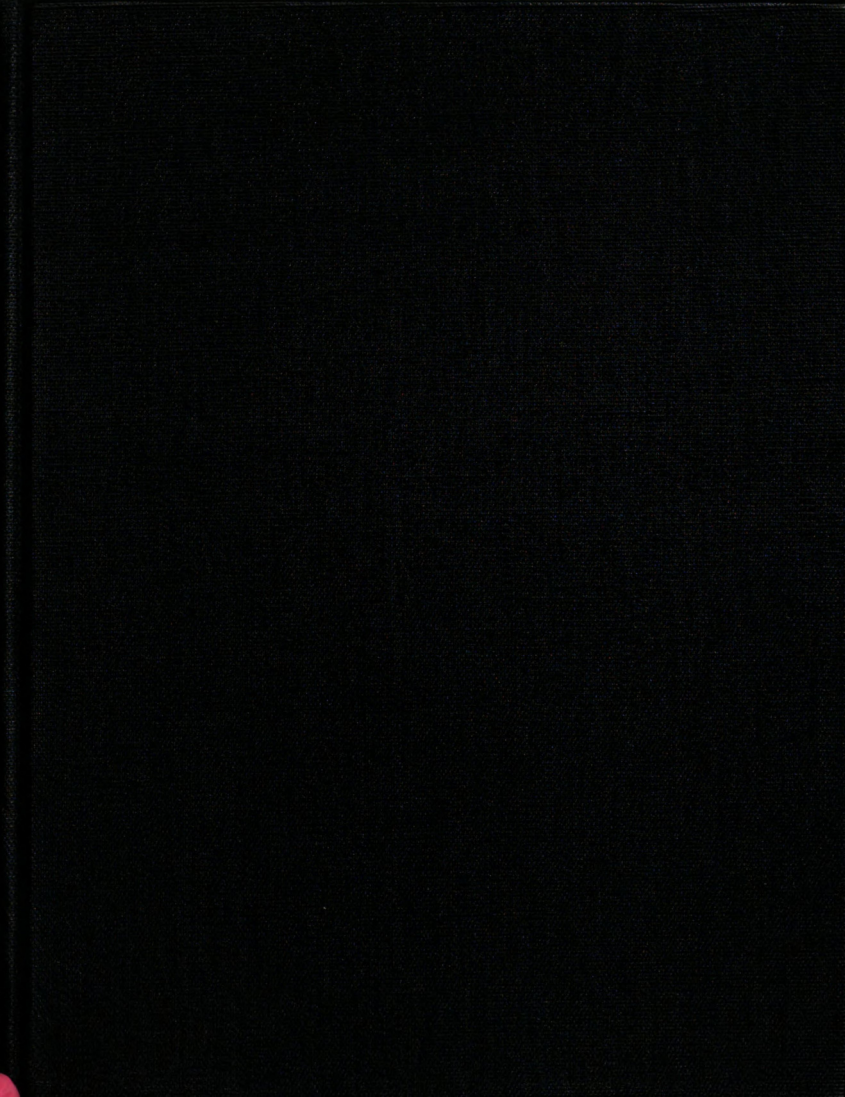
110. Jacob Shirmer Diary, June 19, 1866, South Carolina Historical Society, cited in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 243.
111. Phebe A. Alcott to Mr. Hunt, November 29, 1865, AMAP.
112. Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. S. Hunt, December 13, 1865, AMAP.
113. Francis L. Cardozo to Rev. George Whipple, January 27, 1866, AMAP.
114. Ibid.
115. Actually, the Freedmen's Bureau and benevolent associations had completed their major educational efforts by 1869, due to a shortage of funds. Officially, the Bureau ceased its educational work in April 1870. Alvord resigned as superintendent of schools the following October, and his state superintendents sold the Bureau-owned properties and lost their offices. William P. Vaughn, Schools for All, pp. 16-18.
116. W. D. Harris to Rev. George Whipple, November 7, 1868, AMAP.
117. Arthur Sumner, "Rough Draft of Annual Report of the Shaw School, Charleston, South Carolina, for the Term Ending June 26, 1868," FBP, Box 25A.
118. Mortimer A. Warren to Mr. Smith, October 18, 1869, AMAP.
119. Mortimer A. Warren to Mr. Cravath, December 8, 1871, AMAP.
120. Mortimer A. Warren to Brother Cravath, December 16, 1871, AMAP.
121. Amos W. Farnham to Rev. M. E. Stueby, January 23, 1877, AMAP.
122. The reasons for this were that, having been freed, many blacks were moving about testing their liberty, looking for lost relatives, and looking for economic opportunities. Some wished to go to the Sea Islands of South Carolina and obtain land which was offered by order of General Sherman. The National Freedman, June 1, 1865, p. 150; John Alvord, Second Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen, July 1, 1866, p. 4; Luther P. Jackson, "Educational Efforts in

South Carolina," p. 20; Josephine W. Martin,
"Educational Efforts in South Carolina," p. 130.

123. William W. Taylor, Teachers Monthly School Report, October 1867; N. Van Horne, Teachers Monthly School Report, October 1867.
124. Arthur Sumner, Teachers Monthly School Reports, November and December 1867.
125. James Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935, p. 19.
126. Arthur Sumner, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January, April, June, October, November and December, 1868.
127. Arthur Sumner, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January, February, June, October and December 1869.
128. Arthur Sumner, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January 1870 and January 1871,
129. Ellen M. Pierce, Teachers Month School Report, January 1869; Mortimer A. Warren, Monthly School Reports, February, April, June and October 1869.
130. Mortimer A. Warren, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January and March 1870.
131. J. H. Bates, Teachers Monthly School Reports, October, November and December 1868.
132. J. H. Bates, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January, February and May 1869.
133. J. H. Bates, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January 1870.
134. Kate B. Savage, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January, February, March and October 1869.
135. Kate B. Savage, Teachers Monthly School Reports, January 1870 and January 1871.
136. There were many problems to attend to. Some teachers were ill-prepared and suffered from the Southern climate. When good teachers could be found, little money could be found with which to pay them. There were often too few teachers for the many pupils and the schools buildings were often inadequate to the need as well. It was also difficult to obtain

sufficient books and supplies. Thomas W. Cardozo to Mr. W. E. Whiting, May 10, 1865; Thomas W. Cardozo to Mr. Hunt, March 27, 1866; J. B. Corey to Brother Whiting, October 27, 1868; M. A. Warren to Mr. Smith, December 28, 1869; M. A. Warren to Mr. Smith, January 30, 1870; M. A. Warren to Mr. Smith, March 14, 1870, AMAP; The National Freedman, August 15, 1865, p. 227.

137. James Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, p. 5.
138. Ibid.
139. L.D. Hardy, Down South, pp. 52-53.
140. Francis Simkins and Robert Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 316.



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**CHAOS, CONFLICT AND CONTROL:
THE RESPONSES OF THE NEWLY-FREED SLAVES
IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA
TO EMANCIPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877**

VOLUME II

By

Wilbert Lee Jenkins

A DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER V
WE ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS:
BLACK FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN CHARLESTON
DURING RECONSTRUCTION

Many words have been expended by scholars on the crippling effect of slavery on the black family, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.¹ Slave families often were broken up at the discretion of slave owners; sometimes slave were unbearably punished, and black women often were sexually molested by white males. Slave owners were also considered as the bread winners for the slave family, not the slaves themselves, lessening to some extent the influence of black males on their families. Under these circumstances, it was extremely difficult for most black families to demonstrate much stability. In spite of the debilitating effects of slavery, numerous contemporary scholars argue that some degree of stability did exist in the slave family, and evidence of it was carried into the Reconstruction period. In fact, some slave owners actually encouraged and acknowledged slave marriages, but did so within the limits of the institution.² Many slaves viewed the twin institutions of marriage and family as sacred.³ A large number of slaves either ran away to join family members sold to other planters, while others refused to take flight from slavery in order to remain near

family members. Both urban and rural slaves often lived in family units beyond the master's eye. As a result, some sense of family could and did emerge. According to the historian John Blassingame, the slave found companionship, love, sexual gratification and sympathetic understanding of his sufferings in his or her family. The slave also learned ways to avoid punishment, to cooperate with other blacks, and to maintain his self-esteem. In other words, though the family had no legal existence in slavery, it operated as a survival mechanism through which many enslaved blacks found insulation against the hardships of bondage.⁴

By examining slave registers, and focusing on naming patterns among slaves, at least one recent historian has observed that blacks had a strong attachment to blood kin and often named children after their father, mother, or a relative.⁵ This same scholar, among others, also suggests that by analyzing the Freedmen's Bureau Censuses and federal censuses in the aftermath of the war, it can be deduced that blacks held the institution of marriage in high esteem and a two-parent household had emerged among most black families.⁶

Not only did blacks maintain a strong sense of family during slavery, but a genuine concept of community appeared as well. Whenever possible, blacks organized benevolent societies in order to help each other. Some organizations provided food and shelter for runaway slaves; both free blacks and slaves alike sometimes secretly taught their

brethren how to read and write; and some free blacks purchased the freedom of relatives and friends. Although limited in their application, familial and communal ties grew, even under bondage in Charleston, and upon emancipation, black Charlestonians sought to make these ties stronger.

Immediately after receiving their freedom, black Charlestonians sought to be reunited with loved ones who had been sold or taken away during slavery. In the opinion of most former bondsmen, the work of emancipation was incomplete until the families which had been dispersed by slavery were reunited. Many sought the aid of Freedmen's Bureau officials in their efforts to relocate family members. For example, upon learning that her mother (Jane Watson) resided in Gainstown, Alabama, Maria Robinson requested that the Freedmen's Bureau provide transportation to return her mother to Charleston. Due to a letter-writing campaign orchestrated by her daughter Maria, the Freedmen's Bureau was able to locate Jane Watson, who had been separated from her daughter 31 years ago.⁸ Similarly, Mary Gibb's mother, Martha Gibbs, was sold to a gulf port planter prior to the Civil War. Through the help of the Freedmen's Bureau, Mary's mother was found in New Orleans, Louisiana. Mary's reunion with her mother was especially sweet for Martha, who had also been searching in vain for her daughter and had nearly lost hope when Mary eventually located her.⁹

As Herbert Gutman and other scholars argue, nothing better illustrates the remarkable stability and resiliency of the black family than their efforts to reunite with family members.¹⁰

Sometimes black Charlestonians would request the Freedmen's Bureau to provide transportation for them to visit family members, again indicating a strong sense of family. In order to increase the likelihood of the Bureau funding such ventures, some would maintain that they wanted to rejoin family members who could not survive without their care. Consequently, after visiting relatives and friends, and becoming assured of their physical well-being, they would ask that the Bureau return them home. The following case underscores this point. According to a Freedmen's Bureau agent:

A woman would obtain transportation of me on the plea that she wanted to rejoin a child in Charleston whom she had not seen for ten years and who was suffering for her care; then having enjoyed a sufficient amount of family gossip in the city, she would apply to the Bureau officer there to save her from starvation by returning her to Greenville.

This Bureau agent became so accustomed to these actions that on occasion he would ask the freedmen in a friendly manner, "when do you want to come back?"¹¹

Many of those who did not solicit the aid of the Freedmen's Bureau in relocating loved ones, yearned for the day in which they could save enough money to carry out the

mission themselves. One ex-Charleston slave had been sold by his master to a man in Alabama some fifteen years before, and since then he had neither seen nor heard from his wife or child. However, he hoped to soon "haf money enough to go back and look fo my old 'oman and babies."¹²

Although regretting separation from family members, some Charleston freedmen favored this course of action if it would assure the personal safety of loved ones. The following case underscores this point. One freedman who was owned by a Mr. _____, while his wife and children belonged to someone else, assented to their being taken into the country during the bombardment of Charleston for their safety, though desiring them to remain near him.¹³ In all probability, when it was feasible to do so, this freedman reunited with family members.

Black soldiers often demonstrated a fierce attachment to family,¹⁴ sometimes even risking military punishment to seek out or assist their families. William Emory, a Sergeant in the 128th South Carolina Colored Troops Regiment left his regiment without the proper authorization in order to assist his family, when he was apprised of the difficulties his sick mother and family were experiencing. When he returned, he was charged with desertion and threatened with imprisonment. In an attempt to receive exoneration, Emory asked General R. K. Scott to intervene on his behalf. Details on the outcome of the case are not

known.¹⁵

Some freedmen went to great lengths to give family members both financial and moral support. William Bell, a Charlestonian who had become a barber in San Francisco, sold his barber shop for fourteen hundred dollars and attempted to return home to look after his dying Aunt. In route between Washington D. C. and Baltimore, he was robbed while asleep, and left penniless. By selling his overcoat, he was able to raise money enough to fund his trip to Wilmington, North Carolina, where he became distressed while trying to raise money to continue his journey to Charleston.¹⁶

Emancipation greatly affected the marital relations of freedmen, sometimes impressing on them the necessity of making calculated decisions about partners which they had been living with as man and wife for several years. Was it of paramount importance for them to undergo formal marriages? What would be the status of their children? Would they be considered as legitimate or not? A large number of ex-slaves who had been forcibly separated from their spouses had since taken other partners. Under these circumstances, who was to be regarded as whose husband or wife? Finally, who should have custody of the children?¹⁷

Countless Charleston freedmen experienced legal complications in reuniting with spouses and children. For example, Robert Washington, who before the war had escaped to the North, in 1870 returned to Charleston to claim his

wife Lucretia and their child. To Washington's disgust, Lucretia had already taken another husband. The magistrate, T. J. Mackey, who heard the case, ruled against Washington. In Mackey's opinion, Washington should have had enough interest in Lucretia to have returned to Charleston sooner than he had.¹⁸ Sometimes violent fights broke out between men claiming to have marital rights to the same woman. Such was the case of two Charleston freedmen who sought to physically harm each other over a woman whom both claimed to be their legal wife. Trial Justice Artson agreed to hear the case,¹⁹ but there appears to be no record of its outcome.

Some Charleston freedmen chose to return to their original spouses, indicating that many of their initial marriages were based on genuine affection or strong respect for family obligations.²⁰ Jane Ferguson of Charleston left no doubt where her loyalty lay. Initially, she married Martin Barnwell with whom she had a child. Shortly thereafter, Martin was sold away from her and the infant. Being alone now, and not expecting the sickly Martin to ever return, she married a man named Ferguson. Jane made it clear to Ferguson that if Martin came back, Martin would be welcomed as her husband, to which Ferguson assented. After Charleston fell to the Union Army on February, 1865, news reached Jane that Martin was still alive and wanted to reunite with her. As she expected, Ferguson was not quite

so ready to give her up. He wrote,

Martin has not seen you for a long time. He cannot think of you as I do. O Jane! Do not go to Charleston. Come to Jacksonville: I will get a house and we will live here. Never mine [sic] what the people say. Come to me Jane.

Despite the protests of Ferguson, who was now a Union soldier, Jane and her child reunited with Martin, her first husband.²¹

Many ex-slaves held the institution of marriage in high esteem as evidenced by the fact that, almost immediately after the war, a large number strove to legalize their marriages. When the U.S. Congress legalized slave marriages in March of 1865 and the South Carolina legislature followed suit in the same year, countless freedmen flocked to Provost Courts, Army Camps, churches, and Freedmen's Bureau Offices to get married.²² A contemporary noted, "among the newly freed Blacks each party to a marital union was usually satisfied with one partner, and seldom was it heard that the one or the other had a lover on the side."²³

In spite of the fact that the slave family was not protected by law, a large number of slave couples in Charleston lived together in long lasting unions. This fact can be gleaned from a careful reading of the Freedmen's Savings Bank Records for the Charleston Branch for the years 1865-1874. A substantial number of the married depositors were elderly, usually with many adult children, indicating that unions were probably long lasting, regardless of the

debilitating effects of slavery on black families.

Moreover, many Charleston freedmen lived in two-parent families within just a few years of emancipation.

Approximately 85% of the 2,000 depositors of adult age at the Charleston branch of the Freedmen's Savings Bank were married during the early years of emancipation, and their spouses and children lived in the same households.²⁴ This serves as glowing testimony to the inner strength of blacks as a people, and also reflects their commitment to marriage and family.

Unfortunately, some Charleston freedmen failed to play their family roles as socially dictated. There were blatant cases of wife and child beating, sometimes resulting in murder. James Robertson became intoxicated during a Saturday night on the town, and when he came home, he nearly beat his wife to death. Only the timely arrival of a police officer prevented him from killing her.²⁵ Emma

Richardson, the wife of Joe Richardson, was not so fortunate as Robertson's wife. Her husband brutally assaulted her with an axe and stabbed her in the throat. Emma remained in critical condition for about two weeks, before she finally died.²⁶

Cruelty to children was also a problem. In one case, a girl of about eight years old was severely beaten by her father. Apparently, her family had hired her out to another black family, who required her services longer than she or

her parents anticipated. When she arrived home late, her father whipped her, causing a number of scars on her face and back. Showing the community's concern for the wellbeing of families, several black men in the neighborhood vowed to have the matter investigated by a trial justice.²⁷ Cornelia Verdier, a two year old, was found floating in the Ashley River, and upon investigation, it was determined that her stepfather, Smart Chisolm, had drowned her.²⁸

In some instances, black men were rather lax in materially providing for their families. This point is graphically indicated in the case of Ready Simons, who maintained that her husband should be arrested for failure to support his family, and she made an affidavit with that intent. Ready and her husband had been married for many years, having eight children, four of whom were still living, the youngest being a nine year old boy. In the past, her husband had rendered support to his family, but he had recently refused to contribute anything to Ready or her children. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Joseph Simons.²⁹

In spite of such individual transgressions, most black families demonstrated a remarkable degree of stability.³⁰ A number of these transgressions may have been connected with the particular problems of overcoming the legacy of slavery, as well as the common experiences of urban life and poverty during Reconstruction in the South. During slavery, the

labor of enslaved blacks provided both their own meager subsistence while also providing a surplus with which to enrich the slave-owner. With emancipation, the ravaged economy of the post-war South left freedpeople with a difficult burden of how to provide their subsistence under the new conditions. Unfortunately, some freedpeople were not emotionally prepared to undertake this task, and instead became idlers on vagabonds. Also, though it was rumored that job opportunities abounded in the urban areas, this was often not true. As indicated in a previous chapter, employment possibilities for both blacks and whites were limited in Charleston. Under such circumstances, it is noteworthy that most blacks strove diligently to provide comfortable and stable homes for their families, indicating a strong respect for family obligations.

Evidently, a few black men perceived emancipation as giving them the right to cohabit with whomever they might choose, even white women if they so desired. The prewar regime had forbidden relations between black men and white women, but now that black men were free, they exercised freedom of choice in respect to whom they would socialize with. The wife of a white grocer residing on Calhoun Street and Sergeant Major Overton, a member of the 35th Massachusetts Regiment of Colored Troops and a wheelwright by trade, eloped together. Prior to the elopement, several love letters were passed between the two, with Overton

promising the woman that she would never want for anything if she gave him her love and came to live with him. Many white Charlestonians were incensed over the affair.³¹ This scandal appeared to confirm one of their worst fears connected with emancipation: that black men would take white women as sexual mates. Their fears were unnecessary, however, since such unions were rare during the Reconstruction period.

Similar to the antebellum period, the actions of some whites continued to threaten the stability of the black family. Believing that little had changed, some white males still attempted to take liberties with black women.³² Black men, however, were no longer compelled by slavery to stand by and watch such molestations. When Hughey Kern attempted to rape a nine year old black girl and subsequently stabbed her, it was the girl's father and the police, who pursued and captured Kern.³³ Such behaviors heralded a new social order in which black people asserted rights which had previously not existed.

Not just black men asserted themselves during Reconstruction, but black women did so as well. Black women, almost immediately after the war, often proved reluctant to labor as domestic servants in white homes as they had done previously under slavery. Those who did accept domestic employment frequently refused to live in their employer's residence,³⁴ as an attempt to reduce their

risk of sexual harassment by white male household members. Most black women objected to being employed as domestic servants, since they believed that working in this capacity was not compatible with their new freedom.³⁵

Many black women hoped for an existence and a role in the family more in line with the role they had seen white women enjoy. The withdrawal of black females from wage labor was so extensive that only one half of all married women from the black community of Charleston worked outside their homes.³⁶ This was in sharp contrast to the days of slavery, in which a much larger percentage of black women worked in domestic services. This withdrawal from domestic service presaged a rewriting of not only women's roles but also black men's roles in the family. The black community of Charleston as a whole supported the withdrawal of women from wage-labor. Most black men equated freedom as giving them the right to choose whether or not their wives would work outside the household. As the head of the family under emancipation, black men hoped to be able to allow their wives to remain at home to care for the family. This was seen as important, not just so that black women could have roles similar to those white women had, but also to protect black women from the sexual exploitation that had existed under slavery. The vast majority of black Charlestonians resented the sexual exploitation which black women had experienced for countless years, and they believed that

black women laboring in white households and businesses created an environment conducive to such exploitation. It was deemed imperative that this exploitation be ended, and blacks were determined to do so.³⁷ Moreover, as one contemporary scholar suggests, "many Black women independently desired to devote more time than had been possible under slavery to caring for their children and to domestic responsibilities like cooking, sewing, and laundering."³⁸ White Charlestonians were incensed over the withdrawal of black women and children from wage labor, because it upset the daily operations of many white households, and it smacked of social equality for black families to have the same roles and expectations for their members that white families had.³⁹

These fears were unwarranted, for the shift in the locus of black female labor from paid domestic services to the unpaid maintenance of their own homes proved to be a temporary phenomenon. With the rise of renting costs, and the dire poverty of most black families as a consequence of the depression of the 1870's, it became necessary for both black men and women to contribute to the family's income.⁴⁰ A New York Tribune correspondent in Charleston in the 1870's, noted that many black women washed and sewed, and worked in the gardens near the city.⁴¹ Throughout this period a much higher percentage of black women in Charleston worked for wages outside their homes than did white women.

Therefore, though emancipation did not eliminate wage labor by black women and children, it fundamentally altered control over their labor. The family itself, headed by the black man, now made the decision of where and when black women and children would work, in place of the white owner or overseer. As a consequence, blacks were able to liberate their families to some extent from the authority of whites, an element of freedom which most blacks deemed to be indispensable.⁴²

Once the yoke of slavery had been lifted from blacks, they were confronted with the sometimes difficult task of providing for their families and themselves. Most freedpeople readily met the challenge by not only caring for their children in the present, but also providing for their future as well. As the primary bread winners of the family, black men took it upon themselves to prepare for the future wellbeing of their offspring by opening bank accounts for them at early ages. For example, Daniel Matthias opened an account for his one week old son. William Thorne's daughter, Mary, was only ten months old when he started an account for her; and John Braseman's son was only slightly older, being sixteen months old at the time his father started an account in his name. James Hardy also opened accounts for his six month old daughter and four year old son. Nathaniel Spencer opened an account for his two year old daughter, while William Fox did the same for his

fourteen month old daughter.⁴³

Fathers would even open accounts for daughters who were married and employed. For instance, Thomas Cochran started an account for his daughter Lavinia Middleton, who was married and employed as a nurse for Mrs. Smith. Once daughters reached maturity and were unmarried, fathers appeared to be particularly interested in their welfare, and they tended to open accounts for these daughters, regardless of their employment status, perhaps mirroring the view of the dependent female which was held by most white males. Although Julia Simmons was single and worked as a waiter for Mrs. Owens, her father Jack chose to provide for her future by opening a bank account for her. William Peronneau also opened an account for his adopted daughter, Lena Bullwinkle, in spite of the fact that she was self-employed as a mantaumaker. These two even had a joint account on which either could draw, and "in case of death, to one of us we desire the living one to draw all the money." These examples of careful planning and thrift to provide for their families indicate that slavery had not extinguished a strong sense of family obligation in black men. Even under slavery, they had developed a strong sense of family obligations and they carried it with them to the Reconstruction period.⁴⁴

Not to be outdone, freedwomen in Charleston, married and single alike, also demonstrated the strong determination

to materially support their offspring. Given the fact that employment opportunities for black women were fewer than those available for black men, and these jobs usually paid less than jobs for black men, the record of black women in this endeavor is more impressive than that of black men. Black women exhibited much independence in opening accounts for their children at tender ages. Anna Oakes, a self-employed mantaumaker who was married, started accounts for her daughters: nine month old Lilla, three year old Catherine, six year old Josephine, eleven year old Harriet, and thirteen year old Mary, as well as one for her nine year old son Erasmus. Similarly, Sarah Wigg, a married freedwoman, opened an account for her five month old daughter, Lulie. Rina Weston, who was married and employed as both a nurse and seamstress, started an account for her one year old daughter, May Weston. Being farsighted, Rina even had an exclusive benefit in the account which read that her Aunt Lavinia Palmer "has control of the child's money in the event of death." Apparently, Rina was very concerned with the future welfare of her daughter, relying on her sister to take on this mission if necessary. It is noteworthy that Rina had this clause inserted, though her husband Isaac was still alive and residing with the family. Margaret Levy, a nurse, had a son named James out of wedlock, and she did the best she could to provide a comfortable living for the two of them, even managing to

open an account for him when he was only four months old. Margaret's success was matched by that of Celia Sampson, whose husband Stephen died and left her to care for a five year old daughter. Celia appears to have handled the task well, somehow saving enough money to open an account for her daughter Harriet.⁴⁵

The institution of slavery had required all blacks regardless age, to labor in some capacity and contribute materially to the survival of the family. When emancipation occurred, most black children were more than willing to work and contribute toward the family income, having not yet experienced the luxury of having a childhood in the same sense that white children experienced it. Black children were encouraged by their parents or guardians both to earn money and to save it, though it seems that the task of managing household money fell most often on the shoulders of women. Therefore, in most instances, when children worked and saved money to open bank accounts, black women usually assisted them in their dealings with the bank. For example, when thirteen year old Joseph Deas was ready to deposit his hard earned money, his mother came with him to the bank and both signed the deposit receipt. Similarly, Sarah Harston, a fifteen year old nurse, was accompanied by her mother to the bank to open an account, and her mother also signed the deposit receipt. In spite of the fact that thirteen year old John Roan lived with his father, it was his mother who

assisted him to the bank to oversee the opening of a savings account for his wages as a waiter.

Even when their children had reached maturity, black women sometimes played leading roles in helping them to manage their money. This point is graphically illustrated in the two following cases. Eliza Wilson, a twenty two year old mantaumaker was accompanied to the bank by her mother, who signed the deposit receipt along with Eliza. This gave her the right to check on withdrawals which Eliza might make. The mother of Samuel Berry, a twenty year old carpenter who worked at the Savannah Railroad Company, also came with him to open his account, and in addition to Samuel, she signed the deposit voucher. Evidently, in expending so much energy in efforts to insure that the material interests of their children would be safeguarded, black women were performing family roles denied them during slavery. The inclusion of parents in the managing of grown children's bank accounts suggests that their earnings may also have been considered part of the material base of the household, despite their having reached adulthood. These examples illustrate both the interdependence of the black family and the new roles that black mothers could take in their children's lives. Now black women could devote more of their talents to managing their own household affairs and overseeing the wellbeing of their children.⁴⁶

Mutual assistance and emotional relief rendered by both

black freedmen and freedwomen in Charleston to their children were often returned in kind. Some children sought to show their appreciation by either opening accounts for parents or making provisions for them to draw money from their accounts in the case of death. It should be borne in mind that in many cases, when children offered support to their aging parents, the latter were still able to care for themselves.⁴⁷ Abraham Smith opened an account for his aging father, who was self-employed as a shoemaker. Similarly, Rebecca Gibbs started an account for her mother, Rose Johnson, who worked regularly as a cook. James Chisolm opened an account for his aging unemployed mother, while Joshua Ferguson's daughter started an account for her father who was a tailor by trade. In addition, Jane Buckingham, though only sixteen years of age, gave her mother access to her savings. She informed the bank officials that, "in case of her death, she wanted her mother to have the money." Mutual support flowed back and forth between parents and children, tying them together for their entire lives.⁴⁸

In some cases, grandparents gave assistance to their grandchildren, particularly in the absence of a father figure in the household. The contributions which Mary Whaley made to her granddaughters illuminate this point. Her granddaughters, Sarah and Christiana Legare, and Eleanor Carter was born on James Island, South Carolina, and raised in Charleston. Apparently, Mary Whaley felt either a desire

or obligation to lend support to her granddaughters since the father of the oldest two did not live with them and their mother. While the youngest granddaughter's father's name was indicated on the deposit receipt, it is not clear whether or not he lived in the same household with his daughter and wife.⁴⁹ Perhaps the absence of a father induced the grandmother's concerns for these children, resulting in her contribution to their aid through this bank account.

Continuing in the tradition of family self-help maintained in slavery, brothers and sisters greatly assisted each other in freedom.⁵⁰ The Freedman's Savings Bank records are replete with examples. Cain Gibbs opened an account for his sister, Sylvia Brown, a married mother of six and a self-employed washerwoman. Michael Hayward started an account for his sister, Susan, a twenty one year old unmarried seamstress. Perhaps Hayward chose to give her aid since she was single and both parents were deceased. Similarly, Julia Drummond opened an account for her sister Henrietta, another unmarried seamstress whose father was deceased. Louisa Burke, a married mother of three employed as a cook, was fortunate enough to have her brother, Michael Ancrum, open an account in her behalf. Amelia Williams, married with five children and employed as a washer, received support from her brother, Samuel Grant, in the form of a bank account which he opened in her name. The actions

taken by brothers and sisters to extend assistance to each other are reflective of a strong sense of family obligation. Despite the ill effects of slavery, a strong attachment to family survived in Charleston's freedpeople.⁵¹

At times, uncles would also come to the aid of nieces and nephews, particularly when a family was facing an economic crisis.⁵² This was usually done by singling out one child and providing him or her with continual support. The loss of a job, a devastating injury suffered by the breadwinner, or the untimely death of one parent, could bring uncles into the picture. When Joshua Butler's father's ill-timed death placed a heavy economic strain on his family, although Joshua was eighteen years old and employed as a carpenter by Samuel Porter, his uncle, Moses Munroe, opened a bank account for him to ease the burden experienced by Joshua's mother and her four children. In a similar vein, nineteen year old Rebecca Wilson also lost her father; and with her mother was now left to care for six children, Uncle Larry Denisson attempted to alleviate some of their sufferings. He singled out Rebecca and provided support for her, opening an account on her behalf. Frank Willoughby, eighteen years old at the time his story was recorded, was an only child who had been abandoned early in life by his parents. Frank's uncle, Charles Nelson, not only took him into his household, but also started an account for Frank, even though Frank was employed at Bennett

Mill. Ties of blood and obligation stretched to the extended family, which explains why they often did not hesitate to render aid to each other during times of crisis. These powerful extended family bonds did not develop with emancipation, but were a direct outgrowth of the black experience in slavery.⁵³

When other familial relationships were absent, in-laws and cousins often relied on each other for mutual economic and emotional relief.⁵⁴ Theodore Dupree opened an account for his mother-in-law, Jane Marten, who was struggling to help her husband provide for their four children. Not satisfied with extending aid to his mother-in-law, Dupree also provided support to his young sister-in-law, Mary Marten, by opening an account in her name. Amelia Young, a nine year old freedwoman, had lost both her parents in the early years of freedom. Having no one to turn to, her cousin, Charles Bryan, took Amelia into his household, and even started a bank account for her. Although nineteen year old Louisa Brown was employed as a nurse for Mr. W. A. Courtney, her cousin, Tobias Purvis, still started an account in her behalf.⁵⁵ The diligent efforts taken by in-laws and cousins to ease financial burdens and give emotional relief to each other is suggestive of two important points. First, in order for a person to have a genuine commitment to family, blood ties did not always have to exist. For, as Herbert Gutman so persuasively argues,

during slavery:

Fictive, or quasi, kin played key roles in developing slave communities, binding unrelated adults to one another and thereby infusing enlarged slave communities with conceptions of obligation that had flowed initially from kin obligations rooted in blood and marriage. The obligations to a brother or a niece were transformed into the obligations toward a fellow slave or a fellow slave's child, and behavior first determined by familial and kin obligation enlarged social obligation.

Second, in addition to immediate blood kin, extended relations such as cousins also developed kin obligations which went beyond the immediate slave family and these ties did not disintegrate following their emancipation.⁵⁶

Of course, husbands and wives offered financial assistance to each other.⁵⁷ This could take various forms, as a careful analysis of the records of the Freedman's Savings Bank reveals. Some black women displayed a remarkable degree of independence by opening accounts for themselves. Apparently, at least in the economic realm, they refused to placidly accept the increasingly patriarchal quality of black family life. At the same time, however, they started accounts for their husbands. Black men, determined to have money of their own to fall back on, opened individual accounts. Even so, they too, also started accounts for their wives. Moreover, many husbands and wives opened joint accounts. Frederick and Matilda Elliott started such an account. It was marked on their deposit sheet, "that either the husband or wife could draw the

money." Joseph Berthune, a seventy two year old waiter, shared his bank account with his wife, Silvia. The money was to be drawn by both Joseph and Silvia, and in the case of their death, "it was to be paid to their daughter, Sophia Berthune." Titus and Hagar Hamilton, also started a joint bank account, and both signed the deposit receipt, indicating that the money could be drawn by either husband or wife.⁵⁸ As one contemporary scholar suggests, "these patterns had little obvious connection to work or wage earning roles within the family." Instead, the variations could undoubtedly be explained by the elusive elements of husband-wife relations, that is, the implicit and shifting balance of power and sharing in each relationship.⁵⁹

The strong extended family ties of Charleston's freedpeople can also be deduced by observing naming patterns among them. Even during slavery, a large number of children were named after their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.⁶⁰ The naming of children for their fathers is particularly noteworthy, since it puts to rest the false notion that slave fathers played a negligible role in the slave family. It also contradicts the theory that "patriarchal" status came only after black men acquired property or assimilated American attitudes and patterns of behavior following emancipation and the breakdown of their social isolation.⁶¹ In the case of Charleston's slaves, of seventy-one males born between 1820 and 1860, fifty-three

were named after their fathers.⁶² When women had children out of wedlock, they generally named their sons after either a brother, the child's grandfather, or his natural father.⁶³ In addition, such biblical names as Isaiah, Moses, Josiah, and Ezekiel continued to be passed on from one generation to another. After emancipation names such as Primus, Bacchus, Scipio, Orpheus, and Caesar which were associated with slavery all but vanished as a rejection of slave identity. After emancipation, there appeared a host of Anglo-Saxon sounding names such as Mary, Elizabeth, John, William, Charles, George, and the like.⁶⁴ Above all else, as one recent scholar of the American South notes, "naming patterns affirmed familial loyalties and affixed a stamp of approval on the lines of mutuality and kinship."⁶⁵

Another example of the strong emotional ties which existed among black families can be gleaned from examining the selection of surnames which were adopted at the time of emancipation. Here, Gutman's research on the black family lends valuable insight. Gutman acknowledges that slaves often adopted surnames different from their previous owners. Admittedly, data to test Gutman's hypothesis for Charleston's ex-slaves are sparse, though the data which are available seems to support his contention. Of the sixty-four ex-slaves listed in the Charleston branch of the Freedman's Savings Bank for whom were also recorded the names of their former owners, only two took the surnames of

these ex-owners for themselves.⁶⁷ According to Gutman:

A surname often symbolized the close tie between an immediate slave family and its family of origin and a social identity separate from that of an owner. Slaves often retained surnames identified with early owners, and they and their descendants carried them from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, from one owner to another and from the Upper South to the Lower South.⁶⁸

In this way, blacks could keep better track of kin to the immediate family unit, who had been moved away from it.

Having the same surnames as other family members made it an easier task to relocate loved ones separated by slavery when freedom emerged.

With the demise of slavery, some four million blacks in the South were set free. Due to the devastation of war, the entire South was thrown into economic chaos; and disease and destitution characterized the lot of Charleston's freedmen. Although the Freedmen's Bureau and northern benevolent societies worked to alleviate the suffering, their actions fell far short of the mark. Undaunted, the ex-slaves themselves undertook activities to lessen the economic and emotional strains of the transition from slavery to freedom for their brethren. Many freedpeople who did so were themselves nearly penniless, but they were still determined to accomplish their objective, and struggled tenaciously to do so. In truth, these acts grew out of the slave experience, where upholding kin obligations were considered a cardinal rule of everyday black life. Kin obligations

survived enslavement and in freedom the concept was transformed by the ex-slaves themselves into larger social community obligations.⁶⁹ This explains why Charleston's ex-slaves often went to great lengths to aid their brothers and sisters during the Reconstruction period, sometimes going without the necessities of life in order to aid others.

Black churches often took the lead in organizing charitable societies to help the destitute and sick, and formed burial societies to put to rest those who could not afford decent burials.⁷⁰ In some cases, individual Charleston freedmen also helped to establish funds to provide burials for members. Such was the case of James Wigfall, a seventy year old self-employed carpenter, who had lost his entire family. Wigfall opened an account in which the deposit voucher read, "money is deposited for the purpose of burying the dead who have no money or friends."⁷¹

Charleston's freedmen also contributed labor and money to the establishment of a orphanage for black children in that city, providing further evidence of the existence of social and communal obligations in the black community. Almost immediately after the war, Charleston's ex-slaves helped to start an orphanage which they were able to subsequently sustain. The dedication shown in this endeavor is illustrated briefly in the following account.

Charleston had only recently been evacuated by Confederate forces, when a black woman wrote to James

Redpath requesting his assistance in creating an "orphanage" where she and others could leave their children to work the land in the interior. Being persistent, she was later able to meet Redpath and discuss the matter with him personally. Redpath assisted in this venture by acquiring two deserted and filthy buildings from the Army; but they lacked furnishings, and Redpath told members of a black church that he needed twelve volunteers from their ranks to clean out the Orphan House. Twelve volunteers lent their help in the cleaning, and others contributed a few cooking utensils. A former house servant to a South Carolina governor volunteered to work at the orphanage, and a "society of colored ladies" sewed clothing for the children. The establishment of this orphanage was truly a community effort with former slaves working for the good of their community.⁷² Such community responsibility and mutual aid was crucial in the survival of former slaves throughout the South. Only one-half of one percent of the four million freedmen in the South were materially assisted by the Freedmen's Bureau during its existence.⁷³ Survival of the freedpeople therefore hinged greatly on their own efforts to maintain themselves and their community.

As has already been indicated in the preceding chapter, freedpeople used their mutual aid networks to create and maintain educational institutions in the Charleston area. Ex-slaves contributed as much as they were able to the

erection of school buildings and their maintenance. Often lacking money to pay tuition, freedpeople made in-kind payments of fowl and garden produce to teachers to pay for their education.⁷⁴ Their interest in the schools went beyond economic support, with freedpeople regularly visiting the schools to monitor the progress of the students. In January 1866, one teacher at Saxton School recorded no fewer than twenty-two separate visits of adult freedmen to her classroom, a phenomenon mirrored in the reports of other teachers at Saxton School.⁷⁵ Black churches also participated in mutual aid practices which supported the education of freedmen by providing both day and night schools, often in their own buildings and taught by their own teachers.⁷⁶

The social and communal obligations of Charleston's blacks did not escape the attention of perceptive whites. Freedmen's Bureau officials usually granted transportation requests made by freedmen to return home, particularly in the case of the elderly, destitute, infirm and the very young. The Freedmen's Bureau did so in order to remove the burden of supporting them from the government. Bureau officials, aware of the deep concern which many blacks held for each other, expected that in the absence of family members, friends at home in Charleston would provide for them. A number of Charleston's ex-slaves shared these expectations, for letters addressed to the South Carolina

Freedmen's Bureau requesting travel assistance by blacks to return home and join friends are abundant. The following letter, dated September 6, 1866 illustrates this point:

I have the honor to request that transportation be furnished for the destitute freedwoman Louisa and Rachel Holton, from this place to Charleston, S. C., their former home to prevent them from becoming dependent on the Government for support. Louisa is an old woman and very sick and Rachel is suffering from hip complaint. Both were brought here by their owners who were refugees from Charleston and who are now unable to furnish means to enable them to return to their friends. I am sure that if they reach Charleston they will not need to look at the authorities for aid which will not be the case if they remain here this winter.⁷⁷

echoing similar sentiments, another letter dated June 23, 1866, stated:

I have the honor to request that transportation be furnished this office for Louisa Ash (Freedwoman) from Hamburg, South Carolina, to Charleston, S. C. She is destitute and wishing to get to her friends thus relieving the government from the expense of supporting her.⁷⁸

These and other ex-slaves desired to return home to friends not only for mutual economic assistance, but also for emotional and moral support as well. All three were of paramount importance to freedpeople in successfully making the transition from slavery to freedom. In most cases, their kin and friends delivered on all three accounts. The existence of a deep emotional commitment to the social and communal obligations of Charleston's ex-slaves is supported by the documents of the Freedmen's Bureau.

Charleston's depressed economy, and an over abundance of labor due largely to the heavy influx of black migrants from the countryside, forced numerous freedmen to accept a quality of life much lower than that of whites.⁷⁹ While many individually saved enough money to purchase lots and build homes, others pooled their funds to accomplish this objective. The adverse economic situation, however, prevented most freedpeople from achieving such feats. Unable to obtain decent housing, countless ex-slaves were compelled to take any sort of housing which they could acquire. The vast majority of freedmen rented cheap shacks which were often unhygienic and overcrowded.⁸⁰ The living conditions of Charleston's freedmen did not escape the notice of white contemporaries. One noted that in numerous cases, "as many as five different families lived in one small building."⁸¹ In similar sentiments, another white revealed that "a crowd of colored persons living in a house in Tradd Street --- have made the location a perfect nuisance to the neighborhood."⁸² As unfortunate as these ex-slaves were, there were some whose plight was even worse. A number of freedpeople could not afford to even rent housing; and they could be observed sleeping under old buildings, and on the pavement of back alleys.⁸³ Under these circumstances, predominantly black shanty towns emerged on the outskirts of Charleston which epitomized acute poverty, and became breeding grounds for crime. In

these neighborhoods, the death rate among blacks far exceeded that of white urbanites.⁸⁴

Allowing racism instead of facts to influence them, countless white Charlestonians labeled the freedmen as thieves and scoundrels.⁸⁵ In all fairness to the charges made by whites, some freedmen did commit crimes. However, at least in the first few years of Reconstruction, crimes by blacks were largely confined to petty transgressions upon the property of others, and were not of a violent nature.⁸⁶ Some freedmen stole food to support their starving families, the necessity of such actions being created by white employers, who often defrauded freedmen of wages and crop shares.⁸⁷ Other freedpeople stole either money or valuables which they could exchange for food.⁸⁸ A few freedmen associated freedom with leisure, and alienated from social norms, they became swindlers and drifters.⁸⁹ Often theft was their sole support.

It is an almost insurmountable task to measure the extent of black crime, since the racism so deeply ingrained in the minds of white judges and juries makes the results of the trials of Charleston's former bondsmen suspect.⁹⁰ Freedmen were often on the receiving end of much discrimination and brutality at the hands of law enforcement officials. Even so, black Charlestonians did not just sit back placidly and accept these injustices. Demonstrating an abiding concern for their brethren, black officials of the

Freedmen's Bureau and black religious and civic leaders, as well as the black defendants and their families, wrote voluminous letters protesting these injustices.⁹¹ Such black community efforts to ensure fair treatment of their brothers and sisters by the judicial system were effective, as there was a noticeable improvement with the advent of Congressional Reconstruction.

Beginning in early 1868, South Carolina's entire judicial system underwent drastic change, with northern whites replacing white southerners as judges, prosecutors and police officers. Moreover, the Radicals reorganized the judicial system on the order of the model used in New York State. Having become symbols of separate justice for blacks, district courts were abolished, jurisdictions altered, and the system was streamlined to function through local trial justices, multi-county circuit courts, and a supreme court as well. All judicial offices were now opened to blacks.⁹² As a consequence of these changes, black Charlestonians began to receive more equal justice in the court system. For example, in the months of October, November, and December of 1869, slightly fewer blacks than whites were arrested for crimes committed.⁹³ At this time, Charleston's total population was nearly evenly divided between blacks and whites, and so each race was experiencing, under these judicial changes, a fairly comparable arrest rate.⁹⁴ Thus, it would not be an

overstatement to suggest that, had blacks been treated impartially by white officials in the first three years of freedom, Charleston's black community would have had proportionately no more lawbreakers than the white working poor community.

Evidently, some freedmen encountered great difficulty in dealing with the economic and social problems of emancipation in an urban context. Their problems became, at times, nearly overwhelming. Being greatly depressed and disenchanted with life, some freedpeople attempted to commit suicide. One freedwoman named Mary Williams was so frustrated and disappointed with life that she tried on two occasions to kill herself. In the first attempt, she jumped into the dock adjacent Elliott Street in an effort to drown herself; the second time, she took laudanum, a powerful anodyne. Fortunately, she was rescued in the nick of time by friends who provided her with emotional and moral support, and who made sure she obtained medical attention as well. This reflects the general concern which members of Charleston's black community often had for each other. No record of her physical or mental state after these two episodes could be deduced.⁹⁵ In another case, James Wright, a black police officer beset with domestic difficulties for some time, attempted to end his life by taking laudanum. Luckily, he received medical attention soon enough to save his life.⁹⁶

In spite of such cases of attempted suicides among ex-slaves, in truth, suicide was not a major issue within the larger black community. A host of reasons could be advanced to explain why this was the case. Under the slave regime, blacks had been subjected to various kinds of inhumane injustices. They were brutally beaten; families were separated; wives, daughters and sisters sexually exploited by white males, and black men were denied their appropriate roles in their families. Therefore, when emancipation came, they viewed it as a golden opportunity to undertake lives as free men and women. What could be worse than slavery? To be sure, there existed horrendous problems for freedmen to conquer, but they paled in comparison to those associated with the slave regime. The slave experience had both mentally and spiritually prepared freedpeople to deal with many of the difficulties of freedom. Moreover, powerful affective kin ties were strong countervailing forces to suicide. At times of acute emotional problems, often family support could successfully pull people through the difficulty. As Herbert Gutman has shown, not only did blacks develop strong kin ties and obligations during slavery, but having survived slavery, these ties were transformed by blacks into social and communal obligations. This meant ex-slaves helped each other through both financial and emotional crises. The threat of one committing suicide was considered a major crisis. All of

these factors explain in part why there were few recorded instances of black suicides in Charleston during Reconstruction.

Evidence is sparse concerning the issue of suicide within the white community of Charleston. However, from a material standpoint, most whites had more to lose than did freedmen as a consequence of the Confederate defeat. Many who had been wealthy just prior to the war, were now impoverished. Add to this the psychological difficulty of dealing with the changed relations between blacks and whites which many must have experienced, and you have a volatile situation. Therefore, in all probability, the rate of suicide among southern whites during Reconstruction exceeded that of blacks. More research is needed, however, to determine whether white suicide rates in the South were in fact greater than those for blacks. Certainly, the newspapers of the time were replete with items on white suicides.⁹⁷

Although the typical Charleston freedman had little leisure time, most of them still engaged in an active community life. Many were involved in the affairs of their schools and churches. Parents visited schools on a regular basis to oversee the educational progress of children. Sometimes public examinations of students were conducted at schools which were attended largely by parents, relatives, and friends, including distinguished northern white

visitors. These events not only gave blacks the chance to show off their educational progress, but also provided occasions for merriment for adult and child alike.⁹⁸

In and around Charleston, the church became the central social institution for blacks, around which most black social life revolved. Sabbath and prayer meetings sponsored by churches represented a few of the recreational outlets available to blacks. Even the loss of a loved one could spawn opportunities to socialize. Many freedmen who had not seen each other for months or years would attend sitting-ups and funerals, and reestablish old relationships.⁹⁹ Both sacred and secular events, including picnics and concerts, were sponsored by such religious societies as the Rising Sons and Daughters of Bethlehem Star, Mary and Martha, and the Sons and Daughters of Zion Number Two. The churches were sometimes joined in organizing social events in Charleston by a host of fraternal organizations, namely, the Knights of Damon and the Catholic Knights of America, Old Fellows, Ancient York Masons, Good Templars, and Good Samaritans. Balls, parties, and banquets were held by these lodges, and the black fire companies sponsored excursions around Charleston Harbor and to other cities. In addition, there existed in Charleston the Marble Skating Rink which became a popular place for skating contests and promenade concerts.¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly, these social events served as mechanisms by which the black community was further united.

The many sports activities conducted by Charleston's blacks also brought the black community together. Those interested in horse racing could come together with others of similar interests at the Washington Race Course to enjoy horse racing. Freedmen who had a fancy for boat racing could also be accommodated, for regatta clubs such as the Monrovia, Attacks, and Charleston Union sponsored boat races on the Ashley and Cooper Rivers.¹⁰¹ At both places, freedmen could congregate and share their daily experiences with each other, and obtain emotional release. Another sports activity which helped bind the black community together was baseball. In the social realm, it was significant, indicated by the number of baseball teams that black Charlestonians organized. Among the most important were Fulton, United, Eckford, Catchers, Pacific, Arlington, Active and Resolute teams. It is noteworthy that by the mid 1870's the black clubs had organized state- wide tournaments, and that the Fulton team of Charleston won the state championship in 1876.¹⁰² It is not difficult to imagine the special joy which this victory must have given to the entire black community, particularly in the midst of worsening economic conditions and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. At least the black community had something which they held dear which could not be taken away by whites. If frustrated and defeated in the economic and political spheres, they were successful in the athletic

arena. Athletics acted as a unifying force for blacks from different social and economic classes.

Politics, however, was the most powerful force unifying the black community of Charleston, with the black Church again playing a leading role. The church assisted in organizing special commemorations for such occasions as the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Fourth of July, as well as the anniversary of the Fifteenth Amendment. These were festive times of the year for the black community. Freedmen usually turned out en masse for these events, with crowds at times reaching well into the hundreds and thousands. Of the large numbers attending were ex-slaves from the surrounding rural areas, and thus, the festivities provided opportunities for both urban and rural freedmen to come together. These celebrations usually lasted an entire day, with parades composed of members of black organizations launching the events. Stands and booths were established to sell peaches, pancakes, ice cream, ginger cake, soda water, ground nuts, and beer at Citadel Square, usually the final destination of the festivities. Here, the freedmen picnicked, set off fireworks, and danced and sang songs complete with fiddle, banjo, and piano music. White Charlestonians generally left the celebrating of the Fourth of July entirely to blacks, and often were annoyed by the ways in which blacks commemorated it, with one labeling a Fourth of July celebration as, "an outrage which would not

have been permitted in a civilized community."¹⁰³

A significant portion of the festivities took on a particularly political nature. The freedmen were often addressed by both black and white Republican politicians, with their speeches usually consisting of praise for Abraham Lincoln and the Union, praise for the freedmen for their progress in economic, social and political life; advice for its continuation, and reminders of the necessity of keeping the Radical Republicans in office.¹⁰⁴ For freedmen to be addressed on these occasions by black men of distinction like Martin Delaney and Francis Cardozo must have incited a powerful sense of black racial pride. In being addressed by whites of similar fame, many freedmen probably experienced a feeling of increased status which was healthy for their egos. White men coming to speak to blacks was something that had seldom happened during the antebellum period. Freedmen might have to go home at the end of the day and face a life of poverty, but at least for the time of these celebrations, they could stand among men of higher social fame and be recognized and heard. Although hundreds and thousands of freedmen attended the celebrations, there were no recorded instances of fist fights or other crowd violence.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps this is another indication that the black community of Charleston may not have been as disunited as many white contemporaries thought.

Unfortunately, however, such discipline and self-

restraint was not characteristic of some black Charlestonians who frequented several of the lottery establishments, saloons, and disorderly houses in pursuit of activities of an illicit nature. Especially known for such activities were Elliott Street and the surrounding alleys that were described as "the filthiest and certainly the wickedest region of the city." Here, some freedmen, frustrated with life at the bottom of society, vented their anguish, often violently. These districts experienced skirmishes, robberies, and sometimes murder as well.¹⁰⁶ Such activities involved only a minority of Charleston's freedmen, fortunately.

While the black community of Charleston was racially, culturally, socially and politically welded together, there were, nevertheless, divisive forces within it. Mulattos from the antebellum free black elite were sometimes scornful of the recently freed blacks. At the same time, some ex-slaves were distrustful of the free blacks. House servants thought themselves better than field hands, and blacks who were not very prosperous envied the well-to-do. There were also tensions between the urbanites and rural migrants.¹⁰⁸

When the special status which free persons of color had enjoyed before the war was shattered by emancipation, some of the elite blacks, quickly moved to distinguish themselves from the masses of freedmen, labeling themselves the "bona

fide free" and freedmen as those "set free." As late as 1880, Joseph Hayne Rainey reflected this attitude when he referred to himself as the "first colored bonafide member of Congress."¹⁰⁹ Jane Van Allen, a teacher employed by the American Missionary Association in Charleston, noted that,

many of the brown people here, think they are a great deal better than those who were slaves; and wherever you meet them, they are sure to tell you that they were free; but they think the Northern people must think the colored people are just as good as they are.¹¹⁰

Upon the visit of one contemporary to Charleston, he was told that there were still some French mulattos in that city who formed an exclusive class by themselves, and altogether, the "genteel" colored people keep very much to themselves.¹¹¹

In addition to the divisions within the black community produced by the dichotomy between free persons of color and freedmen, complexion differences fostered even more divisions. As had been the case before the war, mulattos often valued their light complexion very highly, since it revealed their white ancestry, which accounted for some of their advantages. This high regard for fair complexions caused some to view their brothers and sisters of a darker hue rather disdainfully.¹¹² The ensuing case underscores this point. When two well-dressed young mulatto ladies and their black servant all entered a railway car together, one of the young ladies ordered the servant to stay on the car's

outer platform. Shortly thereafter, the conductor told the servant to take a seat, to which she replied, "Oh Lor' bless you massa, no - missus wouldn't 'low it." However, when the conductor made it perfectly clear that riding on the outside of the car was a violation of the law, she reluctantly took a seat by her mistress, who seemed greatly disturbed that "Blacks were allowed to ride alongside ladies."¹¹³ In another case, a visitor to Charleston noted that,

a couple of ebony damsels and a mulatto boy are belaboring one another in terms more vigorous than select as to each others claims to respectability on the ground of color on the walk outside my window.¹¹⁴

At the same time that mulattos attached significance to their admixture of white blood, their darker brothers and sisters sometimes glorified their African heritage.¹¹⁵ To them, being black was a thing of pure beauty. Immediately after gaining freedom, one ex-slave declared, "I got mannish. Wid not a drop of blood in me but de pure African, I sets out to find a mate of the pure breed."¹¹⁶ Mirroring the attitudes which darker blacks would later have toward their lighter brothers and sisters during the Black Power movement of the 1960's and 70's, many darker blacks were scornful of the mulattos whom they viewed as anomalies,¹¹⁷ a people without a racial heritage. On one occasion, two young mulatto men engaged in a discussion centered around the question of which had the lighter complexion of the two.

They were soon overheard by a

jet Black youth who rather contemptuously asserted "you ain't white people an' you never kin be niggers. You'se just nuffin at all. As foh me, I'se pure blooded Black nigger ... lemme tell you. It makes me tired to hear two mulatto niggers talking like dat."¹¹⁸

In the opinion of a New York Times correspondent, it was a common occurrence to hear an ebony rice-field hand say of some cream-colored city dandy: "Dat white washed nigger am just like a mule. He ain't got no country and no ancestor."¹¹⁹

As the historical record shows, color distinctions existed within the black community of Charleston, and they often had a direct effect on social class and status. Color conflicts led some members of Charleston's black community to view others contemptuously and suspiciously. The result was that mulattos sometimes remained aloof from the black masses, and embraced the formation of exclusive organizations and networks based on their light skin color. Although color distinctions were very visible in the post-bellum period, white contemporaries probably overstated their extent, and attached too much importance to them as well. Highly conscious of race themselves, it was nearly inescapable for whites not to impute importance to the deference which blacks sometimes paid to their fair-skinned brothers and sisters. Hoping that they might be able to recruit mulattos into their fold and away from the

Republicans, conservative politicians continuously exaggerated the extent of color distinctions within the black community. Northern white observers seem to have been the most sensitive to the color distinctions within the black community. As a consequence, they were the ones who did the most to publicize its existence.¹²⁰

Fortunately for the larger black community of Charleston, it appears that only a tiny minority of free blacks shared elitist and pretentious notions. On the eve of the Civil War, only 500 of the city's 3,237 free blacks, the majority being mulattos, belonged to an aristocracy of status, color and wealth, amounting to only three percent of Charleston's total black population.¹²¹ Given the fact that many lost property as a result of the Confederacy's defeat in the war, it seems plausible that at the time of emancipation this group's number would have further diminished.¹²² Because of their white ancestry and economic status, many of this group continued after freedom to identify with the southern white aristocracy. Since the war had brought freedom to all blacks, their once privileged position had been eroded. It was now more necessary than before to distinguish themselves from former slaves and the free black mass. To this end, they formed separate churches, and either continued exclusive organizations from the antebellum period like the Brown Society, or established additional ones. Not identifying with most blacks, they

rarely joined the movement of racial self-help, though they were subject to much of the same racial oppression that entrapped poorer blacks. Seldom did they take up the political banner of their less fortunate brothers and sisters.¹²³ Members of the mulatto elite continued to place great value on their skin color and white heritage, for well over a half century after Reconstruction.¹²⁴

Most mulattos, however, were just as proud of their African ancestry as they were of their white connections, and not all of them had been allowed to benefit from their color through manumission. Certainly, if mulattos were to deny their black heritage, then they would be denying a large portion of themselves. Regardless of the fact that they had the option of forming a third "mulatto community" upon emancipation, the vast majority saw themselves as a part of the larger black community,¹²⁵ perceiving their interests to run hand in hand with the black mass.

Reflecting this viewpoint, a northern visitor to Charleston noted:

There seems to be a growing friendship between the better classes and the colored people. The old prejudices are dying out. All are beginning to feel that there is a mutual interest between them, and they now meet on the "level," and Work Square. The cause of this is apparent. All see the necessity of combination for mutual protection against starvation and bankruptcy. All want to live. All look at rising generations and feel that Divine Providence has called them to a higher destiny.¹²⁶

Mulattos like Francis Cardoza, Robert Smalls, Robert DeLarge and others too numerous to name here, emerged to lead blacks in their struggle for political and civil rights, and some also became major figures in the freedmen's campaign for education. Francis Cardoza became an efficient school administrator at both Saxton School, and the famous Avery Institute. At these two institutions, he was joined by other free blacks, who served as teachers of freemen and freedmen alike. Cardoza later went on to become the State Treasurer of South Carolina, as well as the Secretary of State.¹²⁷ Smalls and DeLarge both proposed bills in Congress aimed at securing rights for blacks. The support of mulattos for the plight of the black masses reached beyond the political or educational spheres, for some took active roles in organizing assistance for destitute freedmen, a few providing their services to the Black Orphan Home in Charleston.

In spite of the fact that there were divisive forces working within the black community of Charleston, on balance, the influences which united the black community were far more influential than those which worked to divide it. Blacks were tied to each other by a host of organizations which they formed to achieve economic objectives in the early years of freedom. Among them were the numerous mutual homestead, planting insurance, burial, and savings and loan associations, organizations of

tradesmen, and the joint enterprises as well. They were also bound together by religious and educational institutions, and the myriad social activities emanating from them. Additionally, social clubs, and the one organization which nearly every black belonged to, the Republican Party, welded most blacks together socially and politically.¹³⁰

Under these circumstances, the tensions between blacks and mulattos, freemen and freedmen, field hands and servants, and urbanites and rural migrants, could be more easily minimized. That most free blacks were tied to former slaves by blood and marriage, and shared the former slaves' alienation from whites as well,¹³¹ makes the likelihood of a unified black community during Reconstruction plausible. Together, former slaves and free blacks formed a formidable front. Despite reports to the contrary, upon emancipation Charleston's black community was racially, culturally, socially and politically united. In a real sense "they were all brothers and sisters."

CHAPTER V ENDNOTES

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3. Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and The Family In America From the Revolution To The Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 114; George P. Rawick, From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972) p. 90.
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5. Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family In Slavery and Freedom, pp. 93-95.
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Meier and Elliott Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, pp. 77-78.

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12. Whitelaw, Reid After The War, pp. 220-221.
13. J. E. Hilary Skinner, After The Storm, p. 336.
14. See, for example, Ira Berlin, Francine C. Cary, Stephen F. Miller and Leslie S. Rowland, "Family and Freedom: Black Families In The American Civil War," History Today (January 1987) pp. 8-15.
15. Walter Hill, "Unpublished Paper," 1988, pp. 4-5.
16. Charleston News and Courier, December 19, 1873.
17. Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, p. 59.
18. Charleston Daily Republican, February 19, 1870, cited in Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 307.
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20. Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, p.163.
21. Elizabeth H. Botume, First Days Amongst The Contrabands, pp. 153-156.
22. A good summary of "South Carolina's Law Which Regulated Marriages Among Ex-Slaves" is presented by Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman, pp. 58-59; James M. Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, pp. 113-114; John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans, p. 86.
23. Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman, p.57.
24. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank, Charleston Branch, 1865-1874.
25. Charleston News and Courier, December 1, 1874.
26. Charleston News and Courier, April 29, 1873 and May 14, 1873.
27. Charleston News and Courier, December 18, 1874.
28. Charleston News and Courier, June 2, 4, and 5, and July 22, 1867.

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30. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 309.
31. Charleston News and Courier, November 11, 1867.
32. James M. Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, p. 113.
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35. Henderson H. Donald, The Negro Freedman, p. 21.
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37. Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and The Family, From Slavery To The Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1985) pp. 58-60; Eric Foner, Reconstruction, p. 86.
38. Eric Foner, Reconstruction, p. 86.
39. Peter Kolchin, First Freedom, p. 62; Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, pp. 58-59; Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, pp. 167-168.
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44. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
45. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
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47. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in The South, pp. 18-19.
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49. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
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53. Records of the Freedmen's Savings Bank; Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, pp. 198-229.
54. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, pp. 20-22.
55. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
56. Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, pp. 201, 204, 220-229.
57. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 20.
58. Records of the Freedmen's Savings Bank.
59. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 20.
60. Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, pp 185-196; Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and The Family in America, p. 124; Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor In The South, p. 22; Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
61. Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, p. 190.
62. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
63. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 22; Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
64. Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, p. 186; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 310; Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p.22; Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
65. Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 22.
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67. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
68. Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, p. 232.
69. Ibid., pp. 220-229.

70. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church In America, p. 83; Geo. A. William to Major E. L. Deane, July 16, 1867, Assistant Commissioner Letters Received, FBP; Charleston News and Courier, April 29, September 6, 11, 1878. (All cited in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p.223)
71. Records of the Freedman's Savings Bank.
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73. Ibid., p. 226.
74. American Missionary Magazine (February, 1866); P. A. Alcott to Mr. Whipple, December 28, 1865, AMAP.
75. P. A. Thayer, Teachers Monthly School Report, January 1866, Phebe A. Alcott, Teachers Monthly School Report, January 1867, F. L. Cardozo, Teachers Monthly School Report, January 1867.
76. Christian Recorder, October 14, 1865, February 24, April 28, 1866, June 29, 1867.
77. Colonel William Stone to Brigadier General H. W. Smith, September 6, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner For the State of South Carolina, FBP, Roll 44, M863.
78. E. P. McDougall to Brigadier General H. W. Smith, June 23, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner For the State of South Carolina, FBP, Roll 44, M863.
79. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp.139-140; Eric Foner, Reconstruction, p. 82.
80. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 140; Eric Foner, Reconstruction, p. 82.
81. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p.140.
82. Ibid., p. 140.
83. Ibid., p. 140.
84. Eric Foner, Reconstruction, p. 82.
85. J. W. Alvord, Letters From the South, pp.10-11.
86. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 322, 324.
87. James M. Smallwood, Time of Hope, p. 122.

88. Charleston News and Courier, September 3, September 20, December 22, 1866; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 323.
89. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 46.
90. James M. Smallwood, Time of Hope, p. 122.
91. Capt. O. S. B. Wall (104 US.CT) to Major R. Saxton, August 9, 1865, William H. White and Others to Gen. R. K. Scott, October 31, 1866, Milton Ford to Thomas, May 6, 1867, Sarah Jenkins to Major Crawford, July 8, 1867, R. H. Cain to R. K. Scott, November 14, 1867, Records of The Department of The South, Letters Received, RG 393, National Archives, Washington D.C.
92. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 329.
93. Out of a total of 468 arrested in these three months for committing crimes, 246 were white and 222 black. J. W. Alvord, Letters from the South, p. 12. Voluminous letters from various individuals complaining of injustices done to blacks by white law officials in the first two or three years of freedom appear to suggest that a much higher percentage of blacks were arrested than whites. For example, see: Capt. O.S.B. Wall (104 U.S.C.T.) to Major R. Saxton, August 9, 1865, G. Pillsbury to Major Gen. Saxton, August 27, 1865, A. L. Crawford to H. W. Smith, April 19, 1866, William H. White and Others to Gen. R. K. Scott, October 31, 1866, Milton Ford to Thomas, May 6, 1867, Sarah Jenkins to Major Crawford, July 8, 1867, R. H. Cain to R. K. Scott, November 14, 1867, Records of the Department of the South, Letters Received, R.G. 393, National Archives, Washington D.C.
94. At this time Charleston had a population of 42,000. 1870 Census for Charleston cited in J. W. Alvord, Letters From The South, p. 12.
95. Charleston News and Courier, May 31, 1873.
96. Ibid., April 14, 1873.
97. Ibid., June 6, 1867.
98. Ibid., April 19, June 28, 1867; Charleston Daily Republican, April 8, 1870.
99. Charleston News and Courier, September 24, 1867.
100. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 143-144.

101. Ibid., p. 144.
102. Ibid.
103. Charleston News and Courier, December 31, 1867, January 2, 1868, January 3, 1871, January 2, 1872, January 2, 1875, July 6, 1866, July 4, 1867, July 6, 1867, July 6, 1868, July 5, 1871, July 5, 1872; Charleston Daily Republican, May 4, 1870; N. R. Middleton to His Daughter, July 6, 1866, N. R. Middleton Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 143.
107. Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, p. 189; Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, pp. 389-390; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 313; J. F. Marszalek, ed., The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, pp. 441-442.
108. Iza Duffus Hardy, Between Two Oceans: Or Sketches of American Travel (London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1884) pp. 305-306; Charleston News and Courier, December 8, 1874, February 8, March 2, March 3, 1875, February 19, 1876; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 313. The negative attitudes of some black urbanites in Charleston toward the rural migrants should not be viewed as atypical, for the tendency of black residents of long standing to give new arrivals a mixed reception was a 19th and 20th century phenomena in both northern and southern cities. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, pp. 343-344.
108. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, pp. 561-562; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Amongst The Contrabands, p. 59.
109. J. H. Rainey To G. M Johnson, October 5, 1880, cited in Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 171.
110. Jane Van Allen to Mr. Smith, February 16, 1867, AMAP.
111. Sir George Campbell, White and Black: The Outcome of a Visit to The United States (New York: R. Worthington, 1879) p. 325.
112. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 172.

113. Ibid., p. 172.
114. The Nation, XV[372] (August 15, 1872) p. 106.
115. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 173.
116. George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave, part 4, p. 41.
117. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 173-174.
118. Ibid., pp. 173-174.
119. New York Times, July 4, 1874.
120. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 314.
121. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, eds., No Chariot Let Down, pp. 6-7. In 1860, Charleston's entire black population, slave and free, was 20,383. Ibid., p. 6.
122. By 1880, Bernard Powers estimates the upper class of blacks in Charleston to have amounted to less than two percent of the black population. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 146.
123. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, pp. 561-562; J. F. Marszalek, ed., The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, pp. 441-442; Christian Recorder, September 8, 1866; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 218-220; Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, pp. 388-389; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure."
124. Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, p. 189; Mamie G. Fields and Karen Fields, Lemon Swamp, pp. 13, 23, 24, 47, 63, 64; Septima P. Clark, Echo in My Soul (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc. 1962) p. 18; Carter G. Woodson, Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830 (Washington: Association For the Study of Negro Life and History, 1925) p. lvii, cited in Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 317.
125. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 316.
126. Christian Recorder, July 21, 1866.
127. Eric Foner, Reconstruction, pp. 101-102; Joe M. Richardson, "Francis L. Cardozo," pp. 73-83; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 210, 211, 356, 357, 367, 383, 384.

128. William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 117.
129. Eric Foner, Reconstruction, pp. 101-102; Herbert Gutman, The Black Family, p. 228.
130. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 312-313.
131. Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, p. 391.

CHAPTER VI
WE MUST HAVE OUR OWN HOUSE OF WORSHIP:
THE EXIT OF CHARLESTON'S FREEDMEN FROM WHITE CHURCHES

Reconstruction spawned many significant changes among Southern blacks, one of which was the severing of their religious ties to white churches. The withdrawal of Charlestonian blacks from white churches, and the ultimate establishment of their own religious institutions took place in the first few years following the triumph of federal troops over the confederacy. Sometimes this movement occurred over the protests of white churchmen, but more often than not, it was sanctioned and hastened by the actions and attitudes of white church members. The exit of black church members from white churches transpired on a monumental level. When federal troops were withdrawn from South Carolina in 1877, marking the official end of political Reconstruction, there were practically no black members in the white Southern Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian churches in Charleston. For most Charleston freedmen, abandoning white churches and establishing their own was as much a part of their new freedom as leaving the old plantations and the urban homes of former owners. Since numerous freedmen were impoverished, they often encountered difficulty in

organizing their own churches. In most cases, unable and unwilling to solicit the help of southern whites, Charleston freedmen worshipped in primitive surroundings until they could pool enough resources to either secure or erect church buildings. Ex-slaves went to great lengths to maintain these religious institutions, once they were established. During the Reconstruction period, large and influential churches were created which quickly became the central institutions of the black community of Charleston, and numerous black ministers emerged as community leaders. An understanding of the crucial role played by the black church in the transition from slavery to freedom is essential if we hope to ascertain a clear picture of the Reconstruction period.

A brief examination of the religious status of slaves during the antebellum period is called for in order to fully understand the freedmen's haste in seceding from white religious bodies. The question of whether slaves should be allowed to convert to Christianity was constantly debated by whites during the early colonial period. A large number of whites believed that Christian doctrine permitted only the enslavement of heathens and that conversion to Christianity automatically conferred freedom on the slave. It was not long before white Christians, responding to their economic interests, either modified their earlier beliefs or reversed them altogether. Now, it was articulated that Christianity

conferred only spiritual, not legal freedom on the slave. Some white clergymen maintained that slavery was divinely ordained by God as revealed in the Bible.¹

Throughout the antebellum period, southern whites held ambivalent attitudes toward slave religion. On the one hand, some whites feared that Christian doctrine would convey a message of equality to slaves which would tend to encourage them to be less docile and more assertive. Thus, religious instruction of slaves, it was thought, could foster insurrectionary tendencies among the bondsmen. The 1822 insurrection in Charleston led by Denmark Vesey, a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and supported by other black church members seemed to bear out the worst nightmares of some slave owners that religious education would make slaves less accepting of servitude. On the other hand, many southerners saw religious indoctrination as a useful method of social control.² As one scholar of the Reconstruction period suggests, "the biblical injunction of obedience to one's master seemed clear and the promise of reward in the life after death could be useful in keeping an oppressed class docile."³ Despite this ambivalence, by the late antebellum period the vast majority of southern white clergymen were of the opinion that religious instruction could be used as a means of social control. As a consequence of this belief, southern Baptists and Methodists authorized missionaries to

convert blacks. At the same time, the Episcopalians and Presbyterians established churches specifically for blacks, but supervised by whites.⁴ Most slaves in Charleston, however, did not attend such churches. They were usually required to attend the churches of their masters, where they were assigned to separate sections in the rear of the church or in the gallery. Sometimes black and white members of the same church attended different services. Blacks often received special attention from white ministers who carefully quoted scriptural references supporting the contention that slaves should be obedient to their masters and content with their servitude.⁵ As one contemporary scholar on the American South notes, "Blacks had no voice in church affairs, and were essentially spectators rather than full members of the congregation."⁶

Many blacks greatly resented the subordinate roles which they played in white churches. The segregated seating arrangements served as a painful reminder to slaves that they occupied an inferior position in society. Indicative of blacks' dissatisfaction with their roles within white churches is the steady withdrawal of black Charlestonians from the Methodist Episcopal Church South to form the A.M.E. Church in that city in 1816, an all-black church.⁷

Numerous blacks were also aware of the contradictory nature of Christian doctrine which whites espoused in efforts to make them docile. Slaves were cognizant of white

clergymen's manipulation of Christian doctrine, and they frequently found the gospel to be without comfort to them. In most instances, slaves were also uninspired and unmoved by the bland nature of sermons by white preachers. Often, when the worship service of the white church ended, the slave's worship would in reality begin, for neither his heart nor soul was in the white church. The slave's true church was an invisible institution, which was usually located deep in the woods, and served as a place where blacks could release feelings that had to be suppressed in the white church. Although stiff punishment might be rendered to those caught at such religious meetings, most slaves found so much spiritual and emotional release at them, that they were willing to risk the possible repercussions of their actions.⁸

Blacks wanted more from the antebellum white churches in Charleston than southerners were willing to deliver.⁹ Most blacks' patience began to wane, as they grew less tolerant of their subordinate status within white churches. It became more and more distasteful to them to occupy the designated black pews and upper galleries of white churches during the late antebellum period.¹⁰ In addition, blacks played basically no role in church affairs.¹¹ As a result of all these factors, an entire corps of bondsmen longed to take flight from white religious institutions. Emancipation presented them with such an opportunity. At the same time,

emancipation legitimated a sense of dignity and freedom upon blacks, and they sought places of worship more compatible with their attitudes. The only place in which a black would be able to worship with dignity would be in a black church. Thus, black churches blossomed in Charleston and throughout the South during Reconstruction. The rapid exit of black Charlestonians from white churches presented a striking picture. In June 1865, an informant in Charleston wrote:

In fact the Colours are separated now as to churches. The Blacks now have Calhoun and Zion, Old Bethel, also I believe another Methodist church, Morris Street Baptist and perhaps some other old churches to themselves.¹²

Another informant noted: "Not only do the two races stand apart in all domestic relations, but they cannot even go to the house of God in company." Every now and then, the informant continued, "a Black might come to one of the white churches and creep into a corner, but gone are the old days of mixed congregations. The Blacks now occupy their own churches."¹³

Because the Baptists were primarily an unstructured sect which had traditionally maintained much greater local autonomy than the Methodists, the process of separation transpired with relative ease among this group. Baptists who wanted to secede and establish their own religious institution had only to secure letters of dismissal documenting their good standing. Afterward, the secessionists were able to enter a covenant to form a

spiritual church, select a minister, and get him ordained by other ministers.¹⁴ Charleston's blacks took flight from the white Baptist church and established their own independent Baptist organizations in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. In the months of May and June 1865, the premier black Baptist church was organized in Charleston from the black memberships of First Baptist, Wentworth Street and Citadel Square churches, who united to form the Morris Street Baptist Church. Reverend Jacob Legare was the pastor of Morris Street Church, assisted by the reverends Edward Lawrence and Charles Smalls. Initially, the church numbered only 73 members, but many more blacks, demonstrating a strong commitment to religious freedom, enrolled as members in the new church. Shortly after the Reconstruction period, its congregation numbered nearly 3,000.¹⁵

The efforts of black Baptists in Charleston to form independent religious bodies did not halt with the formation of Morris Street Church, for black Baptists deserted their former masters' houses of worship in such large numbers that the organization of additional churches were deemed necessary. When some other blacks made only cameo appearances in white Baptist churches, the capable reverend Charles Smalls was summoned and given the task of organizing them in October 1865, which resulted in the formation of Calvary Baptist Church. Calvary's growth was so phenomenal that in 1867 and 1876, some members left and established two

other major black Baptist churches in Charleston.¹⁶

The swiftness with which black Baptists in Charleston exited the white churches to form their own religious institutions, as well as the magnitude of this movement, underscores their intense determination to obtain religious freedom. The churches of former slave owners epitomized the old regime, and most blacks felt compelled to leave them, as an expression of their new freedom. Upon emancipation, blacks wanted to demonstrate that they could not only establish their own churches, but also that they could maintain them, once organized. Since blacks had been denied equal rights and privileges in the House of God during the antebellum period, they had no reason to believe that the situation would improve with emancipation. The only solution was to make a quick retreat from white religious bodies to avoid the inevitable humiliation and degradation. With the attainment of freedom, blacks resolved to exercise autonomy over their church affairs, as well as in other areas of life. This could only take place in all-black churches. To this end, the freedmen in Charleston labored diligently.

Distinct from the pattern of organization found in the black Baptist churches, which were organized on the local level first, the black Methodist churches were built from the top down.¹⁷ Because the African Methodist Episcopal Church had already sown the seeds of black Methodism in

Charleston in the early nineteenth century before being forced to abandon its work in the aftermath of the Denmark Vesey insurrection in 1822,¹⁸ the A.M.E. Church was quite successful in recruiting black Charlestonians into its fold in the early years of the Reconstruction period. Almost immediately after emancipation, the A.M.E. Church began to organize freedmen in Charleston and throughout the state of South Carolina. On May 13, 1865, Bishop Daniel Payne, accompanied by three preachers, landed in Charleston Harbor, and put into action plans to organize the South Carolina Conference. The conference officially convened on May 15, 1865. Returning to Charleston in this capacity was a personal triumph for Payne, a native black Charlestonian who, thirty years before, had been forced to leave that city for violating a law against providing education to blacks. A number of resolutions were adopted at the Conference which called for the formation of a separate black church. Indeed, most blacks in attendance felt that it was of utmost necessity to organize one.¹⁹ Although Payne had no trouble in recognizing the brotherhood of man, he clearly believed that:

the day had not come when all men could worship at the same altar because of the prejudices of the white churchmen of both the North and the South. Black men who had admitted to a distinction in the House of God," he added, "had lost half their manhood."²⁰

Many black Methodists in Charleston appeared to share

Payne's sentiments, they opened their hearts to the A.M.E. Church and flocked daily to the conference. This enthusiasm extended even to elderly blacks. Richard Cain, a prominent black A.M.E. Minister in Charleston, wrote in the pages of the Christian Recorder,

many old mothers, bending towards the ground, came to the conference every morning and listened with rapturous delight to their deliberations... when the conference was over, they would come forward and embrace us, and pour blessings upon us, and even kiss our hands.²¹

Cain recorded that several black Charlestonians attended the ordination of deacons which, according to him, "was one of the most impressive ceremonies I ever witnessed."²²

Enthusiastic support for the A.M.E. Church by black Charlestonians was also reflected in the form of two mass meetings which they held to decide on withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church South. After careful consideration of their former and present relations with the southern white Methodist Church, the black Methodists of Bethel, Trinity, and Cumberland Churches unanimously adopted a preamble and resolutions withdrawing themselves from the M.E. Church South, and reorganizing themselves as a religious body under the A.M.E. Church. Agreeing with Payne that blacks attempting to worship at the same altar as whites were subjected to degradation and humiliation, black Methodists sought to avoid this debasement through organizing their own churches. Having the freedom to make

decisions in their own best interests, they chose to take flight from white Methodist Churches. It was agreed at these two meetings that the services of the congregation would be held in Zion Church every Sunday afternoon at four o'clock and 7:30 pm, with Rev. R. H. Cain being the presiding elder.²³

The growth of the A.M.E. Church in Charleston and throughout South Carolina was phenomenal. As early as May 1865, Cain wrote in the pages of the Christian Recorder, "there are at least three thousand colored members who are Methodists in this city, and the great mass of them are with us."²⁴ Over twenty-five class leaders with their classes, he also noted, "have transferred their relationship to the A.M.E. Church from the M.E. Church South."²⁵ Throughout 1865 and 1866, black Methodists in Charleston flocked to the A.M.E. Church, coming in such great numbers that there was a strain on the existing ministry, and additional ministers had to be called to Charleston to accommodate the new members. This outstanding growth was also witnessed by John's, James', and other islands outside Charleston,²⁶ indicating that African Methodism appealed to both urban and rural freedmen. This indicates that membership in the black church could be used to unite the black community at large. Perhaps scholars have over-emphasized tensions between urban and rural freedmen. To enhance our knowledge of life during Reconstruction, comparative study of the southern rural and

urban black church is needed to determine the impact of the church on black community life in this period. Recruits to the A.M.E. Church came from other denominations as well as the white Methodist Churches. For example, in April 1866, over two hundred black Presbyterians deserted the white First Presbyterian Church of Charleston and joined the A.M.E. Church.²⁷

The remarkable success of black Methodism in Charleston and the state of South Carolina is made clear by membership figures given at the time of the church's second annual conference held in 1866 in Savannah, Georgia. There were some 22,388 members and thirteen ministers, as well as \$28,900 worth of property belonging to the A.M.E. Church in South Carolina. Later conferences of the A.M.E. Church continued to document its rapid progress.²⁸ By 1876, church property was worth \$143,875, and the number of ministers had reached an astounding one thousand, with church membership approaching 44,000.²⁹ As two scholars on Reconstruction South Carolina aptly point out, "the fact that the number of members was one thousand more than all Black Methodists in 1860 is convincing evidence of the effectiveness of African Methodism."³⁰

In spite of the outstanding success of the A.M.E. Church in recruiting blacks, not all black Methodists in Charleston were drawn to it. Some were attracted to the Methodist Episcopal Church North. Whatever organization

they joined, however, they did so because of their dissatisfaction with the subordinate status they had been accorded in white churches during the antebellum period. Shortly after confederate forces evacuated Charleston, black Methodists promptly announced that they were severing all relations with the M.E. Church South, and were becoming members of the M.E. Church North. Old Bethel Church was taken over by blacks when its white members left it, and they renamed it New Bethel Church. Although not formed as easily as New Bethel, black Methodists also established Wesley and Centenary Churches.³¹ Though these churches were affiliated with northern White Methodists, they were still essentially all-black churches. In being so, black members were able to exercise a large degree of religious autonomy within them, and thus escape the humiliation and degradation which they had experienced in white churches.

Not only did black Baptists and Methodists in Charleston take flight from white churches and establish their own religious institutions, but so too, did black Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Due to the unemotional worship style of Presbyterianism, only a small group of blacks were ever attracted to the Presbyterian Church.³² In Charleston and throughout South Carolina, only a few blacks had maintained southern White Presbyterian Church membership by the end of the Reconstruction period.³³ Most of these black Presbyterians worshipped apart from their

white Presbyterian brothers and sisters. Eventually, even this small number of black Presbyterians left this church and became members of the Northern Presbyterian Church.³⁴ Two Presbyterian Churches were formed by blacks in Charleston, one of which was the famous Zion Presbyterian Church that accommodated at least 3,000 members and was pastored by the Rev. Jonathan Gibbs.³⁵ The other was Mission Presbyterian Church with a congregation of some 400 blacks, pastored by the politically active Reverend Ennals I. Adams.³⁶ As happened with the Baptists and Methodists, black Presbyterians also deserted white churches because of the dogma of black inferiority.³⁷

Similar to the Presbyterian Church, the unemotional nature of Episcopalianism resulted in the failure of the Episcopalian Church to attract many blacks.³⁸ Only 3,000 blacks in the state of South Carolina belonged to the Episcopal Church at the end of the war, at which time most of these few blacks swiftly deserted the Episcopal Church. By 1876, there were only 262 black Episcopalians in all of South Carolina.³⁹ Just a tiny percentage of this number were Charleston blacks, for in the early years of the Reconstruction period, the vast majority of black Episcopalians in that city took flight to establish St. Mark's Episcopal Church. They held services in the Chapel of the Orphan House, and J. B. Seabrook (white) was summoned to serve as their minister.⁴⁰

The attitudes and actions of southern white churchmen toward black church members helped to speed the exit of blacks from white churches. Both southern Baptists and Methodists were generally opposed to receiving freedmen within their churches on equal terms. They saw little reason why established church relations should be changed by war or emancipation.⁴¹ At a meeting of the Baptist State Convention in 1866, delegates from Charleston inquired as to how the status of their black members might be affected by emancipation. The Charleston delegates apparently felt that no changes should be made to accommodate blacks under the changed legal conditions of the society, for they were "prepared cordially to welcome them to all the ecclesiastical privileges with us which they have heretofore been accustomed to enjoy." In addition, they recommended the appointment of a joint committee on "the colored membership of our united churches so that church care and Gospel discipline may be extended to them as formerly."⁴² The Methodists made similar recommendations.

With the advent of emancipation most freedmen in Charleston proved reluctant to accept a subordinate position in their religious practice, and their steadily growing assertiveness made white churchmen uncomfortable. It was evident even in the early years of the Reconstruction period that blacks and whites would not coexist peaceably within the same religious bodies. Rather than accommodating to the

new situation, white church leaders deemed it best for church members to separate from each other according to race. As early as 1866, white Baptists of South Carolina were hopeful that all blacks in their churches would "of their own accord seek separation and a distinct organization."⁴³ In an 1867 directive, the Charleston Baptist Association suggested that "the best course for the Church to pursue, would be to advise the colored members in a friendly way to withdraw and form a separate interest, if they cannot harmoniously cooperate with this church."⁴⁴ Similarly, the official organ of the white Methodist Church announced that

since the Black people will not remain in any church organization that does not admit them to the legislative and pastoral relation, [and] the social relations of the two races preclude the idea of such equality,

independent black organizations were necessary.⁴⁵ In an effort to aid black separation, the white Methodists of Charleston extended the use of Trinity Church to freedmen until they could erect their own church.⁴⁶

In retrospect, it appears that even if southern whites had made serious efforts to accommodate black members, although unlikely, most blacks would have still deserted white churches on a large scale. To the newly freed slave and freemen alike, the southern white church epitomized the old slave regime. Perhaps the view held by Margaret

Sasportas, a free black Charlestonian best expresses the sentiments of most blacks. Although wanting to remain in the same white church in which she had worshiped during the antebellum period, she simply could not "under a Rebel Minister."⁴⁷ The only plausible solution for most black worshippers was the establishment of all-black churches. It made no difference to most blacks how whites viewed the situation; it was inevitable that black worshippers would withdraw. The attitudes and actions of southern whites simply hastened the process of separation.

The position taken by Baptists and Methodists on the role blacks would play in the respective churches during the Reconstruction period was mirrored by the Presbyterians and Episcopalians. The Presbyterian General Assembly of 1865 adopted a resolution saying that it saw no reason to abandon its antebellum policy of racially mixed churches. At the same time the Assembly said that if the black communicants should "think it best to separate from us, and organize themselves into distinct organizations, ... this church will do all in its power to encourage, foster and assist them."⁴⁸ To this end, the Presbyterian Church worked diligently, although they need not have done so, for freedmen deserted the church on their own. The actions and attitudes of Presbyterians served to further confirm the notion held by blacks that they should leave the white church as swiftly as possible. The Episcopalians also refused to grant blacks

equality within its church doors, and as a consequence, were not able to retain their three thousand members in South Carolina.⁴⁹

As a result of the black worshipper's desire for independence and the refusal of whites to accord them equal status, the process of separation accelerated in the late 1860s, and by the end of the Reconstruction period, only a few blacks remained in the white churches. In 1860, there were in South Carolina 40,000 black members in the M.E. Church South, but by 1867 the number had dwindled to only 8,275, and by 1873 it had plummeted to a mere 653. Similarly, the white Baptist Church could claim but 1,614 black members in 1874. The losses of black members experienced by the Methodists and Baptists were paralleled by those of the Presbyterians. The number of black Episcopalians fell from 3,000 at the close of the war to only 262 in 1876.⁵⁰

The freedmen's withdrawal from white churches, and the establishment of their own churches often was accompanied by a great deal of sacrifice. Freedmen were sometimes impoverished and therefore hampered in their ability to purchase or construct church buildings. In some cases, freedmen received assistance from the white churches in erecting new buildings or were given old ones when white churches moved to new locations. In most instances, freedmen had to worship in primitive surroundings until they

could save enough money to secure adequate church facilities. That freedmen struggled tenaciously to accomplish this feat underscores their commitment to religious freedom. The African Methodists of Charleston made arrangements with the Zion Church Trustees to hold religious services in Zion Presbyterian Church until they could acquire a church of their own. This arrangement proved satisfactory until the Rev. Jonathan C. Gibbs arrived in Charleston and took charge of Zion Presbyterian church. Rev. Gibbs promptly announced that the African Methodists would no longer have access to the church building. As a consequence, the African Methodists were without a permanent place of worship. They were forced to find another place in which to hold religious services.⁵¹ They were able to secure Bonum's Hall to conduct their services; however, the hall was not large enough to hold class meetings, so the African Methodists also placed seats under the trees in a yard nearby in order to accommodate everyone. By having meetings in both places at the same time, the A.M.E. church, at least temporarily, was able to conduct their services with a measure of success.⁵²

Realizing that this would prove insufficient in the long term, the African Methodists pooled their resources to purchase land and erect their own churches. Church building fund campaigns organized by black Methodists in Charleston were highly successful in spite of the fact that many

freedmen were nearly penniless. Even school children lent their support, contributing silver to help fund the erection of the A.M.E. church's proposed new facility, Emanuel Church.⁵³ It was estimated that Emanuel Church, under the pastoral guidance of the Rev. R. H. Cain, would cost about \$10,000. As early as Fall 1865, \$1,500 of this amount had been obtained.⁵⁴ Blacks who could not contribute money to this venture, often provided their labor instead. In fact every person who worked on the building was black, with the architect being Robert Vesey, the son of Denmark Vesey.⁵⁵ Subsequently, the huge Emanuel Church, located on Calhoun Street, was completed to serve some 2,500 people.⁵⁶ With the rapidly increasing membership of the A.M.E. Church, it was believed that Emanuel would not be large enough to accommodate all their members. Once again, members pooled their meager resources to purchase another church and lot. This cost a total of \$8,000, and by the summer of 1866, they had already raised \$2,000 of the required amount.⁵⁷ Given the disastrous economic conditions which permeated Charleston and other portions of the South, this was a remarkable achievement, indicating that Charleston made whatever sacrifices were needed in order to construct and secure their own religious institutions.

To gain a full understanding of the problems which confronted freedmen trying to purchase or construct church buildings, as well as the great lengths to which they went

to accomplish these objectives, the reader should consider the story of the founding of Centenary Methodist Church by black Charlestonians shortly after emancipation. The vast majority of blacks who started Centenary were originally members of Trinity Methodist Church. Shortly after Trinity Methodist Church was demolished in the bombardment by federal guns, individuals who would later found Centenary Church held religious services wherever they could, including the building housing Baker Institute. They continued to worship there until northern missionaries helped them acquire the church building which became known as Centenary.⁵⁸

Due to the racial climate of southern society at this time, when leading white church officials of Wentworth Street Baptist Church in Charleston decided to sell their church, northern missionaries secretly arranged to buy it for black church members, although these worshippers were to contribute funds towards its purchase. Southern white churchmen would not knowingly sell their church to blacks; therefore the ex-slaves stayed in the background while the missionaries negotiated secretly on their behalf. Somehow, the news leaked out, and when it became known by white Baptists that northern missionaries were attempting to buy the church on behalf of freedmen, the Baptists raised the price so high that it was nearly impossible to close the deal. The Baptists also stipulated that the price had to be

paid in gold, and they gave a specific date and time in which the gold had to be paid. If these stipulations could not be met, then the sale would not go through. Since demanding payment in gold raised the price by thousands of dollars, it appeared to be a shrewd way to smash the deal. To assure the purchase, the freedmen had to dig even deeper into their meager resources, and the missionaries had to find more money in the North as well. Fortunately, both the missionaries and the black parishioners were successful in their money raising ventures.⁵⁹

One major problem still remained, for the gold had to come all the way from New York to Charleston. The Clyde Line Ship from New York on which the gold was to come to Charleston was delayed. To make matters worse, when the ship finally arrived in Charleston, it ran aground out in the harbor. By this time, the deadline for the sale had arrived, and the money had to be in the bank by noon. A small boat was hired to row out to the ship, unload the gold and carry it to the bank. While the men doggedly rowed back with time running out, members of the Church prayed long and hard for the money to get to the appointed place on time. Many had given up the monies they had hoarded for their funerals, without the certainty that they would, in return, obtain their own church. Happily, the boatmen made it to the wharf, and the gold was loaded in a buggy drawn by some of the fastest horses in Charleston. A drayman whipped the

horses through the streets of Charleston, reaching the bank shortly before the deadline. Centenary Church was finally acquired by the black Methodists, costing \$20,000 in gold, of which \$5,000 was contributed by the freedmen themselves. From this day onward, the black congregation was able to stop holding religious services at Baker Institute, moving their rituals to their new church.⁶⁰

In addition to donating monies to purchase churches or erect new ones, once they had achieved these objectives, Charleston's freedpeople struggled to fund their maintenance. The case of Centenary Methodist Church illustrates the labor church members sometimes needed to donate to maintain and renovate their churches. Since the Baptists practice total immersion, and therefore require enough space for a pool in front of the church, the pulpit in the Wentworth Street Baptist Church was built very high. Methodists, on the other hand, baptise by sprinkling at a fountainhead in the front of the Church. Consequently, when black Methodists purchased Centenary Church from the Baptists, they had to convert the pool into a fountainhead, with ex-slaves themselves performing this work. Mamie G. Fields, a long time resident of Charleston, recounted that, in addition, her Uncle Abram built the altar and altar rail in this same church. As late as the early 1980s they were still standing.⁶¹

Many of Charleston's freedmen also aided northern

missionaries in efforts to establish churches for blacks, and emerged as influential ministers. Rev. V. H. Bulky entered the Methodist ministry and built flourishing black congregations in Charleston and throughout South Carolina.⁶² Reverend Bulky became president elder, and was selected as one of the representatives of the church at the Ecumenical Methodist Council in London in 1881.⁶³ Another case is that of Abram Middleton, who was converted to Methodism in the great Charleston revival of 1843. He organized numerous sections of South Carolina into Methodist parishes, built 28 churches, bought one, and donated another, as well as remodeling and improving others. Middleton was ordained a deacon and appointed to a place in the Conference Cabinet. Similarly, Rev. J. B. Middleton, Abram's younger brother, was a delegate to the General Conference of 1872, and as a pastor, he rode circuit in rural South Carolina, having a number of congregations under his pastorate.⁶⁴ Both Abram and James Middleton could read and write English, Hebrew, and Greek, which were prerequisites for the ministry during the Reconstruction years. As a consequence, the Middleton brothers were selected to attend Baker's Institute, which northerners had established in Charleston to train black ministers.⁶⁵

Since the freedmen offered a fertile new field for recruitment for both the northern Protestant sects, which had been prominent in the abolitionist movement, as well as

for independent black denominations, competition between these groups to recruit freedmen was widespread and sometimes intense. Surprisingly, the Congregational Church in Charleston conducted persistent efforts to recruit ex-slaves into its fold. In Charleston before the war, there had been few black Congregationalists, due in part to the reasoned, self controlled nature of Congregationalism which had little appeal to blacks, who often preferred the more emotional character of religion practiced by the Baptists and Methodists. Further reducing the number of black Congregationalists was the fact that there were also few southern white Congregationalists. Because slaves usually attended the churches of their masters, it is only logical that there would be few blacks introduced to this denomination in the antebellum South.⁶⁶ Most black Charlestonian Congregationalists attended Circular Church during the antebellum years.⁶⁷

Despite these drawbacks, the American Missionary Association experienced much success in spreading education to Charleston's freedmen in the early years of freedom. They were therefore convinced that they could make headway in converting ex-slaves to Congregationalism. This optimism was ill founded, for, though they worked tirelessly to enlist blacks, the Congregationalists attracted only a small number of converts. In the years just preceding the war, the few black Congregationalists in Charleston who did not

join other denominations, established Plymouth Congregational Church with an American Association missionary, Rev. Merritt, as their pastor.

Despite constant support from the A.M.A., Plymouth Church never flourished during the Reconstruction period. There were several factors which contributed to its predicament. First, Plymouth was plagued by financial problems. Second, a great deal of factionalism existed among its members. Third, blacks were not attracted by the bland nature of Congregationalism.⁶⁸ Last, and perhaps the most crucial factor, was the fact that the Congregationalists were a white congregation, with mostly white ministers. The denomination did not have the racial appeal of the all-black Baptist and Methodist Churches. In these latter two churches, Charleston freedmen could experience a sense of Christian fellowship and leadership that was not possible in white churches. Race played a major role in undermining the campaigns of white churchmen to enroll freedmen. Upon emancipation, most blacks were determined to enjoy the autonomy which the establishment of their own churches would yield. As late as 1876, Plymouth Church in Charleston could only claim a membership of some 198 blacks.⁶⁹

The intense competition between different religious denominations to recruit freedmen into their ranks reached its zenith with the fierce confrontation between the A.M.E.

Church and M.E. Church North in Charleston. Initially, relations between the two were cordial, with Reverend T. W. Lewis of the M.E. Church North sending a letter welcoming Bishop Daniel Payne and others of the A.M.E. church to the city of Charleston. Further, Rev. Lewis also invited Bishop Payne to hold his ordination service in Trinity Church, one of the black Churches under Lewis's jurisdiction. However, during the course of the service, Lewis became greatly concerned about the enthusiastic reception which the African Methodists received from members of Trinity Church.⁷⁰

Fearing the impending loss of these members to the A.M.E. Church, Reverend Lewis called them all to the church basement and attempted to prejudice them against the A.M.E. Church. He told them to have nothing to do with it, and accused the A.M.E. Church of being based on the distinction of color, meaning that it was founded on the principle of all-black membership, to the exclusion of white and mulatto. Lewis also indicated to the congregation that the M.E. Church North was color blind, accepting both blacks and whites into their church on the basis of equality. Believing that the freedmen were still unconvinced, Lewis announced that "if they left him, they would lose their church property; that the property belonged to the M.E. Church North, and that he would hold it for that body."⁷¹ Later that night when A.M.E. minister James Handy's sermon at Old Bethel Methodist Church was favorably received by its

members, Lewis again became alarmed, and he forbade the members from holding any future meetings in the church without at first consulting him.⁷² Using any device to offset the A.M.E. Church's popularity among ex-slaves, agents of the M.E. Church North, according to Rev. R. H. Cain, "were offering money to freedmen as an inducement for them to leave the A.M.E. Church and join the M.E. Church, North."⁷³

Not willing to suffer these tactics and accusations without a struggle, the A.M.E. Church in Charleston under the direction of Rev. R. H. Cain fought back. Realizing that charges of being an organization based on color distinctions could discourage prospective members, Cain urged the South Carolina Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Church to deny such allegations. The Conference issued a denial which declared:

That we hail all men as our brothers, whatever be their complexions, and we have ever maintained, that ours is a church without distinctions of color, accepting gladly all men who believe in Christ, and work for the elevation of our race.⁷⁴

Echoing these sentiments, Bishop Payne told the people of Charleston that the A.M.E. Church did not exist for the purpose of separating black men from white men. According to Payne, his church was for all men.⁷⁵

In spite of the M.E. Church North's malicious attacks on the A.M.E. Church, the African Methodists were able to

organize the black Methodists of Charleston and the state. In Charleston proper and its surrounding environs, the A.M.E. Church outdid the M.E. Church North, attracting twice as many black Methodists. As early as one year after its founding, the South Carolina Annual Conference reported a membership of 22,338 members.⁷⁶ In addition to a desire to control their own religious affairs and avoid humiliation by whites, race appears to have been a central part of the decision of many blacks to join the African Methodist Church. In the words of one A.M.E. publicist, "it is natural...for...the black...people to come to us, because blood is always more potent than money." In the contest for recruits against the A.M.E. Church, the M.E.

Church North had more money but lacked the more important feature of blackness. The A.M.E. Church repeatedly hammered home the point that it had "the blood" and was consequently "the church for all the black Methodists of this country."

To be able to experience religious fellowship with their brothers and sisters, without white supervision, had a soothing quality for many Charleston ex-slaves. The sharing of experiences provided opportunities to release pent-up frustrations. Worship in all-black churches ensured freedom and dignity as well as race pride through the models of black leadership in the congregation. Finally, freedmen were drawn to the A.M.E. Church because of the missionary,

educational, and material assistance which it provided during and after the Civil War. The A.M.E. Church contributed nearly \$167,000 to assist freedmen in the years between 1862 and 1868.⁷⁷ Due largely to these factors, the African Methodists were able to enroll larger numbers of blacks in Charleston than was the M.E. Church North.⁷⁸ Upon emancipation, most ex-slaves found it desirable to join all-black churches for racial, cultural, spiritual and emotional reasons.

Despite the unifying capabilities of all-black churches, in Charleston, where a free black community had thrived before the war, church affiliation often reflected divisions of class, status, and color within the black community. A large number of elite freemen in the city of Charleston were members of St. Marks Episcopal Church, which the Christian Recorder described as being "composed of the flower of the city."⁷⁹ Among the families listed as members were the Dereefs, O'Hears, Marshalls, Washingtons, Greggs, Kinlocks, Walls, Maxwells, Elfes, Lesliees, Dacosters, Montgomerys, Inglisses, Bennetts, McKinlays, Houstons, and Bosemons.⁸⁰ Seven of the original eight vestrymen and wardens had been free before the war, and among this same group in 1880, six of the nine were included in the upper class. Indeed, St. Mark's congregation was overwhelmingly composed of mulattos, many of whom were as color conscious as they were class conscious.⁸¹ They usually chose to

socialize with either upper class whites or with other freemen of like status. Coldness and aloofness characterized their attitudes toward the black masses. Elite black freemen selected Rev. J. B. Seabrook, a southern white aristocrat, as the rector of St. Marks.⁸² Other elite free blacks were members of Mission Presbyterian Church which came under the jurisdiction of Rev. E. J. Adams. This church consisted of many prominent men of the city, such as Messrs. Howard, Thorne, Morrison, Ford, Poinsett, and Eden.⁸³ Plymouth Congregational Church also attracted some members of the elite.⁸⁴

Although the lines of social distinction within the black community of Charleston influenced denominational affiliation, they were not rigidly drawn. In general, the Baptist and Methodist Congregations were composed of ex-slaves and poor free blacks from Charleston proper, the surrounding countryside and the nearby Sea Islands. Many of them were common laborers, who had nothing to depend upon for a living, but their hard-earned daily wages. They were usually members of Emanuel A.M.E. Church under the direction of Rev. R. H. Cain, Morris Brown A.M.E. Church and Morris Street Baptist Church. Neither the stewards or trustees of these churches were prominent. As late as 1880, only two of twenty-six black Methodist or Baptist church officials could be classified as members of the upper class.⁸⁵ An exception to this rule was Centenary Methodist Church, with a large

percentage of its congregation being residents of Charleston proper who had been free before the war. Families such as the Westons, Wilsons, Johnsons, Millses, Browns, Sasportases, Hamptons, McKinlays, Ransiers, Holloways, Ryans and Wigfalls were members of Centenary Church. Nine of its twenty-one stewards and trustees were listed in 1881 as members of the upper class.⁸⁶

Cultural differences between black Charlestonians were also reflected in their religious services. Most of the black upper class, who were disproportionately freemen, not only interacted closely with their white counterparts, but mirrored white social behavior. As a consequence, worship services at the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches attended by the black elite were characteristically liturgical and formal, and the sermons were usually deliberative. Most working class black churchgoers were generally more comfortable in either Baptist or Methodist churches where the characteristic form of worship was more informal and the ministers' sermons were more emotional, inviting a high level of ecstatic lay participation.⁸⁷

The following two cases involving Thomas W. Cardozo, a black A.M.A. Superintendent in Charleston, and Ed Barber, a freedman in the same city, reveal the depth of these differences. Cardozo requested that the A.M.A. send a northern minister to Charleston to supply the spiritual

needs of himself and other A.M.A. teachers. They did not object to working in the local Sunday Schools, he asserted, but found the typical noisy, emotional church service not conducive to their worship.⁸⁸ Distinct from these reactions of Cardozo's was the experience of freedman Ed Barber, who found the worship services at St. Mark's Episcopal Church distressing and uncomfortable. According to him,

all de society folks of his color went to St. Mark's. No Black nigger welcome dere, they told me. Thinkin' as how I was bright 'nough to get in, I up and goes dere one Sunday. Oh, how they did carry on, bow and scrape and ape de white folks.... I was uncomfortable all de time though, 'cause they was too hi-falootin' in de ways, in de singin, and all sorts of carryin' ons⁸⁹

In spite of these divisive tendencies, the black Church became the central institution around which the black community of Charleston was organized. While it is true that a disproportionate number of the members at Mission Presbyterian, Plymouth Congregational and Centenary Methodist Churches were of the black upper class, a smaller but substantial number of these congregations were composed of ex-slaves. The different denominations often jointly sponsored religious functions, and lent valuable support to each other in other ways as well. For example, between twelve and fifteen hundred blacks were in attendance at the opening ceremony for Mission Presbyterian Church, alongside Rev. F. L. Cardozo and numerous other black clergymen of other denominations.⁹⁰ This event was important in that it

displayed a mass-based support for black religious autonomy. Further evidence of black support for religious freedom can be seen in the early relations between the African Methodists and black Presbyterians. Initially the A.M.E. Church in Charleston did not possess a place of worship, and they were provided Zion Presbyterian Church for this purpose by black Presbyterians until they could secure a permanent place of their own.⁹¹

The different black denominations also organized joint religious functions such as camp meetings. On one such occasion, Emanuel A.M.E. Church, Morris Street Baptist and Hayne's Chapel Baptist Church pooled their resources and organized a successful camp meeting seven miles outside the city on the Old Folks Home Farm. It was estimated that about ten thousand black people visited the camp during a ten day period.⁹² It is noteworthy that all denominations participated in this gathering. This indicates not only unified black community support for religious expression, but it also suggests that the black church was the nucleus around which the black community of Charleston could be united.

After the Civil War, the black church instituted a moral and social code for the entire black community to adhere to. Monogamous family life was encouraged by the church, and irregular social relationships condemned. Often, those who violated the prescribed sexual mores were expelled

from the church. The church also adopted a rigid stance in other matters as well. Such vices as gambling, drinking, swearing and card playing were frowned upon. Indeed, the black church played a critical role in setting the social standards of the black community.⁹³

The church also provided a social and psychological outlet for many blacks. Opportunities to socialize accompanied church services. The entire Sabbath was often spent in attending services and programs at the church. There were also church functions which took place during other evenings of the week. It was particularly common for the black church to hold evening prayer service on Wednesdays. In addition, the church building frequently served as the community's theater and concert hall, where religious and secular plays, and singing programs would be held.⁹⁴ Black churches organized picnics, barbecues, parades, baseball games and boat excursions around Charleston Harbor. At these events, blacks could relieve frustrations of everyday life, and receive the solace needed by freedpeople confronted with horrible economic conditions, and intense white racism and violence in the aftermath of the war. In providing blacks with a structured social life in which to express their deepest feelings, achieve status and find a meaningful existence, the black church functioned as a refuge in a hostile white world.⁹⁵

As indicated earlier, the church also played a major

role in the freedmen's campaign for education.⁹⁶ Black churches took up collections to support educational ventures; and although nearly destitute in many cases, when ministers called upon freedmen to contribute, they gave whatever they could. Ministers often served as teachers, and church buildings were used as the freedmen's schools. Black ministers R. H. Cain and Jonathan C. Gibbs organized schools specifically to spread education to blacks.⁹⁷

Being opposed to accepting government handouts even in a time of economic hardships, and believing that blacks had to oversee their own survival, members of churches pooled their meager resources and organized numerous benevolent and mutual aid societies to aid their community.⁹⁸ These associations further united Charleston's black community. Members of Rev. R. H. Cain's Emanuel A.M.E. Church established and maintained a home for the aged on a plantation a short distance from Charleston. During the early years of emancipation, a number of destitute blacks came to Charleston with the hope of eventually immigrating to Africa. In an attempt to alleviate some of their sufferings, the congregation of Morris Street Baptist Church organized a relief society to assist them.⁹⁹ Not restricting their relief activities to the Charleston area, local black churches came to the aid of needy blacks in other cities as well. When yellow fever epidemics broke out in Memphis and New Orleans, Charleston's black churches took

up collections for the afflicted in those cities. Since most freedmen were members of the lower classes and usually had few economic resources, the social welfare functions of the church were particularly important to their members' daily survival.¹⁰⁰ This was understood by the vast majority of ex-slaves, for, on numerous occasions even the impoverished would contribute whatever they could to help their brothers and sisters at the behest of the black churches.

The black church played a leading role in the political arena as well. The black churches of Charleston, particularly Zion Presbyterian and Emanuel A.M.E., became popular sites for organized political activity among freedmen and their northern supporters. In late March 1865, a large number of blacks gathered at Zion Presbyterian Church, which had a seating capacity of two thousand, to adopt resolutions thanking the Union Forces for their liberation.¹⁰¹ In addition, Zion Church had the privilege of hosting one of the more important historical events of the Reconstruction period, the ceremonial raising of the Union flag over Fort Sumter. During the first day of the celebration, more than 3,000 Blacks assembled at a meeting in Zion Church to listen to speeches by General Rufus Saxton, Henry Wilson, William Lloyd Garrison, James Redpath, Rev. French and a number of black ministers.¹⁰²

Throughout the early years of freedom, blacks continued

to hold mass political meetings at Zion Church and at Emanuel A.M.E. Church which could seat between fifteen hundred and two thousand people. In most cases, these meetings took place for the purpose of discussing the state and welfare of the country in general, and the condition of newly freed slaves in particular. Blacks were often organized to devise strategies to deal with the changed conditions wrought by the war.¹⁰³ For example, in the aftermath of racial tensions between the white Zouave troops stationed in Charleston and freedmen, a large number of Blacks met at Zion Church to consider what actions should be taken to cool these racial tensions. A committee was appointed to draft resolutions expressing the discontent of blacks, and to request protection from the Union commander at Charleston. Apparently, the freedmen were persuasive, for General Woodford informed them that he and the government would "afford ample protection to all citizens, without regard to color."¹⁰⁴

These political gatherings were attended by hundreds and thousands of freedpeople, regardless of religious affiliation, indicating that the black church played a unifying role within the black community. When blacks were confronted by major problems, religious affiliation mattered little. It was more important that they marshal all available forces to combat southern white racism.

In the first few months of emancipation, Zion Church

also served as a political forum on the state level. Due to the political capacity of numerous black Charlestonians, and the large seating capacity of Zion Church, this church was selected as the site for the Colored People's Convention held in Charleston in November 1865. The goal of the Convention was to protest the work of the white Constitutional Convention and legislature of South Carolina, and it marked the beginning of concerted political action by blacks in Reconstruction South Carolina.¹⁰⁵ In opening its doors to the political activities of blacks at the state level, the black church was able to bind an even larger black community together.

Since ministers exerted a great deal of influence in the black community, and had much experience in the political arena of the church, many clergymen were among the most effective and able black politicians during the Reconstruction period. Several ministers played active roles in the political events mentioned above, as well as in other affairs of political importance. After the war, ministers of Zion Presbyterian and Old Bethel Methodist Churches organized and carried out a huge emancipation parade which impressed even the most vocal white critics of the black community.¹⁰⁶ Ministers also engaged in Republican party politics in Charleston and South Carolina. At a mass meeting of Charleston's freedmen held in March 1867 to organize a Union Republican Party in South Carolina,

black ministers, Ennals J. Adams of Mission Presbyterian Church, B. F. Randolph, F. L. Cardozo and R. H. Cain of Emmanuel A.M.E. Church delivered addresses and seconded the platform's adoption.¹⁰⁷

These and other ministers went on to hold either appointed or elective offices. In 1868, Ennals J. Adams was elected to the City Council and later appointed to the position of Trial Justice. Rev. Samuel B. Garrett contributed many years of service as a Municipal Alderman in Charleston; and Reverend J. E. Hayne acted as a County School Commissioner for Charleston County. The Reverends Henry Cardozo and Bruce Williams were elected as State Senators. The Reverend Richard H. Cain (Daddy Cain) was, variously, a City Alderman, a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention of 1868, a member of the State Senate from 1868-1870, and a Congressman representing South Carolina from 1873-1879.¹⁰⁸

Of these ministers, E. J. Adams and R. H. Cain were particularly vocal in addressing the concerns of the masses of freedpeople. When whites in Hamburg, South Carolina rioted against blacks there in 1876 and murdered some freedmen, Adams and Cain organized a mass meeting of freedmen in Charleston to denounce these actions. Although not directly advocating violence, they advised freedmen to defend themselves against attacks by whites. Charleston's freedmen heeded their suggestions by going to the defense of

Hamburg blacks.¹⁰⁹

Repeatedly, Cain championed the cause of his people. Cain was at the vanguard of the movement to grant land to former slaves, formulating a practical program to accomplish this objective and presenting it to the Constitutional Convention of 1868. Failing in this endeavor, but undaunted, Cain sought ways of providing land to freedmen on his own. By 1871, he had what he thought was an excellent idea. At this time, he contracted to purchase a thousand acres of land a short distance outside of Charleston, and he subdivided this area into what later became known as Lincoln Village. While Cain encountered legal difficulties in the disposition of the land, he was not indicted at that time and, was elected to Congress in November, 1872.¹¹⁰ Being elected to Congress under a cloud of suspicion regarding the land dealings suggests that Cain's predominantly ex-slave constituency wholeheartedly supported his efforts to provide them with land as a means to economic independence. The freedmen showed their gratitude and their faith in Cain in the form of votes. Cain was one of several black politicians to whom the freedmen looked to advance their interests. Between 1868 and 1878, Cain was able to sell sixty lots, including one to the Trustees of the A.M.E. Church in Charleston. There were about 100 homes in Lincoln Village by 1885, with most of them owned by blacks.¹¹¹

Shortly after the white South Carolina State

Constitutional Convention of 1865 enacted the dreaded Black Code which sought to reduce blacks to servitude, Cain protested to General Charles Devens. He argued that its passage had caused most freedmen to seriously question their fate under southern whites once civil rule was restored.

Cain informed General Devens that

they believe that these laws were passed for the purpose of keeping them as nearly in a State of Slavery as the changed state of affairs would admit. They believed this "code" will enable the employer to enforce his demands on the plantation by whatever means he may think proper to use, and that they may seek redress by leaving they will be charged with doing so without just cause and hence lose their wages.¹¹²

The above mentioned freedmen were apparently employed in the rural surrounds of Charleston. Although it was Cain who wrote persuasively against the code, he was merely articulating the feelings and beliefs of most freedmen. Cain was an immensely popular Charleston preacher and politician concerned with the affairs of the generally illiterate freedmen, who expressed their feelings and beliefs to him both in personal letters and verbally. Many ex-slaves sincerely counted on Cain and other black leaders to make their views known to white government officials.

Not long after the arrest and incarceration of Jefferson Williams, a young freedman alleged to have assaulted a nine year old white boy by slapping and kicking him and striking him with a brick, Cain protested to Robert

K. Scott of the Freedmen's Bureau. Cain argued that Williams had been unjustly arrested and jailed without due process of law, indicating that he had not even received a trial. According to Cain, such arrests could not be permitted to continue, for they took place all too often and usually redress was not possible. Fortunately for Williams, the protests of Cain resulted in his release.¹¹³ Williams' parents had first called Cain's attention to the case, relying on Cain to speak out against this injustice. This indicates that if some freedmen did not protest directly to white officials the injustices they witnessed, they nonetheless made their views known through black leaders. Black church leaders acted as trusted intermediaries between the freedpeople and white authorities.

As a consequence of the freedmen's dissatisfaction over passage of the Black Code, many refused to contract for work with planters. It was rumored that there would be a black insurrection by New Year's Day 1866 if conditions did not improve. Once again, Cain addressed the issues of freedpeople working on the plantations surrounding Charleston, issues which also affected freedpeople residing in and working in the city. Having been in constant contact with many freedpeople in the Charleston area, Cain knew that no such plans existed. Recognizing the danger of these rumors, Cain sought to dispel them in a letter to General Charles Devens, a Freedmen's Bureau official. He maintained

that there was no cause for insurrection among freedmen, and that it would be fruitless for them to commit wrongs against a government which they "rely upon to protect them from vindictive Southern whites." In his opinion, the rumors originated with guilt-ridden whites who had oppressed blacks, and therefore expected ex-slaves might rise up and seek vengeance. In concluding his letter, Cain further ridiculed notions of an insurrection. He noted that ex-slaves were more concerned with laying firm foundations for the future wellbeing of their families by acquiring land and building homes.¹¹⁴ Due to the numerous conversations which Cain held with freedmen, he was able to correctly predict their desires, for the above-mentioned objectives truly were top priorities. Freedpeople struggled tenaciously to carve out an economic foothold, and they made their views known through black leaders. The crucial role in political affairs played by black ministers like E. J. Adams and Richard Cain serves to further underscore the positive impact which the black church had on the black community.

The black church became the central institution within the black community of Charleston. During the prewar years, slaves had been largely confined to white churches where they played subordinate roles, virtually excluded from participation in church affairs. There was much evidence that slaves greatly resented this situation; but they had no other alternative but to continue to attend the churches of

their masters. Emancipation presented them with the opportunity to make numerous choices about their lives, and among their first choices were the exit from white churches and the subsequent formation of all-black churches. In the opinion of most Charleston freedmen, "they had to have their own house of worship." Only in black churches could they enjoy the dignity and freedom which were now rightfully theirs. Almost immediately these religious institutions became the nucleus of black community life. The church not only provided sacred services to blacks, but also functioned as a social, economic and political institution within the black community. Its impact has been everlasting as the black church today still plays an integral role in black community life.

CHAPTER VI ENDNOTES

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69. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 217-218. An excellent piece of scholarship which explores the fruitless efforts of the Congregationalist church to recruit southern blacks during the Reconstruction period is: Joe M. Richardson, "The Failure of The American Missionary Association to Expand Congregationalism Among Southern Blacks," Southern Studies 18[1] (Spring 1979) pp. 51-73. As late as the mid-twentieth century, it was unusual to find more than a handful of blacks in Congregationalist Churches. Leonard L. Haynes, The Negro Community, p. 143.
70. Christian Recorder, June 3, 1865; Clarence Walker, A Rock In A Weary Land, pp. 73-74.

71. Ibid.
72. Christian Recorder, June 3, 1865.
73. Clarence Walker, A Rock In A Weary Land, pp. 92-93; Christian Recorder, May 19, 1866.
74. Clarence Walker, A Rock in a Weary Land, p. 90.
75. Ibid., p. 90; Christian Recorder, July 8, 1865. Ironically it was actually the M.E. Church North that discriminated on the basis of race. In Charleston, Rev. T. W. Lewis reserved New Bethel Church for whites, and if blacks went there they had to sit in the galleries as they had done during the antebellum years. Lewis designated Old Bethel Church for blacks. Clarence Walker, A Rock in a Weary Land, p. 74; Christian Recorder, June 3, 1865.
76. Clarence Walker, A Rock in a Weary Land, p. 74; Christian Recorder, June 3, 1865.
77. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 174.
78. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, pp. 510-511; C. Eric Lincoln, Race, Religion, and The Continuing American Dilemma, pp. 76-77; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church In America, pp. 36-37; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 218.
79. Christian Recorder, September 8, 1866.
80. Ibid., September 8, 1866; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 219-220.
81. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 219-220.
82. Christian Recorder, September 8, 1866. At the same time, it should come as no surprise that members of St. Marks Church would apply for admission to the Diocesan Convention in 1875. However, due largely to racial reasons, they were refused entrance. H. Shelton Smith, In His Image, But..., pp. 246-247; Report Upon The Application of St. Mark's Church (Coloured) To Be Admitted Into Union With This Convention, pp. 1-11; Diocese of South Carolina In Convention, 1876 Report On Admission of St. Mark's. (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans and Cogswell, Printers, 1876) pp. 1-22.
83. Christian Recorder, September 8, 1866.

84. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 219.
85. Ibid. p. 218; Christian Recorder, September 8, 1866.
86. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 219;
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87. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America,
pp. 36-37; Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph,
pp. 152-153; Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston,"
pp. 221-222.
88. Thos W. Cardozo to Rev. S. Hunt, June 23, 1865, AMAP;
Clara M. DeBoer, "The Role of Afro-Americans," p. 389.
89. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, pp. 510-
511.
90. Charleston News and Courier, March 26, 1867.
91. Christian Recorder, August 5, 1865.
92. Ibid., June 29, 1867.
93. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church In America, pp.
39-40; Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph p. 155;
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94. Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, pp. 155-156.
95. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church In America, p.
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96. Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, pp. 156-157.
97. J. E. Hilary Skinner, After the Storm, p. 38; W. D.
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News and Courier, June 28, 1867; Bernard E. Powers,
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98. Carter G. Woodson, The History of The Negro Church
(Washington: The Associated Publishers, Second
Edition, 1921) p. 273; Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and
Triumph, p. 156; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church
In America, pp. 40-41.
99. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 223.
100. Ibid., p. 223.

101. Frank A. Rollin, The Life and Times, pp. 196-197; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 47; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 33; Charleston News and Courier, April 3, 1865.
102. Elizabeth H. Botume, First Days Amongst the Contrabands, pp. 204-205; Rupert S. Holland, ed., Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne, p. 159; Frank Rollin, Life and Public Services, pp. 194-195; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, pp. 338-339.
103. Charleston News and Courier, May 12, 1865, South Carolina Leader, December 24, 1865, Charleston News and Courier, April 29, 1865.
104. Christian Recorder, August 8, 1865.
105. Peggy Lamson, The Glorious Failure, pp. 34-36; Francis Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 55; William C. Hine, "Frustration, Factionalism and Failure," p. 41.
106. Charleston News and Courier, March 22, 1865; Arnold H. Taylor, Travail and Triumph, p. 156.
107. Charleston News and Courier, March 27, 1867.
108. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 231-232; Clarence Walker A Rock In A Weary Land, pp. 212-222; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 206-207.
109. Charleston News and Courier, July 10, 1876.
110. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 232-233; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 206-207.
111. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," pp. 232-233.
112. Rev. R. H. Cain to General Charles Devens, December 29, 1865, Dept. of The South Letters, RG393.
113. Rev. R. H. Cain to R. K. Scott, November 14, 1867, Dept. of The South Letters, RG393.
114. Rev. R. H. Cain to General Charles Devens, December 29, 1865, Dept. of The South Letters, RG393.

CHAPTER VII
FREEDOM IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE:
CHARLESTON'S FREEDMEN'S PROTECTION
OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR FREEDOM

A common feature of the Reconstruction period in Charleston and throughout the South was violence. There were different forms of violence between blacks and whites. Among these were fistfights, skirmishes, small scale battles, individual cases of murder, and minor and major riots, many of a political nature. Black Charlestonians were not just the innocent victims of white violence, but at times fought and repelled white violence. While some of these racial clashes appeared to be undirected or unfocused, the vast majority were attempts by freedmen to maintain a degree of freedom in their lives which had eluded them under the slave system, and which was threatened by attempts of whites to reconstruct the old social order. Life for most ex-slaves was a constant struggle for freedom during the Reconstruction years.

There are several reasons why Charlestonian freedmen were able to successfully repel white violence, when apparently blacks in other localities could not. First, Charleston's black community had a reputation for aggressiveness dating from the antebellum period. Even under the slave regime, they were known to physically

confront whites, and not infrequently to murder them. This assertive behavior reached its zenith with the Denmark Vesey slave insurrection in 1822. Many blacks would be even more aggressive once they had broken the shackles of slavery. Second, blacks in Charleston and the outlying areas amounted to seventy-three percent of the total population by 1875, giving blacks a numerical advantage over whites. Third, there was in Charleston a nucleus of antebellum free blacks experienced in exerting leadership. Fourth, Charleston, as an urban center, attracted many of the South's most talented and outspoken black politicians, who also were capable of leadership. In response to the conditions created under Reconstruction, these able black leaders organized the large and assertive black populace of Charleston in many concerted efforts to maintain the autonomy of the black community and its members. It should be acknowledged that black community leaders did not anticipate many of the racial clashes that would develop, but they were able to use their organizational and leadership skills to support the aims of the black community, particularly with regard to the major race riots that occurred. All of these factors contributed toward the victory of black Charlestonians in numerous racial clashes during the Reconstruction years.¹

Given the nature of changing relations between blacks and whites brought on by emancipation, violence between the two social groups was intense in the years following the

Civil War. Many white Charlestonians found it difficult to view blacks as free men and women, and attempted to continue to treat them as slaves. Blacks, on the other hand, were determined to assert their new freedom.

During the antebellum period, both free blacks and slaves were prohibited from enjoying the beautiful scenery of the Battery. With the arrival of emancipation, black Charlestonians exerted their right to visit this area as often as they wished, much to the dismay of most whites. The customary exclusion of blacks from the Battery symbolized the tyranny of the old racial order to blacks. After emancipation, black youths began to congregate there, and when white youths tried to force them out, the blacks remained, fighting back with brickbats.²

Blacks now went wherever they wanted to. If whites physically confronted them in order to prevent them from going where they wanted, most freedmen were quick to retaliate. For example, a white street car conductor, apparently upset over the fact that some black firemen were out enjoying a nice evening on the town, ordered the driver to run them over, an order which the driver obeyed. As a consequence of this action, one of the firemen was badly injured. In retaliation, other firemen attacked the car, beating the conductor and driver severely, and breaking some of the car windows.³

In another incident, James Clarke, a white seaman, was

beaten severely by a group of blacks after he suggested that they had no right to be on the wharf to see black firemen embark for Georgetown.⁴ These incidents indicate that whites were not willing to accept the changed behaviors of emancipated blacks, and attempted to reinstate traditional rules for them. The responses of these black Charlestonians indicate their refusal to comply with the demands of whites, being resolved to go where they wished, and being res defend their right to do so with physical confrontations if necessary. Their behaviors were a sharp political response to whites attempting to reinstate the old racial order.

In the antebellum period, Charleston's civil authorities had been accustomed to being able to physically abuse blacks over routine matters. Charleston's white police force continued to discriminate against freedmen, sometimes to the point of physical abuse, during Reconstruction. As a result of these well-known practices, freedmen often seized opportunities to revenge themselves upon the civil authorities. The following cases underscore this point. One police officer, a Private Miller, was seized by a group of freedmen and stabbed while trying to break up a fight between one of his attackers and a woman.⁵ A group of black firemen also beat two white police officers who attempted to arrest them for allegedly being too boisterous.⁶

Similar to black men, black women sometimes

demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the actions of white policemen. When a white officer named O'Conner tried to force a group of black women off the sidewalk, they attacked him, and administered a beating to the officer.⁷ Often, when white officers apprehended individual blacks, groups of freedmen would descend upon them and rescue the prisoners. For example, the Charleston News and Courier reported that a Policeman Fludd arrested a black, "but a crowd of blacks made a rush for him, knocked him down three times and rescued the prisoner."⁸ These individual incidents indicate the mistrust of black Charlestonians for white authority and their determination to protect themselves and other members of the black community from that authority.

Black Charlestonians also engaged in skirmishes and fistfights in the streets of the city with white Union soldiers, whom freedmen despised for good reasons. Union soldiers were sometimes racists, and in not a few cases, sided with southern whites to oppress the freedmen. According to a correspondent of the New York Tribune, "Whenever Union soldiers could and dared to, they maltreated and abused freedmen."⁹ Black Charlestonians fought back with a vengeance against the abuses of the Union soldiers. Freedmen may well have identified the actions of white Union soldiers as an extension of the white authority they had been forced to accept under slavery. If so, their actions made the point that those days were over.

On one Sunday night in 1867, two U.S. soldiers went to the house of a black woman named Charlotte Range, seeking her sexual favors. When Charlotte would not allow them to enter, the soldiers began pelting the house and breaking the windows. Five freedmen in the vicinity came to her rescue, chasing the soldiers with an axe, stones, and sticks, and driving them around the corner into Archdale Street, where a general melee ensued. During the skirmish, one of the soldiers and one freedman were severely beaten.¹⁰ In another incident involving freedmen and soldiers, ex-slaves cornered a white soldier and threatened to beat him severely, which they might have done, had he not been rescued by a police officer.¹¹

Admittedly, some of the tension between black men and the U.S. soldiers was due to envy and jealousy over the soldiers' open flirtation with black women. For several successive nights in the summer of 1869, soldiers and black women socialized together in the square on Ann Street, to the dismay of black men. On one Thursday night, a number of black men assembled and threw bricks at the soldiers, who retaliated in kind. One of the soldiers' bricks struck a freedman and hurt him badly. The injured freedman began to yell at the top of his voice, "Murder!" "Fire!" "Help!" "Murder!" He continued these cries until some two hundred or more freedmen arrived on the scene, and one freedman shot at them. This caused great excitement, and had not cooler

heads prevailed among the freedmen, a bloody riot probably would have ensued.¹² These actions on the part of blacks demonstrate that ex-slaves would not only stand firm against white violence, but sometimes would initiate violence against whites. Many of these confrontations between freedmen and whites were mere skirmishes, melees, or fistfights, but there would be others in which lives would be lost.

Having been powerless to prevent the mental and physical abuse of black women by white men under the slave regime, as free men, Charleston's blacks were determined to protect their wives and daughters from further abuse, even at the cost of killing white men in order to do so. In one such case, freedmen thought that a white male by the name of Vaughan had physically assaulted a black woman. When a group of freedmen saw Vaughan walking down Market Street early one morning, they accosted and questioned him. One of them asked, "Did you strike a woman?" Vaughan replied that he had not and knew nothing about the matter. When he proceeded to walk away, one of the freedmen said, "Go for him anyhow." Many of the group concurred with this suggestion. Fearing for his life, Vaughan took flight. The freedmen pursued him down King Street, where one fired two shots at him, with one shot missing and the other striking him just under the right shoulder blade. He was not seriously wounded; but it was alleged that the freedmen

intended to kill him. Jim Drayton was arrested for the shooting and bail was placed at \$500.¹³

A number of whites were not so lucky as Vaughan, losing their lives at the hands of freedmen. William Allen, a close friend of Emma Holmes was, "chopped to pieces in his barn by ex-slaves in Charleston."¹⁴ Similarly, Dr. Prioleau, a prominent white Charleston physician was murdered by freedmen.¹⁵ Although most slave owners adamantly denied that their former slaves might harbor enough ill will toward them to contemplate their murder, usually when a former slave owner was murdered, one or more of his ex-slaves were viewed by the white community with suspicion.¹⁶

Such was the case when B. S. Rhett of Charleston was murdered. The particulars of his murder are unclear; but it was alleged that he was killed by freedmen. Rhett had left his home on the day of the murder shortly after finishing his dinner, to visit his farm near the Race Course. It was argued that, knowing this was his daily routine, some ex-slaves hid near the farm to ambush him. When Rhett opened the gate, he was fired on twice, striking him in the left arm, and in the side. With no one in the vicinity to help him, Rhett struggled to his horse, rode a short distance and fell to the ground. He subsequently died in the presence of his son and one Dr. Mitchell.¹⁷

Because no one had any solid clues as to the identity

of the murderers, John Bennett, a former slave of Rhett's, and one other freedman, Horace Johnson, were arrested and charged with the murder. Later events suggest that they were framed by the police. Bennett was instructed by law enforcement officials to say that Johnson, who had earlier had an altercation with Rhett, fired the fatal shots. Bennett refused to do so, and, unhappy over being incarcerated for four months without trial for a murder he denied committing, Bennett wrote to General O.O. Howard, the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, complaining about his predicament.¹⁸ The outcome of the case is not known.

In a similar ambush, two freedmen, George Stevens and David Pearce, were accused of murdering a white man named J. Evans Edings. Stevens and Pearce borrowed from a friend the gun which eventually was identified as the murder weapon. Determined to kill Edings for reasons not disclosed, the two men waited for him alongside a road for about three hours. When Edings' buggy appeared, Pearce poked the gun through the foliage and fired. Edings then fell backwards out of the buggy and died. Shortly thereafter, Stevens and Pearce stole all of Edings's money and threw away the murder weapon. The two were soon arrested, convicted and hanged for the murder.¹⁹ These cases give little detail to clarify the purposes for which the murders occurred, but mistreatment is alluded to in Rhett's murder and may well have been a motivating factor in this last case. Neither

case indicates impersonal motives in the killing. Given the mistreatment of slaves in the antebellum period and the attempted mistreatment of blacks under Reconstruction, these cases may represent attempts at retribution by persons much more free to exact it than they had been in the antebellum South.

Sometimes freedmen showed they had little compunction against killing whites who physically confronted them. The following case underscores this point. At nine o'clock one Saturday night, John Cook, the white watchman at Graham's Stable, came upon a freedman named Tom Pope with a pistol in his hand, sitting in front of the stable. When Cook asked Pope how he got in, Pope replied that this was none of Cook's business, and swung open the front door. Cook ordered him to close it, to which Pope refused, saying, "I haven't got much use for you anyhow." Cook made a remark implying that Pope disliked him because he prevented Pope from stealing feed from the horses for his own consumption. Angered by this insult, Pope struck Cook on the back of the head. A struggle ensued with Pope striking Cook again with his left hand and Pope being thrown to the floor. Pope allegedly drew a pistol from his hip pocket as he picked himself up from the floor and ran out the front door cursing.

Thinking that the episode was over, Cook attempted to close the door after him, but Pope stepped back in, firing

one fatal shot. He then walked rapidly up Chalmers Street toward Meeting Street. Pope was later overheard on the city streets boasting to other young freedmen that he had shot Mr. Graham's watchman. As late as a day after the murder, Pope had not been apprehended.²⁰ Although admittedly few in number, these cases of black violence against whites nonetheless demonstrate that violence during the Reconstruction period was a double-edged sword, cutting blacks and whites alike. Black Charlestonians repelled behavior from whites that smacked of the repressive and humiliating conditions suffered under slavery, refusing to be talked to or treated as beasts or subordinates.

Black soldiers in the Charleston area were even more determined than the general black population not to accept mental or physical cruelty at the hands of whites. These black troops were a mixture of northern free blacks who had experienced Northern race relations and of southern blacks who had escaped slavery and been influenced by their experiences in the Army. Having fought with distinction in many military campaigns, these soldiers saw themselves as symbols of emancipation and as men deserving respect. As such, black troops would show themselves unwilling to countenance forceful actions by whites trying to repress them. Throughout the Reconstruction period in Charleston, they were active participants in many racial clashes, often as the aggressors. While not arguing that black soldiers

were innocent of vindictive actions against whites, many such incidents were ignited by the harassment of black soldiers by white policemen, white soldiers and the white citizenry.

Mirroring the sentiments of the black population as a whole, black soldiers despised the white policemen. Skirmishes between the two were commonplace, and sometimes black soldiers initiated these confrontations. According to the Charleston Daily News, on one occasion a black soldier was roaming the streets with a pistol in hand and in the company of about ten other black soldiers, as if he wanted to pick a fight with someone white. Subsequently, he pushed a police officer, who then ordered him to go home. He refused to go, saying, "he would not mind any d____d rebel police." At this time, some twenty or so additional policemen arrived at the Market, and the soldiers, now realizing that they were outnumbered, left the Market. Undaunted, as the soldiers were leaving, a corporal in the group said in a loud voice, "Come on, let us go to the Freedmen's Bureau and get ten more of our boys; I'd like to see them take us to the Guard House." The soldiers soon returned and a melee ensued between them and the policemen. There were some ten or twelve pistol shots fired, resulting in one policeman being shot through his shoulder.²¹ While the particulars of this incident are presented with the biases expected of the region and time, the melee which

occurred may well have been initiated by the soldiers. This account however portrays the police as paragons of restraint and the black soldiers as total rowdies. The truth of the matter would probably indicate some fault on both sides. Even so, it would be hard to imagine that such tensions as this melee indicates arose out of thin air. This altercation may have been rooted in the behavior of white authorities toward black soldiers, and the desires of black soldiers to show they wouldn't take insults or repression at the hands of white civil authorities.

Black soldiers also shared the black community's distaste for the white Union Troops. Consequently, they often united with Charleston's blacks in attacks upon white soldiers. These racial clashes were larger and bloodier than the skirmishes between freedmen and soldiers discussed earlier. The first major race riot to occur in Charleston during the Reconstruction period took place in July 1865. Details of the clash are unclear, but it appears that it had been brewing for some days. White soldiers had been abusing freedmen in and around Charleston on a regular basis,²² with the Zouaves of the 127th New York Regiment being the soldiers most often implicated.²³ Racial tensions were already high. The 127th New York Regiment, who were much despised by the black community, was assigned police duty in one of the busiest areas of Charleston and the one most often frequented by blacks, the Market Place. Due to past

relations with this regiment, many freedmen apparently longed for an opportunity to do battle with these white soldiers. The chance presented itself when a Zouave appeared to blacks to have exceeded his authority by physically abusing blacks for no apparent reason but the color of their skin. One of the freedmen took offense, struck the Zouave and drew a knife on him. Some members of both the 21st U.S. Colored Troops and 54th Massachusetts Volunteers (a black regiment), as well as other blacks, subsequently got into an altercation with this same Zouave. Fearing for his life, the Zouave sent for assistance. In the violent melee that ensued, James Bing, a black proprietor of an egg stand was killed, and a Zouave and two freedmen were wounded.²⁴

Sporadic attacks by blacks on white civilians and soldiers continued for three days,²⁵ and it was not known how many people were killed or wounded in the street brawls that took place in the aftermath of the original disturbance.²⁶ Thanks largely to the fine leadership displayed by General W. T. Bennett, the United States Military Commander at Charleston, by July 13, 1865, a measure of order had been restored to the city. Bennett issued orders forbidding citizens to assemble in the streets; and he ordered both blacks and whites to turn in their firearms and observe an 8:00 p.m. curfew.²⁷ The 127th New York Regiment was sent to Morris Island ten days after the riot, and was replaced by

the 126th New York Regiment.²⁸ This action helped restore order to the city. Even so, Charleston would not remain quiet for long.

The next few months were punctuated by skirmishes between blacks and whites, culminating in June 1866 in another racial clash in which black soldiers would again play a major role. The riot originated on Sunday, June 24, when a group of black and white youths assembled on the Battery and began showering each other with stones. This was not an uncommon event, with frequent juvenile skirmishes erupting on the Battery over its use by black youth who refused to accede to the whites-only tradition of that area. This particular encounter grew in intensity, and the youths solicited the aid of black and white adults in the brawl, who used sticks and other weapons. The police arrived in time to quell the fracas for the moment, arresting some six or eight of the ringleaders. Afterward, the crowd dispersed, and it appeared that the altercation was ended. Being intent upon asserting their rights, some of the freedmen who had escaped the policemen regrouped and summoned additional support from the black neighborhood. After receiving these reinforcements, some eight or ten black soldiers emerged to direct this angry group. They formed a procession of two or three hundred, and riotously marched through East Bay, Tradd, Legare and other streets randomly attacking any whites in sight. Eventually, a large detachment of police, and United States Regular Troops

confronted them, and were to restore some order to the city by forcing them to disperse.²⁹

Unimpressed and perhaps even further angered by this show of white authority, blacks continued isolated barrages on whites with all available missiles. Blacks showered police with bricks, injuring a police sergeant, and then grabbing his hat and club as trophies.³⁰ This sergeant was lucky to escape with his life.

Richard M. Brantford, a white walking home with a young lady on the night of June 24, was not so fortunate.³¹ At about eight o'clock on this evening, Brantford was spotted by a large group of freedmen led by John Jenkins and Scipio Fraser, two discharged black Union soldiers. Scipio Fraser instructed the freedmen to, "kill the son of a b___h," and then threw a rock at Brantford, hitting his head. Brantford hurried away as fast as he could; but he was not as swift as Jenkins and Fraser, who knocked him down and struck him in the head with a brick.³²

Shortly thereafter, a crowd of freedmen, numbering about twenty arrived on the scene, and battered Brantford with bricks, even though he was already bleeding profusely from the head. The crowd left him to die. Buoyed by this event, later that evening Scipio Fraser was overheard bragging about the riot to other blacks. He held up a knife and said, "I, and no one else, killed the rebel son of a b___h, and he is not the first nor will he be the last I will

kill." He added that, "he had killed a many one in the army."³³ For the next three weeks or so, the streets of Charleston were not safe, with freedmen constantly launching attacks on whites. As a consequence, a few whites abandoned the city.³⁴

These riots must be viewed in a political context, as the outgrowth of a struggle during Reconstruction by whites to regain control over black people and by black people to maintain their right to autonomy. While there were individual, selfish and cruelly senseless acts performed in these riots, they represent both the release of frustrations and the political determination of blacks not to suffer under white authority. In the process, sometimes individuals would be singled out, purely because of their race, to suffer the wrath of the rioters. While not justified in this sense, it was however akin to the treatment blacks had suffered purely because of their race.

Not only did Charleston's freedmen battle to hold on to the rights won with emancipation, but they also asserted themselves in efforts to acquire civil and political rights throughout the Reconstruction years. Freedmen took whatever actions deemed necessary to accomplish these objectives, to the point of arming themselves for battles yet to be fought.³⁵ As early as January 1866, several hundred freedmen in Charleston and the rest of South Carolina signed, "a petition asking that they may be allowed the

rights of citizenship," and gave it to General Rufus Saxton to deliver to Washington. Upon his arrival in the capital city, Saxton was asked by a member of Congress whether he thought blacks would ever acquiesce or submit quietly "to a subordinate role." In response, Saxton stated emphatically that they would not. Saxton had spent nearly four years among the freedmen, and frequently conversed with numbers of intelligent ex-slaves. As a consequence, he was of the opinion that if the federal government did not soon grant citizenship rights to freedmen, they would take matters into their own hands.³⁶

Saxton admitted that patience was growing thin, and many blacks were already arming themselves. He also indicated to the Congressman that, while in Charleston, he had been able to restrain some freedmen by persuading them to keep faith in the federal government. This he could no longer do, since he had been removed as head of the Freedman's Bureau for the State of South Carolina. According to Saxton, his removal only made a tense situation even worse, for:

The leader of the Colored Union League and other colored men in Charleston had indicated to him that they feared they could not much longer control the freedmen if I left Charleston. I do not recollect their exact words, but the substance was, that they feared the freedmen would attempt to take their cause into their own hands.³⁷

It was not long before these fears became a reality.

In the spring of 1867, Charleston's black community united in sometimes forceful efforts to desegregate the city's street cars. Buoyed with the rising expectations produced by the passage of the first Reconstruction Act, Charleston's blacks were now even more convinced that they were entitled to the same rights and privileges as whites.³⁸ As part of this campaign to secure their rights, black Charlestonians tried to obtain court injunctions against the operation of the exclusive City Railway Line. When this strategy failed, freedmen adopted another. They would, if necessary, force their way onto the street cars and stage "sit ins" to protest their case. If freedmen were then forcibly removed, they would sue the company for assault and battery.³⁹

The reasons why freedmen embraced such an aggressive strategy are easy to deduce, in retrospect. Distrustful of whites, they were determined to seize their rights when the opportunity presented itself. Freedmen were uncertain of what the future would bring: perhaps their abandonment by Radical Republicans, perhaps the return to dominance of the southern whites. These were serious considerations for a number of freedmen, with many reasoning that they should seize the moment, and that the adopted strategy was the most plausible means to desegregate the street cars. The initial effort to stage "sit ins" on the street cars occurred on Tuesday afternoon, March 26, 1867, in the aftermath of a meeting of freedmen numbering between 1,500 and 2,000. They

met outdoors on the Citadel Square for the purpose of ratifying the Republican Party platform which had been drawn up a few days earlier, and to proceed with the party's formation. At this meeting, freedmen were urged to vote and demand equal rights by numerous black and white speakers.⁴⁰ It is unclear why those who engaged in the "sit ins" picked this particular date for their initial action. Perhaps many were buoyed by the hope and self confidence gained from the political meeting.

Whatever the reasons, at the conclusion of the mass meeting, an unnamed black barber entered the car of a conductor named Faber. When the conductor asked him to leave, he refused. After the conductor informed him of the Company's rules and insisted upon his leaving the inside of the car, he reconsidered his earlier response. Reasoning that he might be forcibly removed, his friends convinced him to come out. This was not the end of the issue, since freedmen were determined to settle the matter in their favor. Furthermore, the campaign to desegregate the city's street cars was mass-based and well planned.⁴¹

When conductor Faber's car returned to Meeting Street, between George and Society Streets later that same day, a huge crowd of blacks had gathered to greet him. Intent upon seizing his car, this:

large crowd of blacks rushed into it to the great discomfort of the white passengers, and although remonstrated with and appealed to by the conductor, declined to go out. Mr. Faber

then stepped to the front platform and requested the driver to run the car off the track, as this was his only alternative. The effort to comply with his request failed, and the driver at the suggestion of Mr. Faber unhitched his horse, and leaving the car on the track, went up to the company's stable. Finding themselves disappointed the rioters endeavored to push the car forward, when Mr. Faber put down the brake and stuck to his post, although he was threatened by one of the number who had stolen the iron by which the switches are turned, and held it in a striking attitude over his head, whilst others strove to pull Mr. Faber away from the brake. At this juncture the timely arrival of the police relieved him from his embarrassing situation.⁴²

Concurrent with the altercation on Faber's car, other blacks attacked the cars of Roumillat, Rives and St. Amand in the same way. In some instances fearing personal insult and injury, women passengers were compelled to leave the cars. Realizing that the conductors would not easily give in to the demand by blacks to ride on a basis of equality with whites, the freedmen tried to interrupt the travel of cars by placing stones in the track. Subsequent to this, the black protesters were arrested and removed by local police and United States Army Troops.⁴³ Undeterred, freedmen again pressed the issue only six days later at the same location.⁴⁴ At about five o'clock on Monday, April 1, two blacks, Daniel McInnis and Sidney Eckhard, forced their way inside one of the cars, disregarding all entreaties by the conductor to either get off or ride on the platform. The conductor made no attempt to forcibly eject them, but

instead waited until the car was near the police station, where he summoned policemen for support. McInnis and Eckhard were arrested after police overpowered them.⁴⁵

As news of their arrests spread to the black community, a group of a hundred or more anxious blacks congregated around the police station house and hurled stones at the policemen on duty. Shortly thereafter, a squad of regular infantry troops were called out to assist the police in dispersing the crowd. Before the troops' arrival, the police had managed to restore some order. In their effort to quiet the disturbance, the police were attacked by blacks, and two of the officers were severely beaten. Three more blacks were arrested and given over to the custody of the soldiers, who proceeded to quickly march them off to headquarters. Angry and intent upon rescuing them, a large group of black men and women closely followed the squad and threatened them with bodily harm. In response, soldiers were dispatched to keep the freedmen in check by using their muskets efficiently.⁴⁶

This event did not resolve the street car issue, but made the battle around it even more intense. With pressure mounting on the City Railway Company, its executives began scurrying for alternatives to solve the matter. The Company proposed to establish separate and equal cars, or to partition the same cars between blacks and whites. Charleston's freedmen would have nothing to do with a plan

which they regarded as demeaning and in violation of their newly acquired civil rights. They demanded and expected nothing less than fully integrated facilities.⁴⁷ Keeping pressure on the Railway Company, blacks pressed their case in the courts.⁴⁸ The "sit ins" and court actions ultimately forced the Charleston City Railway Company to abandon its discriminatory policies against blacks, and one month after the "riot," the Railway Company announced that it had decided to eliminate all racial distinctions on its cars.⁴⁹ In addition, Major General Sickles, the Military Commander, issued an order restricting racial discrimination on street railways, railroads and steamboats, one month after the Company's action.⁵⁰

Almost immediately, blacks took advantage of this new privilege, and they could be seen riding daily on street cars. The New York Daily Tribune reported that, "the whites took the new situation with good humored resignation."⁵¹ The determination of black Charlestonians to integrate the street cars suggests two significant points. First, it underscores the great value that freedmen attached to civil rights, rights which they sincerely believed they were entitled to as free men and women. The fact that they were not allowed to ride inside the streetcars was a racial and personal affront to them, violating their new rights and privileges. Second, the desegregation of the streetcars illuminates the considerable organizational capacity of

black communities during the Post Bellum period which could be brought to bear on any issue of importance to blacks. The campaign to desegregate Charleston's street cars was well planned, mass-based, and successful.

With the passage of the first Reconstruction Act on March 2, 1867, Charleston's blacks and those throughout the South were granted the right to participate in the reorganization of the former Confederate States. Of course, the black community of Charleston was excited by the prospect of political involvement.⁵² Realizing early that their interests would best be served by the Republican Party, black community leaders and some northern whites swiftly led successful campaigns to recruit freedmen into the Republican Party. At the same time freedmen were encouraged to register to vote and exercise the ballot.⁵³ Because some blacks had already been organized into Union Leagues which were auxiliaries of the Republican Party, the task of recruitment was made somewhat easier.

Soon the ranks of the Republican Party were swelled by blacks. Freedmen went to the polls in large numbers in South Carolina. Most blacks voted Republican and insisted that every other black do so as well. Black women were active in ensuring that their men would vote the Republican ticket. Most black voters, in spite of all obstacles, were determined to cast a Republican ballot.⁵⁴ Believing that the Republican Party and blackness went hand in hand, blacks

were fiercely Republican. Therefore, if a black was a Democrat, he or she had betrayed the race by joining the party of the slave owner. Black Republicans found such an alliance both distasteful and puzzling. Black Republicans detested white democrats, and these sentiments were returned in kind. As a result, political violence between the two groups was intense and bloody during the Reconstruction years.

While this violence often led to the deaths of many black Republican politicians throughout South Carolina, black Charlestonians were resolved to prevent any such murders in the city and its surrounding environs. As a reminder to whites who might entertain such notions, a group of blacks issued a special warning. They swore, "to burn the city to ashes and have no mercy on the Democrats if any prominent man in the community was murdered."⁵⁵ Apparently white Charlestonians took their threats seriously, for there were no political assassinations in Charleston. Even so, violent encounters between black Republicans and white Democrats were commonplace.⁵⁶ Henry W. Ravenel noted in his journal that in the summer of 1868, blacks became so "riotous" that at "the late Democratic meeting in Charleston... the whites found it prudent to go armed; and a threatened violent interruption of the meeting was only averted by the appeal and interference of the more prudent colored radicals."⁵⁷

There were also numerous instances in which black Republicans battled violently with both black and white Democrats. The Baseball Riot in Charleston in July of 1869 was one such occasion. This riot occurred between black Charlestonian Republicans and a visiting baseball team from Savannah, Georgia and their black band, all presumably Democrats. The origins of the riot are unclear. It appears that an altercation broke out after the conclusion of the game between policemen, soldiers and freedmen. Rafe Izzard, a freedman was arrested with some difficulty by the police and immediately locked up in the guardhouse in the Citadel.⁵⁸

News of this event quickly spread to the black community, and soon nearly three thousand blacks stood ready to do battle near Citadel Square. Although evidently upset over Rafe's arrest, for reasons unknown they did not attempt to forcibly rescue him. Perhaps many blacks were simply using the circumstances of his arrest to vent their frustrations against the black and white Democrats from Georgia, whom they despised. Indeed, it is even possible that rumors were circulating through the black community that these Democrats had actually precipitated the events which led to Rafe's incarceration. It appears that some black Charlestonians had learned the schedule of travel for the Savannah baseball team and black musicians, and were intent upon waiting to attack them. As the black band

members proceeded down the main walk to the gate on Calhoun Street, they were attacked by this group of Charlestonian blacks, who pummeled them with stones, injuring several members of the band. Acknowledging that he was powerless to stop the freedmen, Mayor Pillsbury solicited the help of Colonel Andrews, the commander of the Citadel. Andrews sent a detachment of armed soldiers to escort the black band and Savannah baseball team to their boat once the two groups had eaten their dinner.⁵⁹ To the dismay of Charleston's blacks, on their departure, the black band had the audacity to play "Dixie" for the whites.⁶⁰ Although confined largely to the outskirts, a group of blacks reacted violently to this perceived insult, by showering the crowd with rocks, wounding several people.⁶¹

This riot was both a political and racial matter. Members of Savannah's baseball team were Democrats, and yet they had a team band made up of blacks. This made Charleston's freedmen suspicious of the band which had apparently chosen to befriend people whose sentiments were identified as anti-black. That the musicians were themselves Democrats was counted by Charleston's blacks as a second strike against them, indicating to them that the musicians lacked racial consciousness. When the musicians had the audacity to play "Dixie" for the whites, this was counted as strike three. This was adding insult to injury, since the tune was the anthem of the slave holders. Given

these judgements against the black band, Charleston's freedmen reasoned that they deserved to be stoned, having betrayed their own race. Finally, both Savannah and Charleston's white Democrats were attacked because they represented the old slave regime in the eyes of freedmen. As far as most blacks were concerned, the slave system was obsolete. Their attack on the ball team and band represented an assault against the lingering symbols of slavery and those who would like to see its return.

Black Charlestonians continued to rebel throughout the Reconstruction period against actions and attitudes which were reminders of the regime of slavery. The actions of Charleston's blacks went beyond resistance to the attempted reinstitution of subordinate social relations for blacks in the city; they tackled similar behaviors by whites in the outlying areas of the city and in the rest of the state. The black vote was a central issue, with whites sometimes murdering blacks for their attempts to vote. Charleston's freedpeople fought to protect the voting rights of South Carolina's blacks, believing that, as free men, no one had the right to deny them this right.

When six black South Carolina militiamen were murdered by whites at Hamburg in Aiken County on July 8, 1876, blacks in Charleston organized a mass meeting denouncing this white riot. Issuing a warning to whites about this kind of violent action, freedmen asserted:

We tell you that it will not do to go too far in this thing - remember there are 80,000 black men in this State who can bear Winchester rifles, and know how to use them, and that there are 200,000 women who can light a torch and use the knife, and that there are a hundred thousand boys and girls who have not known the lash of a white master, who have tested freedom once and forever, and that there is a deep determination never, so help their God, to submit to be shot down by lawless regulators for no crimes committed against society and law.⁶²

This was not rhetoric, as the actions taken by Charlestonian freedmen against white authority are well documented. Freedmen viewed this authority as an extension of that suffered under slavery. The following case illustrates this point. During this mass meeting in which the above warning was sounded, one freedman refused to move and allow a street car to pass through the crowd of blacks massed at this event. The aggravated conductor sought the aid of the police, who arrested the man. A group of freedmen rushed to his rescue with the cry of "this is no Hamburg," and in five minutes the prisoner was taken from the police by force, and hidden in the crowd.⁶³ It is plausible to suspect that the actions of the conductor and the policeman were understood as another example of whites presuming to order blacks around and control their right to assembly as had been true under slavery.

Once black Charlestonians had attained a degree of political power previously denied them under slavery, they doggedly fought to retain it. As a result, with whites

attempting to return them to conditions akin to the pre-war social relations, political violence involving Charleston's blacks reached its zenith in the Fall 1876. At that time, Democrats appeared to be seizing power in South Carolina, largely through fraud and intimidation. Most blacks now tended to be even more fiercely Republican than in earlier years. Many honestly believed that a Democratic victory would inevitably return them to slavery. Confrontations between black Republicans and white and black Democrats became particularly bloody in the waning years of the Reconstruction period. Black Charlestonians would emerge in these racial conflicts as the aggressors and victors.

Political meetings in Charleston were a regular occurrence by late August 1876. At Democratic ward meetings held on September 1 and again on September 5, a number of blacks delivered speeches detailing why they could not support the Republican party, and chose instead to side with the Democrats. Of course many black Republicans regarded the enrollment of their brothers in the Democratic Party as anathema to the race as a whole. A large number of black Republicans waited outside the Democratic Meeting House, and at the conclusion of the September 1st meeting, attacked one of the speakers named Isaac Rivers, a twenty-nine year old porter, as he left the hall. A continuation of the confrontation between the two groups occurred on September 6, at the end of the second Republican Ward meeting. Many

blacks wandered over to Auher Hall to listen to speeches given by black and white Democrats. Adding fuel to the fire, J.R. Jenkins, a black Democrat launched a verbal assault on black Republicans. Angry black Republicans waited for Jenkins in the street. Having vowed earlier to kill all black Democrats, the group now appeared ready to carry out their threat.⁶⁴

As was customary during these days of political turmoil, a large group of whites surrounded Jenkins and other black Democrats, attempting to escort them safely home at the conclusion of the meeting. As they moved up the street, they were pursued by several black Republicans who jeered at them, until they reached St. Matthew's Church opposite the Citadel. At this point, the blacks began to advance aggressively on the white and black Democrats.

In an effort to disperse the black crowd, one of the whites fired his pistol into the air, but it had the opposite effect of attracting several hundred blacks to the scene. Both groups began to throw rocks at each other, and to exchange pistol shots. The riot had officially begun. Although badly outnumbered by the blacks, the whites managed to place the black Democrats under the protection of U.S. troops at the Citadel Green through the aid of the police. At this point, emboldened by steadily increasing numbers, the blacks leveled a furious missile assault against them. The whites fired into the black crowds. The white Democrats

and the police had kept the black mob at bay in the initial stage of the riot, but in the ensuing phase, blacks moved unopposed through King Street and other parts of Charleston.⁶⁵

From midnight until the next morning, blacks gathered on street corners in large numbers, and according to a Correspondent of the New York Times, "broke windows, robbed stores, and attacked and beat indiscriminantly every white male who showed his face."⁶⁶ One white male named J. B. Buckner was killed, and several whites were critically wounded. A few blacks received minor injuries.⁶⁷ As the black mob moved through the streets of Charleston wrecking vengeance upon whites, white Charlestonians recalled hearing blacks crying, "Kill Them! Kill Them All! Dis town is Ours!"⁶⁸ It appeared that blacks provoked no white response to their actions after the initial stage of the riot. Even the hated white rifle clubs, holdovers from the old antebellum militia groups, would not oppose them. As blacks roamed the streets on the night of Wednesday, September 6, they jeeringly asked where the rifle clubs were, but they were nowhere to be found.⁶⁹

For the next few days, Charleston was tossed by racial turmoil as blacks continued to randomly attack whites at will. It had become unsafe for whites to venture out on the streets, particularly at night.⁷⁰ In most white households, "people were stooping and crawling as they passed windows; a

shadow on a curtain was a target for a rock or a bullet."⁷¹ White fright was so deep that "Wade Hampton cried when he heard of the cowardice of the whites."⁷²

The September 1876 riot was not to be the last between black Republicans and white and black Democrats in the Charleston area. An even more bloody one occurred at Cainhoy, a village located a few miles from Charleston, in October 1876. Cainhoy often served as a site for social gatherings and political meetings for blacks and whites.

The Cainhoy riots were occasioned by a political meeting known as a joint discussion. This was one of the most common methods employed by whites to appeal to black voters. Under normal circumstances, the chance that the Democratic Party would attract a significant number of blacks to attend their rallies was slim. The Democrats, however, had arrived at a strategy to better their chances of recruiting blacks. The Charleston County Democratic Party Chairman, Charles H. Simonton, went to his Republican counterpart, Charleston County Sheriff Christopher Columbus Bowen, and asked for an agreement allowing his party to share the speaking time at an upcoming political meeting. Bowen concurred with his request, but only with certain stipulations. Bowen proposed that both sides come unarmed to these political gatherings, to which Simonton agreed. Thus, in the waning years of the Reconstruction Period, Democrats attended joint political gatherings which were

organized by Republicans. Although no violence usually took place, most individuals at such meetings were armed, and the atmosphere was tense.⁷³

One such joint political gathering was scheduled to take place at Cainhoy on October 16. The steamer Pocasin left Charleston at 9:00 o'clock in the morning carrying a number of Democrats and Republicans and their friends to Cainhoy to participate in the political rally in which each party's candidates would have equal speaking time. Anticipating trouble, it was arranged between Sheriff Bowen and the Democratic leaders that neither party should bring arms on the boat.

The Democratic candidates were accompanied by a number of white men who carried no rifles, but nonetheless had pistols with them. The Republican candidates, consisting of Sheriff Bowen, William J. McKinley (a black), and G. Galliard, were accompanied by only fifteen or so friends. No trouble occurred during the trip on the river, and the steamer safely reached Cainhoy on schedule at noon.⁷⁴ As soon as the steamer arrived, a small contingent of freedmen met the boat, and shortly thereafter proceeded quietly to the place of the proposed political meeting. Upon their arrival they found about three or four hundred other blacks already assembled. The vast majority of the freedmen were Republicans, and did not trust whites. Acting on these sentiments, many of the freedmen brought shotguns and

muskets, storing them in the nearby woods in a dilapidated shed to the left of the speakers' stand. At the same time, most whites had come to the meeting armed with their pistols.

The meeting was opened with the understanding that each party should be allowed two hours for speeches. The first speaker on the program was St. Julien Jersey, a well known Democrat of Charleston, who finished his hour-long speech without interruption or disturbance.⁷⁵

However, when William McKinley, a member of one of Charleston's prominent and wealthy antebellum free black families, and a Republican candidate for solicitor, stepped to the podium to deliver his speech, the atmosphere changed drastically. McKinley had only uttered a few words when he was startled by a number of the blacks crying: "Look out dar; look out dar!" Responding to the warnings, McKinley looked in the direction in which they pointed, and in an excited tone shouted to the blacks while pointing to a number of white men arming themselves, that "those men have got the guns. They are going to shoot me and the rest of you." McKinley then leaped from the stand.⁷⁶

Realizing that the whites had stolen the guns which the freedmen had earlier stored in the shed, blacks took up the few arms they had and ran for cover. At this time, one of the guns which the whites carried accidentally discharged. This accidental shot was soon followed with a volley of

additional ones, this time for all intents and purposes, to gun down the scurrying blacks. One of their shots found its mark, striking and killing an elderly freedman, John Lachicotte.⁷⁷

Somehow the freedmen managed to retrieve their guns, and now the tide of the battle began to change in their favor. Although the whites initiated the shooting, they now found themselves out of ammunition, outnumbered, and as rarely happened in Reconstruction, outgunned. Angry over the attack and over Lachicotte's death, freedmen now set out to kill all the whites responsible. They peppered the fleeing whites with several rounds of shots. The bloodied whites struggled to reach their boat and return to Charleston.

Efforts by both white Republican and Democratic leaders to get blacks to stop firing their weapons were futile. Freedmen ignored pleas made by the Republican Bowen and Democrat Walker to cease their fire, wounding Walker in the leg as he fled back toward a party of whites who had sought refuge in a nearby vestry. Even, the prominent black candidate, William McKinley, had to pretend he was arresting two desperate whites in order to get them to safety. The hasty retreat of the whites to their boat was disorderly, with many whites who were too severely injured to make it on their own being left behind, with the dead. In this riot, five white men were killed, and an estimated fifteen to

fifty whites were injured. At the same time, there was only one black fatality, seventy year old Lachicotte, and three black Democrats were injured.⁷⁸ Measured by almost any standard, the Cainhoy riot represented a black victory. This fact the New York Times conceded, asserting that "for the first time in the history of the race conflicts of the South, the Negroes were victorious."⁷⁹ In claiming victory for blacks at Cainhoy the Times were correct, but it was not the first victory by blacks nor would it be the last. The upcoming November election of 1876 would lead to another round of intense political confrontations between black Republicans and black and white Democrats.

Since United States troops were present throughout South Carolina and the Democrats desired to avoid the appearance of coercion, although there were sporadic acts of violence, the November election passed with relative calm in the state. The question of whether or not Wade Hampton or Daniel Chamberlain won the gubernatorial election in South Carolina, or whether it was Rutherford B. Hayes or Samuel Tilden who actually won the presidential election in 1876 are open to historical debate.⁸⁰ What is clear, however, is that Charleston's freedmen interpreted Hampton's election as an end, not only to their political rights, but to their civil rights as well. Angry and frustrated over the election results, blacks in Charleston engaged in one more violent clash with whites over a perceived threat to their

political rights.

As election results trickled in, a large number of Charlestonians gathered around newspaper offices hoping to hear the latest figures. On November 8, E. M. W. Mackey, a local white Republican leader and ex-congressman, was awaiting election returns outside the office of the Charleston News and Courier. Joking with a group of Democrats about the election, he advanced the view that Chamberlain had been elected, and the group insisted that Hampton had won. Some of the Democrats grew tired of hearing Mackey say that Chamberlain had won, and one became so incensed that he fired his pistol at Mackey. He missed; but hearing the shots, a number of blacks and whites rushed to the scene. From this point on, confusion reigned. Blacks gathering on street corners heard rumors that Mackey had been killed by the Democrats. They moved toward the newspaper office and joined other blacks already there. They encountered a group of white Democrats and the riot began. As in earlier racial clashes in Charleston, the blacks in the streets outnumbered whites, and blacks beat and shot whites as they passed through the area of the riot. Black policemen, who often despised white Charlestonians, entered the melee on the side of their black brothers, shooting several whites. Black police were alleged to have killed Endicott H. Walter, the son of a prominent Charleston businessman, George H. Walker, who himself was also injured.

Young Walter was the only fatality, though several others were injured.

Since Charleston's black community had a reputation for being aggressive, several companies of United States troops were already stationed in the city, under the command of Colonel Henry J. Hunt of the Fifth Artillery, to prevent further disturbances. Carrying out his job efficiently, Hunt swiftly dispatched a group of his troops to restore order to the city. The troops had cleared the streets by that evening, ending Charleston's final Reconstruction era riot.⁸¹

The historical record seems to indicate that Charleston's blacks during the Reconstruction period were anything but the innocent victims of white violence. Charleston County blacks were themselves unique in their determination and ability to release their anger through violence, and Charleston's whites often felt the brunt of it. Although there were various contributing factors involved, two loomed large. First, Charleston blacks enjoyed a large numerical advantage over whites. When blacks in the low country were added to those in the city, the black population reached as high as seventy-three percent of the total population in Charleston County. Second, beginning with the colonial period and continuing in the antebellum period, blacks in and around Charleston had earned a reputation for militancy and violence. This had

been underscored in the Stono Rebellion in 1739 and Vesey's Conspiracy in 1822, to name only a few. The skirmishes, melees, fistfights, and riots of the Reconstruction era constitute only a continuation of the determination by the region's blacks to stand up for themselves.⁸² This was an ambitious undertaking in the post-war South. To their credit, however, they were largely successful. Charleston's freedmen consistently put whites on notice that they were willing to defend their newly gained rights and their freedom as long as possible.

It must be noted that not all Charlestonian freedmen who engaged in violence against whites did so to defend their rights. Some may have participated in these riots simply because they felt violence was a justified response to white violence against them. Some rioters apparently took advantage of the riots to vent racial hatreds and to even old scores. There were also both black and white thugs in the city. Still, it appears that much of the racial violence of these riots was political in nature and not just senseless violence. The attainment and preservation of human, civil and political rights was of great importance to freedmen. These rights could not be surrendered without a struggle. For freedmen in Charleston, freedom was a battle. The racial violence shown in this chapter indicates that freedmen had adjusted to the new social order better than had whites. Whites who treated them as if nothing had

changed represented to blacks a direct threat to their newfound rights. The freedmen responded in these violent ways, at the peril of their own lives. Therefore, these actions should be viewed as evidence of the preciousness of the rights they were attempting to assert and defend.

CHAPTER VII ENDNOTES

1. Melinda Meek Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction: The 1876 Riots in Charleston and Cainhoy," South Carolina Historical Magazine 86 (1985) pp. 101-102; Melinda Meek Hennessey, "To Live and Die In Dixie. Reconstruction Race Riots In The South," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 1978) pp. 345-346. Racial violence during the Reconstruction period was intense throughout the South, with both blacks and whites being victims. See for example: New York Times, January 28, April 23, May 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 28, 1867, February 15, March 19, 1868; New York Daily Tribune, June 21, 1866, May 15, 16, 17, 24, 1867; Charleston News and Courier, March 10, April 24, 1866, September 30, 1867, January 16, 1868; O. Brown to Gen. O.O. Howard, June 29, 1865, FBP; Alruthus Ambush Taylor The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969) pp. 21-22; Annual Report of Outrages Against Freed People By Whites for 1865, 1866, FBP; General A. Williams to Major E. S. Deane, December 31, 1866, FBP; Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War. There are numerous excellent pieces of scholarship which cover white violence during the Reconstruction period in the American South. See, for example: John A. Carpenter, "Atrocities In The Reconstruction Period," Journal of Negro History 47 (1962) pp. 234-247; David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: The First Century of The Ku Klux Klan (New York: Doubleday, 1965); Allen W. Trelease, White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Herbert Shapiro, "Afro American Responses To Race Violence During Reconstruction," Science and Society 36[2] (Summer 1972) pp. 158-170; George C. Rable, But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984).
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3. Charleston Daily Republican, March 28, 1871.
4. Charleston News and Courier, May 28, 1873.
5. Ibid., January 27, 1873.
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9. Quoted in Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 67.
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11. Charleston News and Courier, November 1, 1867.
12. Charleston Daily News, August 28, 1869.
13. Charleston News and Courier, July 4, 1877.
14. John F. Marszalek, ed., The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861 to 1866, p. 455; Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, p. 159.
15. John F. Marszalek, ed., The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861 to 1866, p. 455.
16. Rosser H. Taylor, Ante Bellum South Carolina, pp. 176-177.
17. Charleston Daily News, July 4, 1866; Charleston News and Courier, July 4, 6, 10, 1866.
18. Arney R. Childs, ed., Journal of Henry W. Ravenel, pp. 288-289; John Bennett to Gen. O.O. Howard, November 10, 1866, Letters Received, Dept. of the South Papers, RG 393.
19. Charleston News and Courier, July 3, 11, 14, 1877.
20. Ibid., November 19, 1877.
21. Charleston Daily News, July 9, 1866.
22. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 279.
23. Christian Recorder, August 8, 1865, William Gurney to James Redpath May 15, 1865; William Gurney to Captain

R. Allison, May 14, 1865, Dept. of the South Papers, R.G. 393, W.F. Bennett to James Redpath, July 12, 1865, Letters Received A-B March thru October 1865, FBP.

24. Charleston News and Courier, July 10, 1865; New York Times, July 16, 24, 1865; W.F. Bennett to James Redpath, July 12, 1865, Letters Received A-B March through October, 1865, FBP.
25. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 102.
26. New York Times, July 24, 1865.
27. Charleston News and Courier, July 12, 13, 14, 1865; New York Times, July 24, 1865.
28. New York Times, July 24, 1865.
29. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 102; Charleston Daily News, June 25, 1866; Charleston News and Courier, June 25, 1866.
30. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 102; Charleston News and Courier, July 6, 1866.
31. Arney R. Childs, ed., Journal of Henry W. Ravenel, p. 287; Charleston News and Courier, June 29, 1866; Charleston Daily News, July 6, 1866.
32. Charleston News and Courier, June 30, 1866.
33. Ibid. For a complete record of testimony concerning the riot, see: Charleston News and Courier, June 30, and July 6, 1866.
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36. Herbert Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History (New York: International Publishers, 1948) p. 160.
37. Ibid.
38. William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit Ins: A Case of Successful Black Protest," South Carolina Historical Magazine 77[2] (April 1976) pp. 111, 113.

39. Leon F. Litwack, Been In the Storm So Long, p. 287.
40. Charleston News and Courier, March 27, 1867; William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit Ins," p. 111.
41. Charleston News and Courier, March 27, 1867; New York Times, April 2, 1867.
42. Charleston News and Courier, March 27, 1867.
43. Ibid., March 27, 1867.
44. William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit Ins," p. 112.
45. Charleston Daily News, April 2, 1867; New York Daily Tribune, April 2, 1867; New York Times, April 5, 1867.
46. New York Times, April 5, 1867.
47. Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, p. 287.
48. New York Times, April 20, 1867.
49. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 296; Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long, p. 287; William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit Ins," p. 114; John T. Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States, pp. 630 to 631; Charleston Daily News, May 4, 6, 1867. Blacks in other cities also protested against the discriminatory policies of railway and streetcar companies. For coverage of their efforts to integrate streetcars in Richmond, Virginia and Mobile, Alabama, see: New York Times, April 21, 24, 1867, May 2, 8, 9, 1867.
50. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 296.
51. New York Daily Tribune, May 6, 1867.
52. William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit Ins," p. 111.
53. See, for example, editions of the Charleston News and Courier for the years 1866 to 1868; Whitelaw Reid, After the War, p. 585; The Charleston Daily Republican, April 20, 29, 1870.
54. Joel Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 340-344.
55. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 291.

56. Ibid., p. 291.
57. Arney R. Childs, ed., Journal of Henry W. Ravenel, p. 326.
58. New York Times, July 30, 1869.
59. Charleston Daily News, July 27, 1869; New York Times, July 28, 30, 1869.
60. Bernard E. Powers, "Black Charleston," p. 290, New York Times, July 30, 1869.
61. New York Times, July 30, 1869.
62. Charleston News and Courier, July 18, 1876.
63. Ibid.
64. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 104; Charleston News and Courier, September 7, 1876.
65. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," pp. 104 to 105; Charleston News and Courier, September 7, 1876.
66. New York Times, September 8, 1876.
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68. Myrta L. Avery, Dixie After The War (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1906) p. 362; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 272.
69. Charleston News and Courier, September 7, 1876; Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 105.
70. Charleston News and Courier, September 9, 11, 1876.
71. Myrta L. Avery, Dixie After The War, p. 362.
72. A. B. Ballard, One More Day's Journey, p. 112; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, p. 272.
73. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 107.

74. New York Times, October 18, 1876.
75. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," pp. 107 to 108; New York Times, October 18, 1876.
76. New York Times, October 18 and 31, 1876; Charleston News and Courier, October 18, 1876.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.; Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," pp. 108-109.
79. New York Times, October 18, 1876.
80. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," p. 110.
81. Ibid., pp. 110-111; New York Times, November 9, 1876; Charleston News and Courier, November 9, 10, 21. Political violence occurred between blacks and whites during the Reconstruction period in other parts of South Carolina and throughout the South. See, for example: Charleston News and Courier, August 29, 30, 1867, November 9, 1876; New York Times, April 19, May 15, 1867, February 5, 1868, July 4, 1869.
82. Melinda M. Hennessey, "Racial Violence During Reconstruction," pp. 111-112.

CHAPTER VIII:
THE STRUGGLE OF BLACK CHARLESTONIANS
FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM BLOSSOMS

The expectations, attitudes, ideas, and actions of black Charlestonians during the Reconstruction period were informed by their antebellum slave experience. The same also could be said of the black rural migrants who came to the city in the aftermath of the war. When blacks were given the opportunities, they immediately began participating in mainstream concerns that had been denied them previously. Similar to slaves throughout the South, those in Charleston displayed great enthusiasm toward their initial emancipation. They sang, danced, and prayed. Since the institution of slavery had placed a heavy emotional and physical strain on the lives of blacks, those early responses are easily understood. Blacks had been required to restrain many of their feelings in order to survive slavery. Once freed, they released many emotions, frustrations and anxieties associated with their bondage. To the former slave, freedom meant at last being able to express their true feelings.

Black Charlestonians made presentations to union forces, passed resolutions thanking the Union Army for their liberation, staged parades, and organized other celebrations in order to exhibit their joy and gratitude. Many of these

events were attended by and participated in by many former slaves. Being able to congregate in large crowds was a new fruit of liberty for them, since even small meetings without the presence of whites had been prohibited to slaves by the conspiracy conscious white community.

Charleston's slaves deserted their masters and mistresses in record numbers upon emancipation, casting doubt on the myth of the "faithful old family retainer" who held steadfast to his or her former owner and pulled the owner through the rough spots of Reconstruction. To most slaves, their former owners' households represented slavery, and now they made conscious choices to leave and experience their newfound freedom. They had experienced enough mental and physical abuse at the hands of white owners. These were choices which they did not have under the old regime.

Despite the demoralizing aspects of slavery, blacks in Charleston emerged from it with a fairly stable family base. Even during slavery there existed a fierce attachment to family on the part of blacks, and this was carried over into the Reconstruction years. Owing to the fact that marriages between slaves were not recognized by the state prior to emancipation, and families were frequently broken, freedmen moved quickly to relocate lost family members and to either legitimize prior marriages or to marry new mates.

Black women were often sexually abused by white men during the period of slavery, with both the victims and

their loved ones being powerless to prevent it. In freedom, black men and women were determined to prevent this abuse. Some black men demanded that their wives and daughters stay at home and no longer work as domestics in white households where they might be vulnerable to the attacks of white males. Black women who had to work as domestics refused to remain overnight in employer's homes, returning home instead to take care of their own families as well as to protect themselves from potential abuse.

Under the old regime, slaves very rarely had sufficient material resources to support their families as they would wish. Now freedpeople were in more control of their meager resources, and they struggled to open bank accounts to provide a measure of economic security for themselves and various family members. All these actions underscore the importance of the family to blacks in Reconstruction Charleston.

Although slave owners frequently called slaves any names that they desired, and slaves answered to them, slaves possessed their own first names. In fact, they were often named after blood-kin, and evidence exists that this continued on an even higher scale after emancipation. Similarly, evidence also exists that suggests that some of Charleston's bondsmen retained surnames, despite any changes in ownership, which helped them maintain a family identity despite the break-up of slave families on the auction block.

Since surnames bestowed a degree of status, respect and dignity upon individuals, it was in the slave's best interests to not reveal their surnames to whites. Once freed, however, former slaves made their full names public, and this was only one way in which they now sought to garner some of the respect which they had long deserved, but had been denied under the slave regime.

There were numerous economic opportunities for slaves in antebellum Charleston. Many worked in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled positions. Although employment often help lead to a sense of self-esteem among slaves, in most cases, they were unable to use their meager wages to provide for their families and themselves. The vast majority of their earnings were used by masters and mistresses to create a life of leisure for themselves. While giving their blessings to the system of "hiring out," which was designed to further economically exploit the slave, whites allowed a loosening of the bond between master and slave. For economic reasons, some masters also sanctioned the system of "living out," among slaves. This removed the slave from the watchful eye of the master. Understandably, these two systems gave rise to a degree of economic and social independence for slaves in Charleston.

In a system where bonds were already loosened, upon emancipation most black Charlestonians expected that economic opportunities would now be increased, thus

increasing opportunities to provide materially for their families and themselves. Having worked diligently for whites under the slavery system, they could now work for themselves. In fact, most former slaves saw themselves as "A class of working people." The former slave migrants who came to Charleston seems to have held similar views to those of urban ex-slaves, with the most crucial factor drawing them to Charleston being the notion of expanded urban economic opportunities. When the freedmen's expectations of increased economic opportunities were not realized, with freedpeople sometimes being denied employment or being discriminated against on the basis of pay, they rebelled. Many organized and joined all-black labor unions and joined strikes, some of which were successful.

Having been denied opportunities to build secure economic bases for themselves during slavery, numerous Charleston ex-slaves were now determined to do so. To this end, former bondsmen either individually saved their meager resources to purchase land and build houses, or they formed economic cooperatives designed for the same purposes. As a consequence of their antebellum slave experience, not only were Charleston blacks aware of the importance of land acquisition for economic independence, but so too were the rural migrants who flocked in large numbers to Charleston. They struggled mightily to acquire land individually, or they participated in land cooperatives with native

Charleston blacks to accomplish this goal.

Although the education of Charleston's slaves was forbidden, particularly after 1835, urban life had provided some educational opportunities for slaves. Free blacks and slaves often illegally operated schools which instructed blacks. In some instances, blacks used trickery to acquire an education, or received instruction from kind whites. Slaves clearly recognized the power and importance of education. They saw masters and mistresses sign bills selling or buying them and other slaves, and in a few cases, sign papers emancipating them. Not infrequently, slaves also saw masters sign papers releasing them from the guardhouse. Furthermore, in order to freely move about, they had to have written passes. Literacy meant one could forge passes which could lead to their own emancipation or that of other blacks. As should be expected, many blacks who could read or write often had high status within slave society. Given these experiences, there existed a thirst for education among blacks in antebellum Charleston, which they relentlessly sought to quench.

This thirst for education was carried over into the Reconstruction years. Having had occasional educational opportunities opened to them during slavery, upon emancipation, most former urban slaves felt that they at last had a right to an education. Rural black immigrants to Charleston also longed for an education and fully expected

to receive it. In fact, many freedpeople came to the city so that their children could attend Freedmen's Bureau schools. Blacks in the Charleston area made tremendous sacrifices in order to obtain an education. Hungry, and with barely enough clothes on their backs, they often walked great distances to and from schools. Black Charlestonians contributed financial support from their meager resources to educational ventures. They purchased books, paid tuition and collected teachers' salaries from among their rank and file. Some served as the teachers of freedmen. Those who did not donate money to the cause, sometimes provided vacant lots on which schools could be constructed, while others provided their labor in constructing school buildings. Still other blacks gave teachers vegetables, fruits and poultry products to pay for their services. Apparently, most Charlestonian blacks doggedly pursued an education during the Reconstruction years because they considered its acquisition to be an important means for acceptance as full and equal citizens in American society. Education provided improved self-esteem as well as material protection from exploitation by literate white employers.

Notwithstanding the fact that many urban slaves were able to receive some religious instruction in the churches of their owners, they often had to occupy segregated galleries in these churches, attend separate services, listen to white ministers misrepresent Biblical texts, while

having little or no role in church affairs. Even in the few cases when blacks were able to have their own churches, it was almost always under the control and supervision of whites. Blacks had always found these arrangements to be a personal affront to their dignity and self-respect. Many blacks wanted their own religious institutions to protect them from such degradation.

Emancipation presented blacks with this opportunity, and they moved swiftly to accomplish this desire. In spite of the fact that the attitudes and actions of white southern churchmen help escalate black flight from white churches, most blacks had already resolved to leave these churches. White dominated churches were symbols of the oppression which blacks had experienced under slavery. The freedmen's exit was another clear expression of the independence which emancipation bestowed upon them.

Many freedmen were poor, and initially were confronted with numerous difficulties while attempting to establish their own churches. They sometimes had to conduct their services under adverse conditions. Still, they endured and pooled their meager resources to build and maintain churches. Others provided their own labor and skills in these ventures. These actions further underscore the strong commitment to religious independence on the part of Charleston's former bondsmen.

The church became the central institution within the

black community of Charleston. It endeavored to enforce a rigid moral code, encouraging monogamous family units, punishing adulterers, and forbidding gambling and card playing. Mirroring the social functions of the few black churches prior to the Civil War, and the white churches attended by blacks during the same period, the postbellum black church often held revivals and prayer meetings. They also sponsored dances, picnics, and barbecues. Black churches played an active role in the freedmen's educational campaign. Church members pooled their meager resources to support educational ventures. Some black churches also organized schools, and ministers often served as teachers.

Of paramount importance to the black community of Charleston were the social welfare functions of the church. Reflecting the benevolent actions of the few all black churches prior to emancipation, during the Reconstruction period the church organized charitable and burial societies. Monies to alleviate the sufferings of indigent freedmen were collected from church members who often were nearly penniless themselves. Nevertheless, they gave willingly to the cause. At the same time, funds were successfully solicited to aid in the burial of impoverished ex-slaves. The black church was the center of most black self-help efforts in Charleston.

In the area of politics, the black church reigned supreme. Churches were used as sites for political meetings

in Charleston, particularly Zion Presbyterian Church and Emanuel A.M.E. Church. Black ministers often played significant leadership roles in the political affairs of freedmen. Sometimes they coordinated huge political gatherings to air grievances and to organize the black community around a particular issue. A number of ministers were elected to public office, and used their positions to advance the interests of freedmen. In many cases, freedmen looked to black ministers for political leadership, freely voicing their concerns to them and expecting them to speak on their behalf to the respective authorities. Two black ministers in the Charleston area who were particularly active in politics on behalf of the black community were R. H. Cain and E. J. Adams.

If one word characterizes the Reconstruction Period in Charleston, it is violence. Charleston's slave population was well known for its restless and aggressive tendencies. Many openly fought whites in the streets of the city, and slaves were known to retaliate violently against their masters and mistresses. Furthermore, there were documented cases of masters being murdered by their slaves, and of entire white families being poisoned to death by slaves. This assertive behavior reached its zenith with the Denmark Vesey slave insurrection in 1822. Thousands of slaves in the Charleston area had been recruited to wreck vengeance on southern whites. In the aftermath of this aborted

insurrection, there was a preoccupation among whites with controlling the black population. To this end, they stepped up vigilante activities and enacted more stringent slave codes. Added to white concern was the fact that the black population outnumbered the whites.

Given the nature of changing relations between blacks and whites wrought by emancipation, violence between the two groups was intense. If black Charlestonians had been slow to back down from physical confrontations with whites during slavery, they would be even slower to do so under freedom. Throughout Reconstruction in Charleston, there were numerous race riots between blacks and whites, many of which were of a political nature. In a number of these racial conflicts, blacks were the aggressors.

Black Charlestonians were more than the innocent victims of violence by whites as some scholars have indicated. More realistically, violence in Charleston and throughout the South during Reconstruction was a double-edged sword, cutting both black and whites alike. For too long, in assessing racial violence in these crucial years, historians have focused primarily on major race riots. With the exception of victorious Charleston blacks, for various reasons whites usually triumphed in other localities. However, if one were to focus attention on lower level forms of violence such as fistfights between individual members of both groups, small scale battles between blacks and whites,

as well as individual cases of the two groups murdering each other, a different picture may in fact be drawn. It is hoped that scholars in the near future will launch historical inquiries in this direction.

Emancipation and Reconstruction gave rise to a revolution of monumental proportions in the American South. The system of slavery which had been part and parcel of the economic, social and political foundation of southern society for over two hundred years was shattered, and a free labor system emerged to replace it. The destruction of a system as dominant as that of slavery required southern whites to redefine their patterns of life to fit the new social reality. Longing to turn back the clock to the days of slavery when blacks knew their proper place in society, numerous white Charlestonians often found it extremely difficult to accept the new relations wrought by emancipation. Many whites still expected the freedmen to behave as slaves.

The freedpeople, however, had every intention of behaving as free men and women. Their conceptions of what freedom entailed were shaped not only by their antebellum observations of whites but also by their observations of the movements and behaviors of free blacks in the antebellum South. Freedpeople looked to these free blacks as role models. They welcomed the opportunity to move freely from one place to another without worrying about written passes

or being apprehended by slave patrols. At the same time, they were elated that they could now date and marry mates of their own choosing, and could raise families without the possibility of forcible separation from family members. Ex-slaves would now be better able to materially provide for their families and themselves. They could now attend their own churches, where they could worship with dignity and respect. They now had the opportunity to receive an education in schools, many of which were all black. They could play a role in electing their own representatives to the local, state, and national governments, and as a consequence, have an impact on political decisions.

Emancipation presented blacks with opportunities to make decisions affecting their lives independently of whites. Freedmen moved quickly to form monogamous family units, and pooled their meager resources to establish and maintain their own economic, educational and religious institutions. In most of these endeavors, they were not substantially aided by the policies of Radical Republicans. Yet, freedmen struggled tenaciously and successfully to carve out a place for themselves as free men and women in American society. When Reconstruction in Charleston is viewed from this perspective, it, certainly should be judged a grand success.

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