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"The Silent Response of the Little Monitor Within": *Freedom's Journal*, Education, and Race in Everyday Life

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This essay situates Freedom's Journal *within the context of antebellum education. It explores the newspaper as emerging from a shared cultural site marked by the conflicting convergence of educational ideologies--of African Americans striving for education against a white supremacist culture that sought to exclude them from it. African Americans were culturally situated on the threshold of education, requiring inclusion while observing injustice in traditional educational practice. In taking this approach, the essay challenges scholars who fail to examine how the status of* Freedom's Journal *as a weekly periodical shaped its pedagogical message, as well as those who characterize it as articulating a racially conservative educational message. It argues that, despite appearing conservative,* Freedom's Journal *shared radical educational agenda with other African American writers of the period. Illustrative of the threshold, the* Journal's *readership consisted of both African American and white reformers who had competing ideas about race and education. Therefore, it advanced its critique subversively through literary performances that depend upon a radical subtext that undercut their more racially conservative literal message. Where whites read assent to the dominant culture in the Journal's educational texts, African Americans read dissent. In this way,* Freedom's Journal *instilled a radical literacy based upon as a strategy for teaching its African American readership how to navigate race within the sphere of everyday life.*

Freedom's Journal, considered the first African-American edited newspaper, published its first number in 1827 with a call for education. "As education is what renders civilized man superior to the savage," declared its coeditors, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm, "...we deem it expedient to establish a paper, and bring into operation all the means with which our benevolent CREATOR has endowed us, for the moral, religious, civil and literary improvement of our injured race."[1] The coeditors recognized that education was central to the struggle for advancing African American citizenship in a white supremacist nation perpetuated by the systemic ignorance of the rights of nonwhites.[2] With every number *Freedom's Journal* followed through, providing information about literary societies and schools, lectures on education by community leaders, articles about learning practices in different cultures, literary works submitted by readers, and news about the world. It was, during its two year run, the only

publication substantively confronting African American educational concerns from a nonwhite perspective.

As the appearance of terms like "savage" and "civilized" denote, however, the *Journal's* educational features often appear couched within conservative racialist discourse. Many of them focus on moral uplift that, at first glance, seems to echo the paternalistic language of white antislavery reformers such as the members of the New York Manumission Society who paradoxically advanced a racial order in which blacks occupied a separate and subordinate social position.[3] On one hand, for instance, Cornish and Russwurm assert that education is "an object of the highest importance to the welfare society."[4] On the other hand, they qualify that claim with accommodationist language suggesting that education should serve a society marked by distinct racial spheres. "We form a spoke in the human wheel," write the coeditors, "and it is necessary that we should understand our dependence on the different parts, and theirs on us, in order to perform our part with propriety."[5] Accordingly, Cornish and Russwurm appeared to walk a fine line in *Freedom's Journal*, advocating widespread education for African Americans while simultaneously reassuring whites that its effects posed no threat to their hegemony.

This essay explores the newspaper's ambivalence towards the practice and social purpose of education. In doing so, it builds upon recent scholarship that has complicated our understanding of African American print culture in the nineteenth century. Scholars such as Frances Smith Foster, John Ernest, Joanna Brooks, Eric Gardner, and Marcy Dinius, with their attention to the periodicals, texts, writers, and readers participating in the African American press, have opened pathways into exploring the social dynamics of antebellum print culture.[6] As John Ernest has importantly articulated, the African American Press was "a dynamic and communal process that gathered and arranged information to meet the shifting contiguities of African American life."[7] As I specifically attend to African American educational life, my reading of *Freedom's Journal* draws from scholarship that examines how African American periodical writing informed the productions of racial identity through its interplay with the dominant racial discourses. In recent years, scholars such as Jacqueline Bacon, Timothy Helwig, Todd Vogel, and James Winston have increasingly attended to how *Freedom's Journal*, its editors, and contributors, participated in promoting African American community and public life despite systemic white supremacy.[8] Among their concerns, scholars have contributed to discussions involving the newspaper's advocacy of education, a pressing issue to any community but especially to African Americans staking a claim to citizenship in the urban north. Bacon's indispensable history of *Freedom's Journal*, for example, attends to the

newspaper's role in promoting literacy, supporting mutual aid societies, and encouraging moral uplift. Such studies make room for my exploration of the newspaper's ambivalence toward white-led educational efforts for African Americans.

This essay views *Freedom's Journal* as emerging from a shared cultural site marked by the conflicting convergence of educational ideologies--of African Americans striving for education against a white supremacist culture that sought to exclude them from it. The various texts that comprised *Freedom's Journal* were, to borrow from Derrick Spires' observations on the circulation of black convention proceedings, "performative speech acts that seek to manufacture the very citizenship practices from which [African Americans] had been excluded."[9] For northern white Americans, the early antebellum period marked the beginning of a large-scale mobilization in mass education known today as the common school movement.[10] For black New Yorkers in the 1820s, however, the path to education was more precarious than a walk to school. Excluded from most white-run schools, African Americans also recognized that the education practiced within their walls was a racializing discourse underpinned by white supremacist ideology. African Americans were culturally situated on the threshold of education, requiring inclusion while observing injustice in traditional educational practice. Illustrative of the threshold, the *Journal's* readership consisted of both African American and white reformers who had competing ideas about race and education. *Freedom's Journal* articulates the ambivalence of the educational threshold, pressing for a view of education that seems embedded in white, paternalistic notions about African American citizenship. However, this essay argues that *Freedom's Journal* demonstrates how expressions of ambivalence toward whiteness provided a means of critique and dissent rather than support. Through examining manifestations of this ambivalence in the newspaper, I posit that ambivalence was often a tool for subtle criticism, emerging as literary performance that undercut the newspaper's seemingly conservative educational message. The performance of this ambivalence, moreover, extended beyond the newspaper's articles directly about educational issues like schooling, emerging as a subtle satire of white paternalism in genres like advice columns and travelogues that dealt with the learning of identity outside the classroom. In this way, *Freedom's Journal* amplified a critical racial literacy—a way of reading whiteness—throughout its circulation as a strategy for teaching its African American readership how to navigate race within the sphere of everyday life.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL THRESHOLD

Freedom's Journal participated in a period fraught with competing ideas about race and education. The paper's first year coincided with the final stages of New York's gradual emancipation of most of its enslaved population. In the city, a community of roughly 14,000 free African Americans was gaining a middle class foothold.[11] While this gave African Americans cause for celebration, white New Yorkers, even those who were members of the most liberal reform groups, expressed trepidation. These concerns, for instance, were exacerbated by the white press, which regularly published sensationalized crime reports that drew upon racist narratives and applied them to the African American community as a whole.[12] Involvement in education was a way to represent the black community positively, countering a white "publick" that had, as Cornish and Russwurm put it, "too long...been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us deeply."[13] Education, however, also posed a dilemma. Whites perceived it as a social category over which they claimed authority, articulated through a myriad of institutions and practices. For African Americans to declare public entry into education, they were asserting their participation in a tradition that had been developed by whites for whites. New York, for instance, took its first steps toward developing a tax-supported school system for whites in 1795.[14] In 1827, it was estimated that nearly 500,000 white children within the state attended its 8,000 common schools.[15] Part of this white educational tradition was the development of ways to control the access of nonwhites. In some circumstances, whites excluded African Americans, sometimes violently, from schools and access to basic literacy.[16] In others, whites limited inclusion through developing, as educational historian James D. Anderson put it, "schooling for second-class citizenship," separate institutions and curriculums deployed to instill in African Americans a subordinate social position.[17]

The New York Manumission Society with its educational arm, the African Free School, was one such institution, run by white philanthropists who were firmly against slavery but were also ambivalent to citizenship for free African Americans. Founded in 1787, the African Free School was the largest educational operation for African Americans in the city of New York.[18] The Society rooted its actions in whites' anxiety, charging itself in its official charter with "keep[ing] a watchful eye over the conduct of such Negroes as have been or may be liberated; and to prevent them from running into immorality or sinking into idleness."[19] African Free School headmaster Charles Andrews reprinted an article from the *New York Commercial Advertiser* in his book-length history of the school that uses similar language. The article contrasts African Free School students with "those idle [children] who are suffered to grow up uncultivated, unpolished, and heathenish in our streets; who, for the want of care and instruction, are daily plunging in scenes of sloth, idleness, dissipation, and crime, until they pass from

step to step over the tread mill, into the state prison, and at last up to the gallows."[20] In the absence of slavery, according to the African Free School's headmaster, African Americans necessitated management from white institutions--either the schoolhouse or the prison house. The schools' discipline was in keeping with this. It employed a monitorial method in which the schoolmaster appointed a hierarchy of student monitors who oversee younger students, teach the school's values, and enforce its rules. The apparatus depended upon a reward system of tickets for good behavior that students used to purchase promotions in rank.[21] Each spring, the African Free School's academic year would culminate with a public examination in which students would model the efficacy of the school's discipline through performances in areas such as oration, literacy, penmanship, mathematics, geography, and needlework. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* described "the effects of education" demonstrated by students at an African Free School exhibition as setting them apart from "black children…who drag out a miserable existence as pests in our streets."[22] Indeed, the school's administration idealized students' performances of gratitude to the African Free School's benefactors and acquiescence to its discipline.[23] Charles Andrew's history, for example, includes a poem recited but not written by a student during an examination that distills the performance of self-discipline in the monitorial experience. "As soldiers under discipline, "the student performed," We end our work as we begin / with regularity pursue / each exercise we have to do / orderly perseverance gains / a good reward for all our pains"[24] Employed to illustrate the efficacy of white-run education, the student's poem likewise articulates the educational dilemma that African Americans faced. Entering white-run charity schools like the African Free Schools offered the possibility of social elevation through literacy, mathematics, and some vocational training, but it also meant participating in a discourse that suppressed their subjectivity and aimed to reinforce a white hegemony.

Many contemporaries of Cornish and Russwurm fought against white educational authority. In New York and elsewhere, African Americans throughout the antebellum period struggled for educational control by attempting to reshape the existing educational culture. Organizing boycotts of white-run schools was one of the more forceful methods of protest. In 1832, for example, parents in New York waged a boycott of the African Free Schools. Sparked by Andrews' violent caning of a student, the boycott resulted in his dismissal and the appointment of African Free School graduate John Peterson as Andrew's replacement. After only two years of Peterson's leadership, all but one of the school's teachers were African American and its enrollment was 1,439 students, the highest in the school's history.[25] African Americans likewise established small private schools in their homes or churches that offered basic

instruction. In 1815, for instance, the Brooklyn African Woolman Benevolent established a school in the home of its charter president, Peter Coger. Later, when the New York public schools turned away black children to accommodate more white children, the Woolman Society raised money for a school, a church, and a library.[26] Philadelphian Jeremiah Gloucester likewise ran a notice in *Freedom's Journal* for a tuition-based school that offered instruction in "Reading, Writing, Cyphering, Geography, English Grammar, and Natural Philosophy. And to the females Needle Work."[27] St. Philip's, a black Episcopal Church in New York City, also advertised in *Freedom's Journal,* offering evening music lessons on Tuesday and Friday evenings.[28]

In cities like New York, African Americans also formed literary societies that fostered a network of community-based organizations focused on education. Ranging from small to large, these societies, organized around reading and literature, offered discussion groups, lectures, poetry recitations, reading rooms, and circulating libraries.[29] New York's Phoenix Society, for example, was founded in 1833 with the populist mission of "promoting the improvement of the colored people in Morals, Literature, and Mechanical Arts" across no less than the entire black population."[30] The Society's constitution outlined a plan that involved dividing the city into wards, "visit[ing] every family in the Ward, and mak[ing] a register of every coloured person in it—their name, sex, age, occupation, if they read, write, and cipher." This comprehensive support included encouraging children to attend school regularly, enrolling infants in day programs so that parents could work, offering access to lending libraries, helping adults acquire vocational training or means to pursue liberal arts, and providing school clothing.[31]

From these efforts, African Americans developed a discourse marked by ambivalence toward the white educational culture that they sought to reshape. While assertively promoting widespread education as central to racial justice, African Americans' public statements often stopped short of criticizing the paternalism and racist assumptions that underscored white-run educational efforts. On New York's 1827 emancipation day, for example, William Hamilton, president and cofounder of the African Society for Mutual Relief, called whites' assumptions that African Americans were less capable of study "false as hell," concluding an oration delivered at the African Zion Church with a forceful demand for his listeners to devote themselves to literature and the sciences.[32] Hamilton's speech, which praised the New York manumission society, also trafficked in white misconceptions about African American's capacity for citizenship. It borrowed from the paternalistic beliefs held by liberal whites that African Americans' were sorely in need of instruction in Christian values. More important than academic learning, Hamilton told his audience, "first…let me invite you to the path of

virtue." Directing his strongest admonition not to racist whites but rather as a warning to African Americans, he continued, "Vice, from which I would call you […] is a crooked, thorny way, full of stinking weeds, the path of trouble, debasement, misery, and destruction."[33] Similar discourse manifested in the constitution of New York's Phoenix Society. Not only did the society seek to encourage African Americans to "improve their minds" but also "to abstain from vicious and demoralizing practice."[34] In this way, often antebellum African Americans both advocated education while, at the same time, speaking about it a similar paternalistic register as liberal whites. They recognized widespread learning's importance in the pursuit of social justice but stopped short of overtly challenging the racial ignorance central to American education—that set of normalized learning practices that emerged from a Protestant tradition and worked to sustain white hegemony.

Some African Americans did overtly criticize the paternalistic aims of white-led education. Of Cornish and Russwurm's contemporaries none was more critical of it than David Walker, *Freedom Journal's* own subscription agent in Boston.[35] His *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), published two years after the inaugural issue of *Freedom's Journal*, labeled white educational practice as "ignorance and treachery."[36] Walker evinced his assertion of this "ignorance and treachery" by demonstrating how it manifested in the handwriting of an African American child who had attended a white-run school for nine years. The child's neat and composed handwriting "only looks beautiful," Walker noted, when actually he "knows grammar this day, nearly as well as he did the day he first entered the school-house, under a white master."[37] Walker, therefore, overtly contested the underpinning ideology of white education, asserting that it insidiously internalized in African Americans a sense of inferiority. "Young men of color," he writes, "who have been to school, and who are considered by the coloured people to have received an excellent education, because, perhaps, some of them can write a good hand, but who, notwithstanding their neat writing, may be almost as ignorant, in comparison, as a horse."[38] For Walker, true education necessitated learning how to uncover and confront systemic whiteness. Periodicals edited by African Americans, explained Walker in his *Appeal*, were central promoting this education that confronted white ignorance. Though the *Appeal* appeared after *Freedom's Journal* ceased publication, Walker advocated the "universal spread" of *The Rights of All*, its successor also edited by Samuel Cornish. "The utility of such a vehicle…cannot be estimated," he stressed. "If we should let it go down," he continued, "never let us undertake anything of the kind again, but give up at once and say that we are really so ignorant and wretched that we cannot do anything at all!!"[39] In short, Walker saw newspapers like *Freedom's Journal* as essential features of the African

American community as sources of education that countered the effects of white-led schooling by revealing its underpinning ideology.

"READING AND REFLECTION"

Freedom's Journal and its readership were situated amid these competing ideas surrounding white reform education for African Americans. Though a product of New York's African American community, for instance, *Freedom's Journal* also had ties to the Manumission Society and its schools. African Americans and white members of the Manumission Society--as well as other reformers in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere--read, subscribed, and helped fund the newspaper.[40] The newspaper's coeditors provided copies of *Freedom's Journal* for the African Free School library.[41] Consequently, ambivalence marked discourse that emerged in *Freedom's Journal* from the convergence of these competing ideas about race and education was marked with ambivalence. This ambivalence appears, for example, in its handling of the New York Manumission Society's African Free School. At first glance, its involvement with the African Free School seems to illustrate the uncritical acceptance of white educational practice that David Walker would reject two years later in his *Appeal*. "No man of colour," notes a *Freedom's Journal* article about the Free Schools, "can hesitate one moment about embracing the generous offer of the Manumission Society." It continues, "we can but pledge ourselves to render every assistance in our power, to further the philanthropic views of the Society."[42] The newspaper published advertisements for the schools, notices, accounts of the Manumission Society meetings, descriptions of public examinations, and examples of student work. For further evidence of the newspaper's support, one could look at Samuel Cornish's and John Russwurm's personal involvement with the school as well. They served as agents for the school, visiting homes on the Society's behalf. Employing an organizational strategy similar to the monitorial order of its classroom, the Manumission Society divided the city into seventeen districts, appointing agents for each district.[43] Though the Phoenix Society would later employ a similar approach to assess the educational needs of New York's African Americans, the white Manumission Society was more concerned with behavioral discipline. For children's school admittance, parents would be required to uphold "good characters," as well as exemplify "Sobriety and Honesty,--and peaceable and orderly living."[44] A child's education itself was the ticket in the reward system. Cornish acted as the General Visiting Agent while Russwurm served as a district agent. Cornish's role entailed administering a wide-spread canvassing effort

throughout the city to gather information and report to the Society on "the particulars of every coloured family in each district."[45]

While the coeditors' involvement as agents for the African Free School suggests their support, the report published in *Freedom's Journal* announcing this plan reveals ambivalence. On one hand, the article borrows from white, paternalistic discourse. It articulates whites' underlying anxiety over black citizenship that fueled white-led educational efforts to instill Christian values, citing that "it is feared that many hundreds [of African American children] are spending their time in idleness."[46] Expressing ambivalence was, on the other hand, a way of publically challenging white education in the guise of support. While overtly contesting white education, the article also implies that the canvassing plan should be seen as a way for African Americans to assert greater influence over education. For instance, the article presents the plan as a "joint" effort between the Manumission Society and the African American community.[47] Accordingly, it emphasizes that leaders in African American community would be the plan's chief administrators. The article, for instance, lists the thirty-four African American leaders representing the city's seventeen districts. In addition to Cornish and Russwurm, readers would recognize that the committee included prominent community members such as William Hamilton and Henry Scott, a successful entrepreneur in the pickling business.[48] Peter Williams, the reverend at St. Philips Episcopal Church, presided over the committee and represented a ward.[49] The article both asserts African American subjectivity while not overtly rejecting white conceptions of education and the "ample provision made by the Manumission Society."[50] Consequently, the article's meaning—whether it represented assent to white educational authority or an assertion of African American subjectivity—depended upon the cultural standpoint of the reader. A white audience, empowered by the dominant educational system, could read the article as assenting to that system, while a black audience, disempowered by it, could read dissent. Expressing ambivalence in this manner was a means of surreptitiously critiquing white education through texts that appeared to support it.

For example, in a three-part article simply entitled "Education," a contributor writing under the pseudonym Philanthropos echoes the sensationalized images of crime and social decay to describe "the evils accruing" to the black community for want of education. Philanthropos writes in the second installment that without education:

> youths ... are permitted to wander from street to street, to indulge in every species of juvenile dissipation, and to imbibe habits, the most pernicious to their future interests, and destructive of every moral and social obligation. ...[T]hey are less disposed to industry in the pursuit of any vocation...; they are unused to aspire

> after elevation of condition; and consequently continue during a wretched existence, ignorant, poor and contemptible.[51]

This passage ostensibly reflects the sentiment of white educational reformers. Philanthropos, though, does not identify white schooling as the solution. He ironically uses its discourse to promote African American educational efforts for adults. He advocates Sabbath Schools in black churches "for the instruction of those who may be unacquainted with the art of reading," as well as secular "mutual relief" schools of which he identifies two "among our brethren of this city...under their own superintendence."[52] Finally, he advocates informal education through "READING AND REFLECTION, as well as by conversing in the social circle."[53] The subjugating language of white schooling therefore cloaks an argument for an education whites cannot monitor. The practice of reading functions as to way of instituting unmonitored spaces for building community within the social contingencies of everyday life. *Freedom's Journal* itself, Philanthropos further implies, carries import in this social "READING AND REFLECTION" conducted informally with friends and family throughout the course of everyday life. In this manner, while seemingly reproducing the discourse of white education, Philanthropos advances the radical literacy of reading and reflection--the intellectual space for critiquing the dominant culture. Juxtaposed here are the racializing discourses of subjugation and educational liberation. His authorial performance as both a white reformer and a self-identified member of New York's African American community articulates the tension between them.

NAVIGATING PRINT, NEGOTIATING RACE

As a newspaper, *Freedom's Journal's* was uniquely suited to circulating this ambivalence toward white institutions, amplifying it among its readership. The newspaper's circulating ambivalence taught readers how to navigate competing racial discourses in everyday life. Simply reading the newspaper, for instance, was an act of social navigation. Each issue included an array of texts of various genres by African American and white authors, juxtaposing original submissions with reprints of articles from the white press. Issues regularly engaged readers in the practice of reading articles, advice columns, poems, letters, tales, travelogues, and other serialized works of fiction and nonfiction. Because its layout of various texts across several large pages did not depend upon a linear reading, readers would move across the paper's terrain from text to text, as they constructed meaning from each issue's contents. Through its

variety of texts, *Freedom's Journal* encouraged its readers to navigate the tensions among the many discourses that participated in the reproduction of racial identity.

By appropriating genres common to newspapers, *Freedom's Journal* established spaces for scrutinizing the dominant discourse that normalized race. This often meant attending to deceivingly minute circumstance of daily life. Advice columns, with their recurring attention to the everyday, were one manifestation. *Freedom's Journal* published a column entitled "The Observer" that implicitly examined the monitorial discipline utilized by the Manumission Society.[54] Under the pseudonym "Mr. Observer," the author claims to give voice to "the silent response of the little monitor within."[55] While this seemingly constitutes strident didacticism to queries from supposed readers about everyday concerns, Mr. Observer's authorial performance and exaggerated mimicry of white reform rhetoric suggests satire. For instance, Mr. Observer begins his first installment by observing himself, thus subtly caricaturing the internalization of the white panoptic system. Speaking of himself in the third person, he observes himself judging others while refusing to regard their judgement of him. "The Observer," writes Mr. Observer, "is aware that his intentions will frequently be called in question, and the purity of his motives disbelieved. It matters not with him."[56] Watching himself watch others watch himself, the character of Mr. Observer, reveals the absurdity of monitorial discipline. Accordingly, the column's first query contributes to this. Though Mr. Observer grandiosely claims "to expose the deeds of the designing, and defend the weak and inexperienced from the power of the strong and subtle," his readers' queries ironically involve minor problems. For instance, he responds to "an elderly lady, of great piety and benevolence" outraged by churchgoers who "turn their heads round" when someone enters service late.[57] Mr. Observer responds with a disproportionate indignation, employing the "rod of reproof" to chastise the African American community.[58] "We should let no unholy thought," he writes, "no worldly care intrude upon our minds."[59] Then, as if winking at the reader, he continues, "And far from us should be the least appearance of levity. I hope these few words will produce the intended effect."[60] Depending on how one reads his "intended effect," Mr. Observer either provides for his audiences the uncritical reproduction of racializing reform ideology or a subtle critique of it. Through literary performances that drew upon periodical genres like advice columns, *Freedom's Journal* utilized its status as a newspaper to direct the repeated, consistent, and reinforced implementation of this subversive education to the everyday social sphere.

Along with advice columns, travelogues reprinted from the white press posed complex representations of African American subjectivity that encouraged this radical literacy. "The Memoirs of Captain Paul Cuffee," for instance, was one such reprint.

Not only was Cuffee's "Memoirs" originally published in a white newspaper, it was written in the third person most likely by a white amanuensis.[61] On one hand, the editors of *Freedom's Journal* appear to establish Cuffee, a well-known black shipping merchant who prospered in the late eighteenth century, as embodying the values of citizenship acceptable to the newspaper's white readers.[62] The narrative establishes Cuffee as pious and industrious. He uses the money from his shipping business to fund agricultural endeavors and build a school "open to all who pleased to send their children."[63] On the other hand, Cuffee's story illustrates how *Freedom's Journal* utilizes reprints from the white press to emphasize the discursive tensions between white constructions and black subjectivity. In the first number of *Freedom's Journal*, Cuffee's "Memoirs" is situated on the front page among numerous other reprints and original articles. This includes the editors' statement of purpose in which they declare emphatically, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."[64] Through the paper's layout, the coeditors set "Memoirs" in tension with the newspaper's objective of providing an African American voice. The editors emphasize this by overtly identifying Cuffee's story as the product of the white newspaper the *Liverpool Mercury*, presumably of white authorship, speaking for an African American. The newspaper's layout undercuts what appears to be the acceptance of a white person's rendering of an African American with a juxtaposition that implies the underlying discursive conflict over African American subjectivity. This conflict reemerges throughout the issue, displayed literally before the readers' eyes as they navigate the pages. Readers move from the compelling travelogue of Cuffe's nautical and social navigation, to another reprint pronouncing the flourishing of common schools that do not admit blacks, to verse by the white poet William Cullen Bryant entitled "The African Chief," to a vignette reprinted from a white newspaper about a cruel slave owner and a pious slave, and finally to a brief advertisement for a modest, private school for African Americans.[65] As Cuffee navigates the ocean, readers must navigate Cuffee in relation to themselves within the white supremacist world that *Freedom's Journal* overtly shows its audience. In this manner, the newspaper facilitates the critical negotiation of its readers' own subjectivity through an implicit curriculum underlying its contents.

"Travelling Scraps," an original travelogue, maps these negotiations across the reach of the newspaper's circulation. As with Mr. Observer and Philanthropos, "Travelling Scraps" similarly engages with authorial identity as performance.[66] It involves weekly correspondence addressed to Mr. Observer from an anonymous African American traveler. The traveler's narrative recounts an excursion from New York to his destination in Washington DC, through which he describes life, society,

and institutions within the cities he visits. His descriptions particularly attend to African Americans' situations of learning. "Travelling Scraps" links readers in communities across geographic distance, unifying them at the point where ideological struggle over black subjectivity meets everyday life. Beginning with his first installment, the traveler establishes these tensions with a description of an everyday situation in which he faces white reformers. As his journey progresses, his critique of white reform becomes increasingly overt. He notes initially that his steamboat to Philadelphia is filled with "indefatigable benefactors, of the Society of Friends."[67] Eventually he bitingly asserts the reformers' company is worse than exposure to "the inclemencies of the weather."[68] Finally, he cuts to the crux of the problem. Why is it," he asks, "that even in the estimation of men, who are really our friends, we are all classed and considered alike?"[69] He remarks with frustration that "prejudices at present are so great" that African Americans would be afforded more "convenience and comfort" during travel posing as a slave to the Governor of Georgia "than as a free man on your own private affairs.[70] The travelogue provides for such moments to enter the broader public conversation of black subjectivity. Reaching Philadelphia, for example, the traveler shifts his gaze from the everyday to a sweeping perspective of the city's landscape, which he explains represents the epitome of "good order and economy."[71] He uses this perspective, along with an approving tone, to survey the schools whites established for African Americans. "Besides the City Public Schools in Sixth street," observes the traveler, "there are no less than five others supported by Societies & individual charity: two in Willings Alley, Male and Female, containing each thirty-five scholars."[72] While this description seems to look with uncritical favor on white institutions' role in establishing an orderly and just society, the traveler's frustration with white reformers in his descriptions of everyday life tell a contradictory story. The travelogue reveals the juxtaposition between perspectives, implicitly underscoring the difference between the theoretical benevolence of white educational reform and the more difficult reality of its practice. Rather than simple didacticism, "Travelling Scraps" demonstrates the *Journal's* broader educational process of building African American community through fostering the shared practice of culturally-specific reading that critiques white supremacy. The newspaper, a collection of various published scraps, pieces together a fluctuating representation of the discursive tension from competing racializing ideologies and encourages its readers to participate in negotiating that tension within the sphere of everyday life.

Instructing readers how to address this tension, according to a literary piece published in the *Anglo African Magazine* in 1859, was the legacy of *Freedom's Journal*. "The Last and the First Colored Editor," part of a series entitled "Afric-American

Picture Gallery," captures this tension as the undercurrent running through subsequent efforts in African American periodicals. The tableau imagines the tension as performed through body of last colored editor. It depicts him "in his chair editorial, with the first number of the *Freedom's Journal*…held in one hand and outspread before him, while the other, as though expressive of his resolve, is firmly clenched." To emphasize the legacy of this tension and the primacy of newspapers in navigating the struggle against white supremacy, the tableau situates this editor amid the artifacts of these everyday texts. "Surrounding him," it continues, "are piles of all the journals edited by colored men from the commencement up till the present, among which the Freedom's Journal, Colored American, People's Press, North Star, and Frederick Douglas's paper are the more prominent."[73] In this way, the tableau considers the antebellum struggle for civil rights as the accumulation of individual newspaper issues, each of which signifying a communal attempt to help people across a circulation of readers better navigate their immediate daily worlds. Engaged in the everyday struggle of asserting subjectivity and influence over racial production, African Americans situated on the threshold of white education turned to newspapers to circulate intricate literary performances like "Travelling Scraps" and nuanced characters such as Philanthropos and Mr. Observer that articulate ambivalence toward white educational discourse. These performances of ultimately inform our understanding of race, American education, and African American literary history by emphasizing how black print culture contributed to the development of a black educational culture that challenged white schooling and its underlying ideology.

NOTES

[1] Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm, "Proposals for Publishing the Freedom's Journal," *Freedom's Journa*l, March 16, 1827.

[2] Education was central to the lives and activism of both Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm. Cornish, a Presbyterian minister, was affiliated aid societies and served as an educational agent for the New York Manumission Society and a proposed college. See David Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy before the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Russwurm, a schoolteacher before attending Bowdoin College, was among the first black American college graduates. Moving to Liberia in 1829, Russwurm was the colony's school superintendent, launched its first newspaper, and served its governor until 1851. See Winston James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm: The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer, 1799-1851* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[3] The New York Manumission Society was established in 1785 and included elite, white politicians, religious leaders, and business people in New York. Among its founding members were society president John Jay (a participant in the Continental Congress and architect of the state's constitution), John Murray (a wealthy, Quaker merchant), and Alexander Hamilton (who later was elected to the United States presidency). Manumission Society desired society to be, as historian David Gellman put it, "reformed in their image and under their direction," advocating the multi-year gradual emancipation of New York's enslaved population that sought to counterbalance African Americans' right to freedom with slaveholders' property rights. See David Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom 1777-1827* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008) 56, 58, 59.

[4] Cornish and Russwurm, "To Our Patrons," *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

[5] Cornish and Russwurm, "To Our Patrons."

[6] My approach to *Freedom's Journal* is informed by recent scholarship that complicates the cultural and literary history of the antebellum black press in ways that, as Frances Smith Foster puts it, address its role in advancing a "purposeful self-identified African America." See Frances Smith Foster, "A Narrative of Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," *American Literary History* 17, no. 4 (2005): 714-740. See also John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Joseph Rezek, "The Orations on the Abolition of the Slave Trade and the Uses of Print in the Early Black Atlantic," Early American Literature (45) no. 3 (2010): 655-682); Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public

Sphere and the Emergence of Black Print Culture," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62 no. 1 (2005): 67-92; For a focus on religious texts within African American print culture, see the collection *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African-American Literature*, ed. Michael J. Drexler and Ed White (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008); *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); especially reverent to newspaper focus of this essay is Daniel Hack, "The Canon in Front of Them: African American Deployments of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'," *Early African American Print Culture*, 178-191. For recent work on African American newspapers, see Eric Gardner, *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Robert Fanuzzi, "Frederick Douglass's 'Colored Newspaper'" in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 55-70; Robert Fanuzzi, Abolition's Public Sphere, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Marcy J. Dinius, "Seeing a Slave as a Man: Frederick Douglass, Racial Progress, and Daguerreian Portraiture, in *Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) 193-232; Rachel Banner, "'Thinking through Things: Labors of Freedom in James McCune Smith's 'The Washerwoman,'" *ESQ* 59, no. 2 (2013): 291-328.

[7] Ernest, *Liberation Historiography*, 281.

[8] For a history of *Freedom's Journal*, see Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom's Journal: The First African-American Newspaper* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007). and "Freedom's Journal: 'Pleading Our Own Cause'" from Winston James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm: The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer, 1799-1851* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).; For recent literary scholarship on *Freedom's Journal*, see Jean Lee Cole, "Theresa and Blake: Mobility and Resistance in Antbellum African American Serialized Fiction," *Callaloo* 43 no. 1 (2011): 158-175. Timothy Helwig, "Cross-Racial Strategies of Class Solidarity in *Mechanics' Free Press* and *Freedom's Journal*" *American Periodicals* 19, no. 2 (2009): 117-135; Frances Smith Foster, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa?" *African American Review* 40, no. 4 (2006), 631-635; Todd Vogel, "The New Face of Black Labor," *The Black Press*, 37-54.

[9] Derrick R. Spires, "Imagining a State of Fellow Citizens: Early African American Politics of Publicity in the Black State Conventions" in *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) 274.

[10] For a history of antebellum common schools, see Carl Kaestle. *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).
[11] Leonard P. Curry. *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 245.
[12] Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 110.
[13] Cornish and Russwurm, "To Our Patrons."
[14] Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars, a History of New York City Public Schools*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000) 7.
[15] S.S. Randall, *History of the Common School System in the State of New York* (New York: Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor & Company, 1871) 56.
[16] For a study of antebellum African American schooling, see Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[17] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1; Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens*, 37-8.
[18] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 137.
[19] New York Manumission Society, quoted in John L. Rury, "Philanthropy, Self Help, and Social Control: The New York Manumission Society and Free Blacks, 1786-1810," *Phylon* 48, no. 3, (1985): 233.
[20] "The African Free School," *The New York Commercial Advertiser*, quoted in Charles Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1830) 45-46.
[21] Free School Society of New York, *Manual of the Lancastrian System* (New York: Samuel Woods and Sons, 1820) 20.
[22] The African Free School," *The New York Commercial Advertiser*, quoted in Charles Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1830) 45.
[23] For analysis on African Free School student writing and racial performance, see Carla Peterson, "Black Life in Freedom: Creating an Elite Culture," in *Slavery in New York,* ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris (New York: New York Press, 2005) 184-204., as well as Anna Mae Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in *My Bondage and My Freedom*," *American Literature* 82, no.3, (2010): 461-488.
[24] "Lines," quoted in Charles Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1830) 143.
[25] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 143-44

[26] Craig Steven Wilder, *In the Company of Black Men: The African Influence on African American Culture in New York* (New York: NYU Press, 2005) 127.
[27] Jeremiah Glouster, "School Notice," *Freedom's Journal*, November 2, 1827.
[28] "St. Philip's Church Music School," Freedom's Journal, October 19, 1827.
[29] Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 50.
[30] "Address and Constitution of the Phoenix Society of New York, and of the Auxiliary Ward Associations," in *Early Negro Writing*, 1760-1837, ed. Dorothy Porter (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995) 142.
[31] "Address and Constitution of the Phoenix Society of New York, and of the Auxiliary Ward Associations," 144.
[32] William Hamilton, "An Oration Delivered in the African Zion Church, on the Fourth of July, 1827, in Commemoration of the Abolition of Domestic Slavery in this State," *Early Negro Writing*, 1760-1837, ed. Dorothy Porter (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995) 103.*;* Craig D. Townsend, *Faith in their Own Color: Black Episcopalians in the Antebellum New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 46.
[33] William Hamilton, "An Oration Delivered in the African Zion Church, on the Fourth of July, 1827, in Commemoration of the Abolition of Domestic Slavery in this State," 103.
[34] "Address and Constitution of the Phoenix Society of New York, and of the Auxiliary Ward Associations," 145.
[35] "The Freedom's Journal," *Freedom's Journal*, "March 16, 1827. For recent scholarship on David Walker's *Appeal*, see Lori Leavell "'Not intended exclusively for the slave states': Antebellum Recirculation of David Walker's Appeal," *Callaloo* 38 no. 3 (2015) 679-695. Marcy J. Dinius, "'Look!!! Look!!! At This!!!': The Radical Typography of David Walker's Appeal," *PMLA* 126 no. 1 (2011), 55-72; Chris Apap,"'Let no man of us budge one step"': David Walker and the Rhetoric of African American Emplacement," Early American Literature 46 no. 2 (2011) 319-350; Gene Andrew Jarrett, "'To Refute Mr. Jefferson's Arguments Respecting Us': Thomas Jefferson, David Walker, and the Politics of Early African American Literature," Early American Literature 46 no. 2 (2011) 291-318; Robert S. Levine, "Circulating the Nation: David Walker, the Missouri Compromise, and the Rise of the Black Press," *The Black Press*, 17-37.; See also Peter Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
[36] David Walker. *Walker's Appeal, In Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1830), 24.
[37] Walker, *Walker's Appeal*, 36, 39.

[38] Walker, *Walker's Appeal*, 37.
[39] Walker, *Walker's Appeal*, 76.
[40] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 47.
[41] Charles C. Andrews, "New York African Free School," *Freedom's Journal*, November 9, 1827.
[42] "City African Free Schools," *Freedom's Journal*, December 21, 1827.
[43] "School Meeting," *Freedom's Journal*, January 11, 1828.
[44] New York Manumission Society, quoted in Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 65.
[45] "School Meeting," *Freedom's Journal.*
[46] "School Meeting."
[47] "School Meeting."
[48] Townsend, *Faith in their Own Color*, 2.
[49] Townsend, *Faith in their Own Color*, 40.
[50] "School Meeting."
[51] Philanthropos, "Education No. II," *Freedom's Journa*l, April 6, 1827.
[52] Philanthropos, "Education No. III," Freedom's Journal, April 13, 1827.
[53] Philanthropos, "Education No. III."
[54] Jacqueline Bacon attributes authorship of anonymous "Observer" to John Russwurm, though she does not document the source. Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 114.
[55] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I," *Freedom's Journal*, August 17, 1827.
[56] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I."
[57] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I."
[58] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I."
[59] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I."
[60] John Russwurm. "Observer, No. I."
[61] Bruce Dickson reports that biographical sketches of Paul Cuffe began circulating as early as 1807 and were distributed widely. Dickson, *Origins of African American Literature, 1860-1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001) 132.
[62] For a biographical account of Paul Cuffe, see Lamont D. Thomas, *Rise to be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
[63] "Memoirs of Capt. Paul Cuffee," *Freedom's Journal*, March 30, 1827.
[64] Cornish and Russwurm, "To Our Patrons."
[65] From *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.
[66] Jacqueline Bacon attributes authorship of "Travelling Scraps" to John Russwurm. Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 75.
[67] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal*, June 27, 1828.

[68] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal*, June 27, 1828.
[69] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal*, June 27, 1828.
[70] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal*, June 27, 1828.
[71] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal*, June 27, 1828.
[72] "Travelling Scraps," *Freedom's Journal,* July 11, 1828.
[73] Ethiop, "Afric-American Picture Gallery: Number 1" *The Anglo African Magazine*, February 1859, in *The Anglo African Magazine*, ed. William Loren Katz (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 53.