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Community Development for a White City: Race Making, Improvementism, and the Cincinnati Race Riots and Anti-Abolition Riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841

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Community Development for a White City: Race Making, Improvementism, and the

Cincinnati Race Riots and Anti-Abolition Riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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in
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Abstract

This project is an historical ethnography and a cultural history of the anti-black race riots and anti-abolition riots in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1829, 1836, and 1841. It is also a case history in an urban and commercial/early industrial context of the idea that violent social practices such as riots, as well as law and the customary practices of everyday living, are deployed as *race making technologies*, actually constructing racial categories. By extending this constructivist concept to the conversion of *space* to *place* through the human ascription of meaning, this study also examines racial violence as a strategy for *place making* - for establishing and maintaining Cincinnati as a white city, one in which the social practices of its white residents, including those of community development, consistently define and preserve the privileges of being white.

Many sectors of the white-identified population performed this co-construction of *race* and *place*. Using a multi-disciplinary approach to method and theory, the discourses and practices of improvement - the community development of the period - and of race making in antebellum Cincinnati were analyzed using local newspapers and a variety of other published and unpublished sources from the period. Analysis of the overlapping discourses and practices of race making and the "Negro problem" and of improvement indicated that white Cincinnatians of all classes, men and women, participated in creating a local racialized culture of community development. This was a prevailing set of values and practices in the city based on assumptions about who

could be improved, who could improve the city, and who should benefit from the city's improvements. The language of local improvement boosters was particularly powerful in synthesizing images of nation, region, and community in which a harmonious fit between the land, the virtuous population who comes to develop it, and the free and republican institutions they put on the land had no room for Negroes and mulattoes in the picture.

White rioters, and those elites and city officials who enabled them to act, acted with them, or didn't stop them from assaulting Negroes, mulattoes, or the abolitionists who were their allies, and burning and looting their property, acted within a socio-cultural context of widespread local economic and social boosterism and improvementism. Using their local *common sense* about race relations, as well as about improving the community, the white residents of Cincinnati enacted a public strategy of community development to attempt to achieve a city with few Negroes. Racialized community development, instrumentalized though the collective violence of race riots and ant-abolition riots, made Cincinnati a whiter city.

Acknowledgements

The work of researching and writing a doctoral dissertation is never accomplished without the important help of others. I would like to acknowledge the following people for their invaluable aid in preparing this document: my wife and soul-mate Katherine Bobula for her tireless support, far beyond the "call of duty"; the staff of the Ohio Historical Society, and particularly, the staff of the Cincinnati Historical Society (where I spent nearly three weeks) for their friendliness and professionalism; the staff of Interlibrary Loan at Portland State University for six years of diligence and good humor in finding many rather obscure published sources for my research; to geographer Rodney Garland for preparing my excellent and clear maps for me - any mistakes are my own; to the "Coffee Klatch" of dissertating urban studies doctoral students at Portland State University for their empathy and their collegial critique; and finally, but not least, to my dissertation committee of diverse and able scholars for their time and helpful comments. Any mistakes or omissions are entirely my own.

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Abbreviations

CHS   Cincinnati Historical Society (Cincinnati, OH)

HCL   Hamilton County Library (Cincinnati, OH)

OHS   Ohio Historical Society (Columbus, OH)

Chapter 1

Introduction

A. The Intensions of this Study

Cincinnati, Ohio, experienced five anti-black and anti-abolition riots between 1829 and 1841. This study examines these riots as a community development strategy involving a broad spectrum of white residents in the city. This approach began as thoughts about the ways in which community violence could affect community development efforts. Trained as an intellectual and cultural historian, but with a strong interest in cultural anthropology, in 2002 I was enrolled in a doctoral program in Urban Studies, focusing on community development. I was initially interested in racial or ethnic violence as a challenge to community development, making local efforts more difficult to achieve. In 2001 I had heard a report on National Public Radio concerning race riots that April in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood which also mentioned the race riots in the city in 1829, 1836, and 1841.[1] I had grown up in northern Ohio in the 1950s and 1960s, and I was well aware of the city's reputation for racial prejudice and violence. Cincinnati was notorious for its history of violent relations between white and African American residents. It was also well known for its difficulties in pursuing effective community development in older, run-down areas of the city with high numbers of poor and African American residents.

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[1] A good overview of the 2001 violence in Cincinnati, including the riots, can be found in a critical review of the entire year's racialized violence between the police and local African American residents, particularly in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, published by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. See Dan Horn, "Cincinnati: 2001 Year of Unrest," *Cincinnati Enquirer,* Dec. 30, 2001, http://www.enquirer.com/unrest2001/ (accessed Nov. 16, 2009). See other linked articles, as well.

In an article written less than two months after the 2001 violence in Cincinnati, Thomas A. Dutton, director of the Miami University Center for Community Engagement in Over-the-Rhine, in Cincinnati, described the recent riots as "indictments of entrenched patterns of police-community relations and community development." The population of Over-the-Rhine is seventy-seven percent African American; and seventy-five percent of those individuals have incomes "well below the reach of the rental market." Failures in community development in this neighborhood include decisions not to fund more low income housing in the area after particular projects had qualified for state funding, and the promotion of gentrification projects in the area. As examples of "institutional violence" committed on the residents of this neighborhood, Dutton points to the common thread in these failures in development:

> They market Over-the-Rhine as an idealized version of itself, effectively erasing it as a place for poor people of color. Revitalization efforts are selling an image that has no place for the poor who actually live there. "Development" means attracting people of higher incomes to live and play and work. ...The city fights to deny resources to community-based organizations while promoting renovation that caters to white, wealthier residents.[2]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Cincinnati was in an active mode of violent place making, appealing to the development interests of "white, wealthier residents," and getting violent responses. This was true of Cincinnati in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, as well - with development directed to the specific interests of white

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[2] Thomas A. Dutton, "Violence' in Cincinnati," *The Nation*, June 18, 2001, http://www.thenation.com/doc/ 20010618/dutton (accessed Nov. 16, 2009).

residents of all kinds and with violence as a key strategy for achieving it. How did development in Cincinnati become "white" and how was it linked to local violence?

Thirty years ago, historian Stephen Grable criticized "explanatory generalizations" of the causes of race riots involving whites and African Americans for "fail[ing] to consider the diverse origins and development of the particular communities" in which the riots occurred. He believed that the causes of race riots were related to "the distinctive origins and development patterns of the affected local communities," and not just to the broad historical era within which they are located. He pointed out that increasing documentation of the growth of African American communities made it "possible to view the riots and protests within the context of community development over time," showing both their differences and the localness of their causes.[3] Even fifty years ago, with race riots in many larger cities in the United States, and "serious scholarship on [the riotous] dimension of the American past… shamefully thin," urban historian Richard Wade saw "disorder and violence in our cities" not as mere "occasional aberrations, but rather [as] a significant part of urban development and growth."[4] Our knowledge of early nineteenth-century community development in the United States, the initial *vitalization* of our cities, is still quite fragmentary and scattered. Without a clear sense of the social, intellectual,

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[3] Stephen W. Grable, "Racial Violence within the Context of Community History," *Phylon* 42, no. 3 (1981): 275.

[4] Richard Wade, "Violence in the City: A Historical View," in *Urban Violence*, ed. Charles U. Daly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 7.

and cultural history of community development in a city, it is difficult to understand the various ways that violence may be implicated in that development.

I initially wanted to know about Cincinnati's early nineteenth-century anti-black and anti-abolition violence and how it may have affected subsequent community development in the city. I read the histories of these riots, none of which addressed community development directly. But it appeared that, rather than preventing community development, the white population's desires for a particular type of community development were well served by the five anti-black and anti-abolition riots that occurred between 1829 and 1841. I wanted to examine how close the fit was between the expressed desires of whites in Cincinnati for a certain kind of development, and a certain kind of community, and what they actually achieved. I also wanted to explore the role of the riots in achieving these community development goals. I formulated a hypothesis:

> Anti-black race riots and anti-abolition riots in Cincinnati in 1829, 1836, and 1841 were a race making technology deployed by the white population as strategies in a community development project to create a white city.

Antebellum Cincinnati is a particularly good site for a study of racial construction, community development, and violence in the nineteenth century for a number of reasons. Ohio was the first state carved out of the territory covered by the Northwest Ordinance, and Cincinnati, founded in 1788, was its largest city in the antebellum period. Cincinnati was a boom town during the 1820 and 1830s, its population growing quickly. The city had an early free African American population that remained the largest in the state throughout the antebellum period. Its location on the

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Ohio River, across from a slave state, and its position as the southern terminus of the Miami Canal which reached to Maumee/Toledo on Lake Erie, with direct access to Canada, made it a prime location on the Underground Railroad routes for escaping slaves. Cincinnati's economic reliance on southern trade made it a volatile location for the clash of pro-southern and anti-slavery sympathies.

Cincinnati actively competed with other developing communities such as Louisville and Indianapolis for economic and cultural supremacy in the region, contributing several early innovators of booster literature, such as Daniel and Benjamin Drake, E.D. Mansfield, James Hall, and Timothy Flint. The number of extant primary sources for antebellum Cincinnati is tremendous - from government documents, newspapers and magazines, to letters, journals and memoirs, and published works of public intellectuals and writers. Cincinnati was a publishing center in this period and produced mountains of published materials on a full range of subjects. Many foreign visitors to the United States, having heard about this wondrous, booming city, had to come and "see the elephant," and left a rich trove of information and impressions of the city from non-American perspectives, as well.

Finally, antebellum Cincinnati has been well studied by urban, cultural, social, and African American historians, providing a rich contextualization for these riots. There are also a number of studies of all of the antebellum race and anti-abolition riots in the city, from both white and black perspectives.[5] Scholars know a lot about antebellum

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[5] Twentieth-century histories of Cincinnati and studies of the antebellum riots in the city are discussed in the "Review of Literature" following.

Cincinnati, allowing the present study to concentrate on what has not been described before.

For the purposes of the present study, we may define community development in Cincinnati in the first half of the nineteenth century as:

> the practices and outcomes of the efforts of people to improve the social, cultural, intellectual, moral, and economic aspects of a community and its residents. Those involved in those efforts were civic leaders, business people, civic and project boosters, activist improvers, builders, and private citizens. They operated in associations and as individuals. With the community nearly a proxy for the city, antebellum community development was pervaded by a notion that specific developments *in* the city would lead to development *of* the city.

B. Design and Methods

This study has a mixed design. As an *historical ethnography*, this study describes and interprets the culture of the residents of antebellum Cincinnati, Ohio as they constructed it, particularly in regard to race and improvement, or community development. The focus of this ethnography is the anti-black and anti-abolition riots in the city between 1829 and 1841 and the surrounding discourses on race, improvement, the city, and the riots themselves, making it a *collective case study*. As a collective case study, it examines five riots in a twelve-year period using a variety of types of primary sources.[6] As a *cultural history* of the riots, it describes and interprets the relationship between the habits of thought and the discourses in the community about race, improvement, and the city, and the behavior of a dominant portion of the white

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[6] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 58, 61-62.

population when it chose to use violence against African Americans, abolitionists, and their allies.

As a qualitative and multidisciplinary study, the analysis draws on theories and methodologies from history, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. In particular, I was interested in the ways that Cincinnati's local public discourses of race (including those of Negro removal, abolitionism, and colonization), improvement and community development, and civic boosterism developed and overlapped during the years surrounding the riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841. I was interested in what was being said and to whom, in who was involved in the creation and airing of these discourses, and in instances where the same person, group, or institution participated in two or more of these discourses. I was also interested in the discourses and other behaviors at the various community meetings and city council meetings that were associated with these riots, as well as the riots themselves and what was said while the rioters committed violence.

Primary sources for this study include: contemporary local, regional, and national newspapers and magazines; archived collections of letters, sermons, diaries and journals, and notes; public and government records; published letters, sermons, diaries and journals, autobiographies, memoirs, essays, and miscellaneous writings of those who participated in the various discourses; and published and archived memoirs, travelogues, and diaries of residents and visitors to the city from the 1810s to the 1840s. Secondary sources for primary content include histories of Cincinnati and Ohio, histories of Cincinnati's African American community, biographies of active

residents in the community, and previous studies of the riots. My goal in reading these

sources was to understand who lived in antebellum Cincinnati, how they constructed

the city and communities of Cincinnati, and how the residents constructed races and

developed their notions of improvement and community development. Although I read

as many sources about the African American community as I was able to locate, my

focus was on the majority portion of the population that identified itself as white

because they both held the power in the city and were responsible for starting the

violence in each of the riots.

Historical methods were used to reconstruct the socio-cultural environment of

antebellum Cincinnati, the local and national discourses on both race and

improvement, the local discourse on the city, and the events leading up to and

comprising each of the riots. Chronology was an important consideration, more than is

typically the case in anthropology, as there were frequent instances in the public

discourse when someone was responding to a specific previous utterance or writing, or

a specific event in the community. Trained as an intellectual and cultural historian, I

adopted what Sherry Ortner has called "the ethnographic stance…as much an

intellectual (and moral) positionality - a constructive and interpretive mode - as it is a

bodily process in space and time… producing understanding through richness, texture,

and detail, rather than parsimony, refinement, and…[mathematical] elegance."[7] In

researching and writing an historical ethnography, I treated my primary sources as

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[7] Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 42, 43.

interviews or field notes. Above all, I tried to understand what my informants were attempting to achieve, what they were trying to do.

I began my research with a pilot study, conducted from November 1, 2005 to January 31, 2006. It included four days at the archives of the Cincinnati Historical Society (CHS) and three days at the Ohio Historical Society (OHS). After reading a sample of primary sources borrowed from libraries and on-site at the two archives in Ohio, I determined that there were sufficient extant sources to pursue the project.[8] The primary sources turned out to be unexpectedly rich in examples of each of the discourses. It was during this pilot study that I first noticed the overlapping of improvement, booster, and racial discourses. I returned to Ohio in October and November 2007 for further research, spending two weeks in Cincinnati at CHS and the Hamilton County Library (HCL) and one week in Columbus at OHS.

Reading and organizing all of the materials I collected from archives and borrowed from libraries took more than a year. While reading for the various discourses, I developed a series of proxy words I noticed that often substituted for *race* and *improvement*. The proxies for race were: tribe, lineage, type, class, people, or nation. African Americans were typically referred to as black, negro, colored, African, or even "that unfortunate/despised/degraded people." European Americans were referred to as white or Caucasian. Native Americans were referred to as Indians, redskins, or savages. People of mixed ancestry were called mulattoes or mixed breeds.

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[8] These sources included reports and discussions of the riots and meetings associated with them, booster literature, reports on improvement projects and their associated meetings, and examples of the different discourses, from local and national newspapers.

I also looked at anything concerning abolition, slavery, colonization, amalgamation, Indian removal, emigrants, Europeans, or "foreigners." The proxies I developed for improvement were development, progress, self-study, and in the case of African Americans, racial uplift or Negro uplift. Because public meetings were the way that improvement was organized during the antebellum period, I also examined notices of public meetings. When looking for booster writings, I examined canal, railroad, and turnpike reports and meetings in the newspapers, as well as city directories, local gazetteers, and pamphlets. Individual writings were coded for which one or more of the discourses were discussed. I read the discourses themselves closely, looking for instances of overlap between content, rhetoric, or the person speaking or writing.

Because both male and female boosters and improvers tended to be civic leaders, educated, and from business or the professional middle class - some were public intellectuals - many of these individuals wrote memoirs or autobiographies, or others have written biographies of them. Reading these types of sources provided me with the kind of information about both individuals and the community that I might have gathered while doing participant-observer ethnographic field work with a live population. The sources available were not representative, with few for most participants, and even fewer for most women, workers, or African Americans. The sources that were available, however, helped me understand how a number of my informants came to form their beliefs and assumption about blacks, whites, the city, communities, prejudice, or any number of other topics. The differences in the life experiences of my informants helped to explain their often oppositional positions

within a particular discourse. They were helpful in giving me a glance into the social structure of the community, seeing which persons were connected by family, professional, schooling, religious, or business ties, and provided surprising views of openly pursued race making among white elites. Through these kinds of sources I was able to gain the kind of information about everyday practices that an ethnographer engaged in field work can acquire.

There was a pronounced overlap and instrumentality between the racial discourses and the improvement discourses. Race was being indexed on the basis of perceived improvability, and a person's ability to improve -- their self or their city -- was indexed on perceived race. Race and improvement in antebellum America, and in Cincinnati, Ohio, were dialectically related. Race making and notions of improvement, including notions of community development, were constructed in terms of each other. In addition, both of these discourses, and the places where they overlapped, were also running through the discourses and public meeting associated with each of the riots. No scholar had yet reconstructed race-making in antebellum Cincinnati, nor had anyone reconstructed the cultural history of improvementist ethos in the city. For this study, I needed both of them in order to unpack the discourses surrounding the riots, and the riots themselves. I conducted mini-studies of both topics in order to create a tool-box with a bifocal lens, allowing me to look at the riots and their surrounding discourses through race making and improvementism lenses simultaneously. This is reflected in the chapter organization: race making and improvement in the city are pulled apart and examined in two separate chapters in order to indicate more clearly

how they were put together in community development strategies and to be able to articulate their presence within the discourses surrounding the riots, and within the practices of the riots themselves.

C. Literature Review

1. Previous Studies of Nineteenth-Century Race and Anti-Abolition Riots

Late twentieth-century studies of nineteenth-century violence have established that mobbing and rioting were nearly endemic in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, in urban and rural areas, North and South. Legacies from widespread eighteenth-century rioting, such as making a limited attack on focused targets and participating in violence as "politics out of doors," played a continuing role in the antebellum period as the institutions of an increasingly democratic republic began to evolve and new class, ethnic, and racial conflicts developed. But the antebellum period also saw new dynamics develop, with attacks becoming more violent and less focused. Riots of many types, led by thinking, reasoning, and often organized participants, occurred regularly throughout the 1820 to 1840s in larger cities of the North such as Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston, as well as Cincinnati.[9]

Anti-black race riots and anti-abolition riots, in particular, increased dramatically in northern cities and towns in the antebellum period. Historians of both kinds of riots have attempted to create typologies for analysis; however, they proved to be of limited

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[9] Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996); David Grimstead, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," *American Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (Apr. 1972): 361-397; David Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Paul A. Gilje, "'The mob began to think and reason': Recent Trends in Studies of American Popular Disorder, 1700-1850," *The Maryland Historian* 12, vol. 1 (Spring 1981): 25-36.

usefulness for the present study. John Werner coded northern race riots with their causes and intentions, giving amalgamation, "self or social improvement," job competition, and anti-abolition as causes and "desire to drive blacks from the community" and "desire for revenge" as intentions when whites attacked blacks.[10] Many riots have multiple conflicts embedded in them, but he does not unpack them nor show their relationships to each other. Even in the case of intentions, Werner is not clear how "revenge" and a "desire to drive blacks from the community" can be completely separated from each other. Leonard Richards' two types of anti-abolition riots, "those that involved a substantial amount of prior coordination and design" and "mobs that at least appear to have formed without previous planning and organization" are also problematic. He places Cincinnati's 1836 violence in the "planned" category and its 1841 violence in the "unplanned" group.[11] For both sets of riots, I found evidence of planning on the part of rioters as well as city officials, before and during the violence.[12] With an insufficient sense of what "planning" means, Richards' distinction loses usefulness.

Antebellum riots in general have been typed by several historians. David Grimstead divides riots into northern and southern types. Northern riots are characterized as directed at property rather than people, and frequently responded to by city authorities. Southern riots, on the other hand, were focused more on people,

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[10] John M. Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest: Race Riots in the United States in the Age of Jackson, 1824-1849* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 298, Appendix I.

[11] Leonard L. Richards, "*Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 84, 92-100, 122-129.

[12] See Chapters 6 and 7.

were more "sadistic" and "murderous," and were tolerated and even accepted as a method of social control in the region.[13] However, all of Cincinnati's antebellum riots have elements of both patterns, perhaps due to its location on the boundary between North and South and the strong sympathies of many of the white population toward the pro-slavery South. Although Cincinnati's riots were not as murderous as those in the South, in 1829 and 1841 they were more focused on people than property, and they were all tolerated by city authorities to a great degree.

Historian Michael Feldberg's three types of riots are *preservatist*, *expressive*, and *recreational*. He places race riots and anti-abolition riots in the preservatist category, which were "attempts by groups that held some degree of economic, social, or political power to maintain their privileged position over other groups below them on the social ladder… [They were] highly political in nature."[14] But both race and anti-abolition riots also exhibited aspects of expressive rioting, the deployment of "collective violence to reinforce… [group] solidarity, or to communicate that solidarity to the outside world," as well as recreational rioting - "blowing off steam." However, Feldberg is forced to admit that antebellum riots do not cleanly sort into these categories, even the most political of preservatist riots having both expressive and recreational qualities.[15] The usefulness of his scheme for this study lies in its focus

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[13] Grimstead, *American Mobbing*, 86.

[14] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 34.

[15] Ibid., 54-55, 80-81.

on the goals of the rioters, leaving the rioters and their intentions more present in the narrative.

2. Improvement and Community Development in Nineteenth-Century America

Improvement, or community development, in the early nineteenth century has not been systematically studied. John Larson's new synthesis of antebellum ideologies and practices concerning so-called internal improvements adds to our understanding of the national picture, but ignores the social and other improvements that were being split off from canals and railroads at the time. Daniel Walker Howe astutely included a chapter on "The Improvers" in his recent volume on the period, but mostly limited his scope to more physical, internal improvements. He provocatively included a section on the founders of the American Colonization Society, America's national Negro removal project, in the chapter, placing it squarely with other improvement associations. There have been several studies of "city-building" in the trans-Appalachian West in this period that are interesting for comparisons, notably Don Doyle's book on Jacksonville, Illinois, William Cronon's book on Chicago, and Jeffrey Adler's book on St. Louis. None of these books address community development explicitly.[16]

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[16] John Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; Daniel Walker Howe, "Chapter 7: The Improvers," in *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 241-283; Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of St. Louis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Most of the scholarship on community development in the nineteenth century has focused on the role of civic boosters in the economic aspects of city building. Historian Carl Abbott as has defined boosterism as

> the entire process by which business and civic leaders assessed the situation they faced, tried to define a coherent economic program to be carried out by the public and private action, and publicized that assessment and program to local and national audiences.[17]

This has served as a working definition for most scholars who have studied the phenomenon of boosterism thus far. The beginning of the examination of boosters as critical factors in urban development is found in Daniel Boorstin's chapters on boosters in "upstart" frontier cities of the West. A more thorough study of the role of boosters in new communities in competition with others for population and resources in newly-settling lands such as the nineteenth-century American West, Canada, and Australia, is David Hamer's *New Towns in the New World*. Especially useful for this study is his discussion of the way that boosters use language to construct powerful imaginary communities. These imaginary communities were important components of the civic ideology that developed in a community.[18] My interest in boosters for this study is due to their role in creating these "imaginaries," their role as participants in local improvements, including the weight their opinions carry as improver-boosters,

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[17] Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4.

[18] Daniel Boorstin, "Part Three: The Upstarts - Boosters," Chapters 16 - 20, in *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 113-168; David Hamer, *New Towns in the New World: Images and Perceptions of the Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

and their participation in the discourses on race and the other practices of race making in the city.

There has been some examination of boosters in the literature on trans-Appalachian frontier cities other than Cincinnati, notably in Doyle's study of Jacksonville, Illinois and Cronon's study of Chicago.[19] Much of the work in the Old Northwest for this period focuses on Cincinnati; I discuss studies of antebellum Cincinnati that examined boosters in the next section. All of these studies confined their discussion of boosters to those focused solely on urban economic growth. They are important to my study for their identification of the *booster ethos* as well as the typical practices and rhetoric of boosterism.

3. Previous Studies of Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati

Previous historical studies of antebellum Cincinnati have contributed to the present study in three broad areas: a general understanding of the city from a particular historical perspective, a look at aspects of local community development, and specific descriptions and analysis of antebellum Cincinnati's African American community. Daniel Aaron's seminal cultural history gives a detailed view of a single generation of Cincinnatians, at a critical point in its early development, defining and solving its problems, managing its affairs, building institutions, and creating public opinions about the economic, political, and social concerns of the city -- that is, making culture. Walter Glazer's study of *Cincinnati in 1840* shows the effect of the city's phenomenal

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[19] Doyle, "The Booster Ethos," in *The Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 62-91; Adler, *Yankee Merchants*; Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 31-46, 53-54, 81-86. Cronon's study includes a very complete bibliography of economic boosterism in the antebellum United States. See *Nature's Metropolis*, 397n45.

growth on its social structure, institutions, and social relationships. Wendy Katz's

Regionalism and Reform: Art and Class Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati

examines the development of the city's middle class through the development of a

unifying reform ideology and the creation of institutions on behalf of the whole city.

Cincinnati is one of the four case cities in Carl Abbott's history of economic thought

among antebellum Midwestern businessmen and economic boosters. His study

provides a solid background in the economic history of the city and explains the

economic strategies used by businessmen and boosters in Cincinnati to promote and

attempt to sustain its phenomenal growth in the antebellum period. The labor side of

this economic history is provided by Steven Ross's *Workers on the Edge*, which

suffers from its cursory treatment of African American laborers and the local labor

market's open discrimination against them.[20] What we don't have is a clear picture of

are non-economic strategies used by Cincinnatians to promote and sustain

development.

    These histories of antebellum Cincinnati provide good coverage of particular

aspects of local community development. Voluntary associations were the primary

vehicle for identifying, gaining support for, and carrying out various projects of

improvement or development in the community. Cincinnati had a thriving culture of

voluntary associations of all kinds, which Aaron details as a cultural phenomenon and

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[20] Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West: 1819-1838* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992); Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Wendy Jean Katz, *Regionalism and Reform: Art and Class Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002); Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*; Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

Glazer describes as the primary instrument of change in local society before the rise of party politics. Katz's study shows how improvers co-constructed both the city and the class identities of many of Cincinnati's middleclass and elite white citizens through participation in reform societies and the creation of the "markers of civilization" such as schools, hospital, libraries, colonization societies, and support for the arts. Particularly relevant for my study is Glazer's discovery of an "interlocking directorate" of men who served as the officers and comprised the memberships of associations, corporations, and societies all over the city, including many individuals mentioned by Aaron and Katz. Some civic leaders had high degrees of associational activity, showing the depth of their influence in the community.[21] Many of these civic leaders, improvers, and boosters of the community also participated in public race making discourses, often supporting local efforts to colonize African Americans out of the United States, as well as in other race making practices in the community. Sometimes they led or took part in the meetings associated with the riots or participated in the riots themselves. Improvers and boosters, alike, were important participants in the overlapping practices of race making and community development in antebellum Cincinnati.

Carl Abbott's study of the economic thinking of Cincinnati's businessmen and boosters as they competed with other rising cities in the trans-Appalachian West gives a close-up of local strategies for development, as well as their effectiveness in

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[21] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen of the West*, 109-140; Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*; Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, especially Chapter 4: 123-156. Glazer's discussion of the interlocking directorate and its implications is on pages 141-147.

responding to changing local and regional conditions. Although it primarily describes Cincinnati a decade after the riots, Abbott's study helps to explain how antebellum Cincinnatians concerned with sustaining, and benefiting from, its continued growth saw the city in economic terms. Glazer describes a *civic ideology* or *communityism*, Abbott an "urban ethos," and Griffith a *booster ethos* that was widespread in the population of antebellum Cincinnati. Griffith's short study of the role of Cincinnati's boosters and their anti-abolition ideology in the 1836 anti-abolition and race riots provides an important touchstone in analyzing the relationship between improvementism and racial violence in antebellum Cincinnati.[22]

General histories of antebellum Cincinnati have included little or no information about African Americans in the city. The first in-depth study to remedy this was Henry Louis Taylor's edited volume *Race and the City*; the first half of the book focuses on the antebellum period. Particularly helpful for the present study are Taylor and Dula's article about the formation of the black community detailing the "residential clusters" in which African Americans lived in pre-ghetto Cincinnati, as well as William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek's article about John Mercer Langston with good descriptions of the community at the time of the 1841 race riots. Nikki Taylor's recent study of Cincinnati's black community up through the Civil War is a valuable synthesis of what is known about the state of this community at the time of

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[22] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 14-15; Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 150; Sally F. Griffith, "A Spirit of Proper Enterprise": The Booster Ethos and Resistance to Abolitionism in Jacksonian Cincinnati," in *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*, eds. Jeremy Adler and Stephen Aron (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2001), 214-215, 213-245.

the riots. It is also the most detailed examination of community development through institutional development in Cincinnati's black community to date. This community's reactions to being attacked by whites during and after each of the riots are an important contribution of this book.[23]

4. Previous Studies of Cincinnati's Antebellum Race and Anti-Abolition Riots

There have been no book-length studies of any of the antebellum riots in Cincinnati. The most thorough examinations have been sections of chapters in books on Cincinnati, on Cincinnati's African American community, chapters in works on antebellum race riots, and on Cincinnati's riotous history. The earliest in-depth treatments of the 1829 riots were by Richard Wade in the 1950s; the most recent is an article about the subsequent emigration of a portion of Cincinnati's African American community to Canada.[24] Both studies suffer from minimizing the deliberateness of the white community in driving nearly half of the non-white population from the city. The thinness of the surviving coverage of the violence of 1829 in local papers makes this a challenging, though not impossible, episode to research and interpret. The section of John Werner's study of antebellum race riots that covers this riot and Patrick Folk's

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[23] Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., and Vicki Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Race in the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 96-125; William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in *Race and the City*, ed. Taylor, 29-69; Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005.

[24] Richard C. Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," *Journal of Negro History* 39, no. 1 (January 1954): 50-57; Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959; repr., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 225-229; Nikki Taylor, "Reconsidering the 'Forced' Exodus of 1829: Free Black Emigration from Cincinnati, Ohio to Wilberforce, Canada," *Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer 2002): 283-302. Taylor's full-length study of Cincinnati's antebellum black community only dedicated three pages to this riot. See Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 63-65.

thorough chapter on these riots in his doctoral dissertation both recognized the level of

violence and persistence on the part of white rioters and city authorities in this rout of

the black community.[25]

Although the 1836 violence included a race riot, an anti-abolition riot, and a

third riot which targeted both African Americans and abolitionists and their property,

the literature tends to split the race riots from the anti-abolition riots, or to mention

them both, but make no effort to connect them in any way except in time. Leonard

Richards examines these riots primarily as anti-abolition riots led by local

businessmen and community leaders, describing the race riots as a "second phase."

The most thorough treatment of the 1836 riots is Patrick Folk's study, which presented

the early race riots and later combination race and anti-abolition riots in separate

chapters, with a further chapter on community reactions to the violence. Both John

Werner and Nikki Taylor present views that integrate the anti-black and anti-abolition

aspects of the 1836 violence. Though focused on anti-abolitionism, Sally Griffith did

examine the linkage between anti-abolition mobs in the 1836 riots and the anti-

abolition sentiments of local civic boosters. Though she is not explicit, the connections

she makes point to community development motivations behind the rhetoric of booster

anti-abolitionism as well as behind the riots themselves. All of these studies connect

all of these riots to fear of the loss of southern trade and other economic interests, as

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[25] Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*: 50-61; Patrick A. Folk, "The Queen City of Mobs": Riots and
Community Reactions in Cincinnati, 1788-1848." PhD diss. University of Toledo, 1978, 43-56.

well as negrophobic prejudice, however without sufficiently unpacking either concept or showing how they were linked.[26]

The main studies of the 1841 riots were written by William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, Patrick Folk, Leonard Richards, Nikki Taylor, and John Werner; both the Cheeks' study and Taylor's were written from the African American community's perspective. Overall, these historians agree with reports by contemporaries of the violence that the primary causes of the riots were wide-spread fear of the loss of southern trade (as residents argued during the 1836 riots) and a recent rash of fugitive slaves being put on the route to Canada in Cincinnati - locally referred to as "Negro stealing."[27]

Within these studies, as a group, there have been some attempts to bring in the ideas of such historians of American violence as Michael Feldberg, Paul Gilje, and David Grimstead. But there have been no attempts to analyze the racialization of Cincinnati's culture, to analyze the culture of development in the community, or to link the violence against African Americans and abolitionists to culture making. The perspectives of the anthropology of violence have contributed important insights concerning the deployment of violent strategies in the construction and reconstruction of culture and cultural systems. As anthropologist Sherry Ortner has stated, class, gender, and race, indeed "all structures of domination are simultaneously material and

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[26] Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing,"* 92-100; 134-150; Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 57-85, 86-146; 147-204; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 72-96; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 118-126; Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise," 213-245.

[27] Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," 42-50; Folk, "The Queen City of Mobs," 205-226 and 227-283; Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing,"* 122-129; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 118-126; and Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 72-95.

cultural."[28] However, many historians, particularly urban historians, lack training in the methods and approaches of cultural history, and have not familiarized themselves with the perspectives of cultural anthropology, leaving them unprepared for the cultural constructions of both identity and community development that are at the heart of these riots.

My study of Cincinnati's anti-black and anti-abolition riots focuses on the riots as *practices*. I examined violent practices along with the surrounding public discourses of race, Negro removal, improvement and development, and the image-making language of civic boosterism. This study focuses on what the riots *did* rather than *what caused them*. All of the previous students of these riots focused on anti-black prejudice, fear of the loss of southern markets, or assumptions concerning job competition as causes of these riots, without ever sufficiently explaining how the local culture, or the job market, became racialized in the first place. These studies also assumed that racism simply existed in the white populations of Cincinnati and Ohio without explaining how people constructed black and white races locally. The present study shows that the riots, as well as the surrounding discourses of race, Negro removal, and community improvement in which they were embedded, were technologies deployed by a dominant portion of the white-identified population to establish, reinforce, or patrol the boundaries of whiteness in order to achieve the civic goal of a white city.

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[28] Sherry B. Ortner, "Reading America: Class and Culture," in *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 25.

D. Theoretical Orientations and Assumptions

A key assumption informing this study is that as human beings we should avoid participating in causing *social suffering*, the pain and trauma caused to individuals, families, and communities from both political violence and the "soft knife" of everyday oppression such as customary prejudice or poverty. *Social suffering* is the result of "what political, economic, and institutional power does to people, and reciprocally, from how those forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems."[29] Human practices, including those of community development, cause social suffering when they are informed by the customary power inequalities in a community. Race making causes social suffering through prejudice and discrimination, as well as other practices that are designed to assign some rights and privileges to one defined group and remove them from a particular other. Because community development is about the allocation of basic resources in communities, when it is discriminatory, as it is when it becomes racialized, it is capable of causing great social suffering to the members of the disprivleged group of residents. Something that causes social suffering is violent. Violent community development, whether utilizing implicit bias or direct and physical violence, requires that we understand that development in our communities has a moral dimension to it, not just an economic one. Community development that causes social suffering is immoral, and should be stopped.

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[29] Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, "Introduction," to the Special Issue on Social Suffering, *Daedalus*, 125, no. 1 (Winter, 1996), XI.

This study makes substantial use of theoretical perspectives on identity, violence, and power from a number of social sciences including anthropology, sociology, and geography, from the humanities and law, as well as from history. I used this integrated inter-disciplinary approach to theory both to help determine what writings, advertisements, sermons, behaviors and other "texts" constituted data, as well as to analyze that data. In addition, a number of theoretical perspectives significantly inform the present study, falling into four broad categories: the socio-cultural construction of social and place identities; "practice theory" perspectives on the relationship between human action and social structure, including theories on human agency; discourse as a particular category of practices; and ideas about the ways in which the booster ethos or improvementism operated in Cincinnati.

A fundamental concern of this study is the construction of race and its relationship to the construction of place. Race and other structures of social domination such as gender and class are typically conceptualized as *identities*, a poorly defined and static end-product of processes and practices performed by people within social relationships. Although the concept of identity is still of limited use, focusing on the end product effaces the actors who create the *identified*, as well as obscuring the practices in which those actors engaged to achieve their end.[30] This study views race, class, gender, and other dominating structures, or identities, as actually created by socially embedded actors.

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[30] Philip Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History," *Journal of American History* 69, no. 4 (March 1983): 910-931; Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (Feb. 2000): 1-47.

As with other social identities, people construct the "*concrete* abstraction" of

race, as anthropologist Thomas Biolsi has termed it, through the use of "*stating*,

categorizing, *spacing*, and *mixing*" technologies, which are everyday "microractices

used by situated actors in concrete, historical situations." These race making

technologies are deployed to create races, not in isolation, but each with others as

referents, in, at the least, binaries, such as black/white, Indian/white, and so on. If one

race is being made, at least one other is being made, as well.[31] Race is fictional and

has no basis in biology; it is "*a technique that one exercises.*" Race is something that

people do, which begs the questions of who is doing it and what is the goal of that

individual.[32] Having "blackness" carried liabilities for an individual in antebellum

America, and still does today. Having "whiteness," on the other hand, had value for

the individual, initially identified by historian and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois as "a

sort of public and psychological wage" - what historian David Roediger calls "the

wages of whiteness," value it still carries. Whiteness in nineteenth-century America

was a sort of socially, culturally, and legally constructed form of personal property.[33]

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[31] Thomas Biolsi, "Race Technologies," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, eds. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 400, 401, italics are in the original; Ian F. Haney Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 191-203.

[32] Biolsi, "Race Technologies," 400; italics are in the original.

[33] W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *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: Russell and Russell, 1935), 700-701; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 1999); Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1709-1791.

The present study assumes that social identities co-construct. David Roediger's and Noel Ignatiev's studies of white and working class identities being co-constructed in antebellum Philadelphia and New York provide good case studies of these processes, including the use of racial violence by those constructing working class whiteness.[34] My study also assumes, and shows, white identities co-constructing with elite and middle class identities, as well as male and female ones. This is also true for the African American population and their identities. Both European Americans and African Americans, in Cincinnati and elsewhere, constructed themselves *and each other* as white and black, male, female, and as members of economic or cultural classes. One identity may also be mapped onto another, or subsumed in another, as class may have been subsumed under race in the United States.[35] This has important implications for the creation of a cross-class alliance of white-identified Cincinnatians acting in their own interests to create a white city. Race making became a technique in a development strategy for the city.

Places, such as cities, are also socially and culturally constructed through the practices of those who bring them into existence. A *space* becomes a *place* as humans ascribe meaning to it in relationships in, and with, that space.[36] To a certain degree the identity of Cincinnati as a place is an extension of the social identities of those in the

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[34] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routeledge, 1995).

[35] Sherry B. Ortner, "Identities: The Hidden Life of Class," in *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 63-79; see especially 72-79.

[36] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "'Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (February 1992): 11.

community who ascribe meaning to it as a place. But, as Benedict Anderson reminds us, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[37] Ahkil Gupta and James Ferguson have problematized the idea that culture is viewed as naturally linked to a particular people and a place. They ask a number of questions that are important for denaturalizing Cincinnati's residents' sense (as well as the scholar's sense) of the city as a place: How do we politicize the social construction of space? How are spatial meanings established in practices? Who has the power to make places from spaces? Who contests this and what is at stake?[38] Cincinnati was imagined as a city free of Negroes in the minds of those who worked to make it so before they deployed the cultural practices of discourses, laws, customs, and riots that helped to make it a white city. So we have to ask, who imagined Cincinnati as a city free of Negroes?

The perspectives of practice theorists are a second major theoretical orientation of the present study. *Practice theory* is the name anthropologist Sherry Ortner has given to a group of approaches in anthropology, sociology, history, and cultural studies to the problem of the relationship between structure and function in the social sciences.[39] She has described practice theory as "a theory of the relationship between

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[37] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 1991), 6.

[38] Gupta and Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture'": 11.

[39] Good overviews of practice theory, including critiques of its approaches can be found in Sherry B. Ortner, "Introduction," in *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*

the structures of society and culture on the one hand, and the nature of human action

on the other…Practice emerges from structure, it reproduces structure, and it has the

capacity to transform structure."[40] Ortner's work in practice theory is a major

influence on my own thinking. To a great degree, practice theories proceed from the

idea that humans construct their worlds, and themselves, in the processes of living - in

their day to day practices. Those who adopt this approach are attempting

> to understand something the people did or do or believe, by trying to locate the
> point of reference in social practice from which the beliefs or actions emerge.
> This is not just a question of locating the actor's point of view, although that is
> a part of it. It is a question of seeking the configuration of cultural forms, social
> relations, and historical processes that move people to act in ways that produce
> the effects in question.[41]

For myself, trained primarily as a historian, practice theory perspectives have

encouraged me to ask different questions of my data than I used to. Instead of looking

for causes of events in large structures that are external to an act or event, now I ask

"What is the goal of the participant in this action?" and "Why was that structure

constructed? What does it do and to whom?" It led me to ask of the data I collected on

Cincinnati's riots and their surrounding discourses, "What was the goal of those

rioters" and "What was the speaker/writer trying to do by saying/writing that?" rather

than "Why did they do that?" This approach led me into the construction of culture in

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(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 11-18; and Sherry B. Ortner, "Introduction: Updating Practice Theory," in *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 1-18.

[40] Ortner, Introduction," in *High Religion*, 11, 12.

[41] Ibid., 1.

Cincinnati, and into the cultural and social construction of the social identities of Cincinnati's residents, as well as into their construction of Cincinnati as a place.

Practice theorists have placed issues of human *agency* at the center of their projects. A "provisional" definition of agency is "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act." Agency "can be virtually synonymous with the forms of power people have at their disposal, their ability to act on their own behalf." Ortner has added the caveat, that "the absence of agency and legitimate intentionality [are the]… effects of power."[42] Theorists of practice generally agree that "agency is in some sense universal…and always culturally and historically constructed," but often disagree on which "domain of social life" should be emphasized.[43] Ortner has said, "at one level agency is a kind of property of social subjects. It is culturally shaped by way of the characteristics that are forgrounded as 'agentic'"[44] But this is not free agency, or free will. As practice theorist and historian William Sewell has remarked, agency is not "opposed to, but…constituent of, structure. To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree."[45]

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[42] Laura M Ahearn, "Language and Agency," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 112; Sherry B. Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," in *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 143; Sherry B. Ortner, "Making Gender: Toward a Feminist, Minority, Postcolonial, Subaltern, etc. Theory of Practice," in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 10.

[43] Sherry B. Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," 136.

[44] Ibid., 151.

[45] William H. Sewell, *The Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 143.

In practice theories the relationship between human agency and social structures is dialectical; they are constitutive of each other.

My informants brought up issues of agency in two distinct ways that required attention from the researcher. First, in the discourses on race, agency, or *will* as they called it, was made the index of race. In the dominant view, whites had agency and Negroes and mulattoes did not; only a minority of whites expressed that people of color had agency. Agency was (and is) the key to improvements of all kinds. Without agency, one cannot improve oneself or one's community. Local booster literature ascribed the rapid progress of Cincinnati as a city to the agency of its (white) residents. African Americans were so defined by a lack of agency that when they exhibited it, many white residents, from local city officials to rioters, made strenuous efforts to remove it and return Negroes and mulattoes to what they thought of as a (properly) "degraded" state. Second, agency surfaced during each of the race and anti-abolition riots as city officials, editors, and letters to the editor insisted that local abolitionists and blacks had *caused* southerners to be nervous about fugitive slaves, and caused local businessmen to be afraid of losing southern trade because of it. They had *caused* each of the riots through their attitudes and their behavior, especially blacks behaving in an "impudent" (read: insufficiently deferent) manner. Abolitionists, in particular, were quick to analyze the fallacies in this line of thinking, but those who were Negrophobic or anti-abolition persisted in claiming that violence perpetrated by whites had been *caused* by something external to their own feelings and emotions about local circumstances.

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The third theoretical orientation informing this study is scholarship on

discourse. Discourse, and *discourse analysis* are terms used in so many different ways

in the humanities and social sciences that they need to be defined for this study.[46]

Discourse is a fundamental way in which humans form the world in which they live.

This study assumes Foucault's perspective, that discourses are "practices that

systematically form the objects of which we speak."[47] These objects include the social

structures that frame, enable, and limit our ways of acting in the world we have made.

I am primarily interested in the public conversations, in print and face to face, about

the subjects of race, improvement, and civic boosterism in Cincinnati. My approach to

discourse analysis is informal, and in the self-referential tradition of *hermeneutical*,

rather than *structuralist* or *Marxist* analysis. I am more interested in the goals of

participating in a particular discourse than in what caused it.[48] As discursive practices,

these conversations, including opposing viewpoints and what was left unsaid, were

combined with other practices by white Cincinnatians to construct races,

improvements, and civic boosterism. These discourses, including acts of violence, also

constructed Cincinnati as a city for white people to use and enjoy.

The last area of theoretical orientations informing this study concerns the use

of the concepts *improvement* and *booster*. Improvement is typically treated in narrow

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[46] A comprehensive and readable introduction to discourse and the development of discourse analysis, and the critique of both, is David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 2000).

[47] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Tavistock, 1972; repr., New York: Random House), 49.

[48] Howarth, *Discourse*, 10-11.

economic or transportation-system terms by historians who have covered it.[49]

Historians tend to split reform off from improvement. During the antebellum period the word improvement is used for all kinds of betterments for individuals and groups, as well as for cities in domains of society as diverse as transportation, finance, morality, education, and public access to information. Contemporaries, and historians, increasingly labeled those kinds of improvements that women or minorities were more involved with, such as education, and social and cultural issues such as temperance, prison reform, and aiding the poor, as reform. Historians tend to refer to the larger projects that required more public money, carried a lot of political weight, and were connected to commerce and transportation, as well as being connected to the practices of white men, as public, local, or internal improvements. In primary sources, the word 'improvement' is used in all cases, and sometimes reform is additionally used for social improvements. In Cincinnati, many of the same people were involved in several types of improvement, often economic improvements and social ones at the same time. Personal prosperity and that of the community were linked in many people's minds, especially in a city prospering like antebellum Cincinnati was.[50]

By broadening our view of improvement to include what Cincinnatians of the period included -- from social and cultural to economic -- and linking the previously "siloed" topics of improvement and reform, more women come into focus as urban improvers, helping to correct our lack of understanding of how urban women lived

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[49] See, for example, Larson, *Internal Improvement* and Daniel Walker Howe, "Chapter 7, "The Improvers," in *What Hath God Wrought*, 241-283.

[50] Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 5; Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise," 221.

and "transformed the city, its residents, and its structures."[51] As historian Linda Kerber has said, "*Who* is given the time and opportunity to think and argue is a matter not only of personal intelligence but of social history and social situation, and when women are absent from the narrative histories of ideas, it is not because they are truly absent, but because the historian did not look energetically enough to find them."[52] This study was able to make use of a number of local women, both known and anonymous, who participated in the discourses and practices of improvement, and of race and race making in antebellum Cincinnati.

Finally, this study assumes that communities develop a culture of economics and business. Sally Griffith, in her study of Cincinnati's businessmen and civic boosters and their involvement in the riots of 1836 and in the public meetings surrounding them, presents business in antebellum Cincinnati as "a cultural system, with its own practices and ways of defining reality." The booster ethos, as Griffith understands it, "embraced issues of public life that seem to us far distant from business. Its tenets were central components of what could be called the "official culture" of nineteenth-century American towns and cities."[53] I argue that one of the issues that Cincinnati's boosters embraced was race making. Their anti-abolitionism, examined by Griffith, was only part of their involvement. They had been involved since the beginning of the development of Cincinnati in race making practices in the

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[51] Maureen A. Flanagan, "Women in the City, Women of the City: Where Do Women Fit in Urban History?" *Journal of Urban History* 23, no. 3 (March 1997): 254.

[52] Linda K. Kerber, "Introduction," in *Toward an Intellectual History of Women: Essays by Linda K. Kerber* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 19; italics are in the original.

[53] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise," 214-215.

interest of creating a city for whites to enjoy. Griffith's attention to business as a

cultural system in Cincinnati is a major starting point for my analysis of improvement

-- community development -- as a cultural system with its own values, and practices,

and world view.

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Between 1829 and 1841 Cincinnati, Ohio, experienced five serious anti-black

race riots and anti-abolition riots: a race riot in 1829; an anti-abolition riot, an anti-

black riot, and a riot that combined both targets in 1836; and a race riot that also

targeted abolitionists in 1841.[54] This study argues that the violence of these riots and

the actions of city officials, and the public discourses of race, improvement, and

culpability that justified them, were deployed by various segments of Cincinnati's

white population as strategies in an ongoing community development project to create

a white city.

A cross-class alliance of separate interests was created -- from boosters and

civic elites, through the merchants and professionals in the middle, to artisans,

mechanics, laborers, and other workers -- within a city-wide, racialized culture of

improvement and development. Drawing on the white community's dominant notions

of the common sense of local race relations between whites and Negroes, local whites

used a racialized culture of community development to promote, obtain, maintain, and

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[54] In 1843, there were attempted mob actions against abolitionists after a man named Scanlon brought
his nine-year-old female slave to Cincinnati and she took her mother's advice and found some
abolitionists to hide her. But in this case the mayor, the sheriff, city officials, and a volunteer watch
were able to disperse the crowds and keep the peace. It was not included in the present study because
they did not involve the entire community the way these other riots did. See Werner, *Reaping the
Bloody Harvest*, 96-97.

enforce the privileges of whiteness. They worked to attach to whiteness a privilege to make all public decisions, a privilege to prevail, a privilege to a higher literal and social wage, and a greater social capital than those who could be labeled "non-white": Negroes, blacks, mulattoes, coloreds, mixed breeds, and Indians. From the earliest community-based development, race making was both an implicit and explicit component of development in Cincinnati, creating a racialized culture of community development. The Cincinnati riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841 both drew on and reproduced this racialized culture of community development, reinforcing notions of a white community that would develop and grow for a white population to live in and enjoy.

Because community development practices are fundamental ways that we make places, racialized community development results in racialized place making. Meaning is encoded in the improvements we make to a space to create places for ourselves. Antebellum Cincinnati's racialized culture of community development was the link between the social identities of those who dominated local public opinion about the development issues in the community and the identity of the community itself. This is the story of how antebellum Cincinnati's race and anti-abolition riots and their supporting discourses were the practices of a racialized community development strategy that white residents used to create a whiter city.

Note: For the convenience of the reader, a list of individuals who figure prominently in this study, with identifying information, is in Appendix A.

Chapter 2

The City and the People of Cincinnati to the 1840s

> Cincinnati, the largest city of the west, is situated in a gradual bend of the Ohio river, on its northern bank, and immediately opposite Newport and Covington, Kentucky….The city is almost in the eastern extremity of a valley of about twelve miles in circumference, perhaps the most delightful and extensive on the borders of the Ohio….The hills which surround this extensive valley, present to the eye of the beholder one continued ridge, irregularly elevated, and of diversified configurations.
>
> Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*[1]

A. The Geography of Cincinnati

The area that the city of Cincinnati occupies on the Ohio River, directly across from the Licking River, elicited two distinctly different descriptions in the antebellum period. Looking at the hills, described above,

> they exhibit, under no circumstances, an aspect of grandeur; but are always beautiful and picturesque…they present gentle and varying slopes, which are mostly covered with native forest trees. The aspect of the valley from the surrounding hills is highly beautiful…In approaching Cincinnati by water, whether ascending or descending the river, the view is neither extensive nor commanding.[2]

These two geographical views - "beautiful and picturesque" and "neither extensive nor commanding" are paralleled by views of Cincinnati's society during the 1820s and 1830s as either "bustling and full of opportunity" or "narrow-minded," "negro-phobic" and "uncivilized." As in the scenic views, it all depended on *where* in the society one happened to be standing.

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[1] Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: Charles Cist, 1841), 13-14.

[2] Ibid., 14.

The original settlement, named Losantiville, was established in 1788 by

Matthias Denman, Robert Peterson, and John Filson. The name Cincinnati was used

on all legal papers by the early 1790s. The town was incorporated in 1802.[3]

Cincinnati, "like all the towns, in this state, is laid out on the plan of Philadelphia."

"The streets intersect each other at right angles…. [The six] principal streets

commence at the river, and extend back in parallel lines.…The cross streets run nearly

parallel with the river." The topography was in "two distinct planes or tables,

commonly called the hill and the bottom; the upper table being elevated about fifty

feet above the other."[4] The irregular terrain of the second tier made the street grid an

awkward, and sometimes unattractive, fit. Beyond the regularity of the streets, isolated

cabins were connected to the early town by a "narrow, winding road." As civic booster

and improver Dr. Daniel Drake reminded an audience fifty years after the town's

incorporation, "Curved lines…symbolized the country, straight lines the city." For

Drake and many other citizens, the grid was a trope for the order that they hoped

would prevail in Cincinnati, distilled from the imagined homogeneity of eighteenth-

century American towns.[5]

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[3] Charles Theodore Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Biographical, 1904), 1: 155, 413.

[4] Caleb Atwater, *A History of the State of Ohio, Natural and Civil*, 1st ed. (Cincinnati: Glezen and Shepard, 1838), microfiche, 336; J.H. Woodruff, *The Cincinnati Directory Advertiser for the Years 1836-1837* (Cincinnati: J.H. Woodruff, 1836), 198.

[5] Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959; repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 24-25, 27-28; Daniel Drake, *Discourses Delivered… before the Cincinnati Medical Library Association, January 9th and 10th, 1852* (Cincinnati: Published for the Association by Moore and Anderson, 1852), 22, CHS. Wade briefly discusses the meaning of perpendicular streets to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ohioans.

What attracted settlers to Cincinnati from the beginning, despite the perennial problem with flooding of the poor-draining "bottoms," were its commercial possibilities, which became apparent soon after settlement began. Across the Ohio lay the developing Kentucky farmlands and to the north and west lay the rich farmlands of Ohio and Indiana. Cincinnati, with basic water transport at its feet waiting to be developed, was ideally positioned to "process and ship" the products of its hinterland.[6] Boosters and settlers alike, considered it to be ideally sited for acquiring the materials needed for building a city. High quality limestone, marble, and grey freestone were available nearby by water transport and artisans made immense quantities of bricks from the excellent clay in "the lower part of the town." There were abundant oak, ash, poplar, walnut, and other trees in the state for building and furniture making. Less expensive and more available white pine was floated down river from the Allegheny Mountains, which were east of Cincinnati.[7]

B. The People of Cincinnati

From the beginning of non-native settlement, the site where Cincinnati was built was a place of violence. Local white Kentuckians called it "the Miami slaughterhouse" due to continued attempts of the Shawnees and other allied tribes to violently reclaim ownership of the land from whites.[8] After General Anthony Wayne's victory over a confederation of tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in Maumee in

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[6] Wade, *Urban Frontier*, 22.

[7] Daniel Drake, *Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country...* (Cincinnati: Looker and Wallace, 1815), microfilm, 133-134.

[8] Patrick A. Folk, "'The Queen City of Mobs:' Riots and Community Reactions in Cincinnati, 1788-1848" (PhD diss., University Of Toledo [OH], 1978), 30.

1794, the Treaty of Greenville extinguished Indian "title" to the lands in 1795 and the

Northwest Ordinance established the basis for settlement in the region. As Ohio was

becoming the first state carved out of the region, defense against and removal of these

tribes was an important part of the early experience of white settlement in Cincinnati,

as well as in the rest of the Northwest Territories.[9]

According to booster and city chronicler Charles Cist, Cincinnati's earliest

residents, through the first several decades of the nineteenth century, came primarily

from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, New York, and New England.

The small initial core group from New England would begin to draw increasing

numbers to the city from that region after 1820. There were also small, but growing,

immigrant populations from England, Scotland, France, Germany, and Ireland present

early in the city's history. By 1840, residents of foreign birth constituted 46 percent of

the city's population.[10] African Americans, in very small numbers, also lived in

Cincinnati in its first two decades.

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[9] *Indian removal*, important in itself for Ohio history, is an important precursor and back-drop for *Negro removal* in antebellum Cincinnati. An incident known as the "Bog Bottom Massacre," occurring in 1791 in the Marietta area, east of Cincinnati on the Ohio River, set off a series of white killings of innocent Indians in the area. The Treaty of Greenville was the end of Indian raids in the area, as well. These incidents helped Jefferson, as President, to develop his idea of removing all Indians to west of the Mississippi, making Ohio was critically important in the development of removal ideology in the United States in this period. See Patrick Griffin, "Reconsidering the Ideological Origins of Indian Removal: The Case of the Big Bottom "Massacre," in *The Center of a Great Empire: The Ohio Country in the Early Republic*, ed. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Stuart D. Hobbs (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 11-35.

[10] Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 38-39; Cole Patrick Dawson, *Yankees in the Queen City: The Social and Intellectual Contributions of New Englanders in Cincinnati, 1820-1850* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1977), microfilm, p. 35. (PhD diss., Miami University, 1977). For a partial list of New Englanders active in the city between 1820 and 1850, see Dawson, 197-200. Cist's 1841 figures for "constituent proportions" of the local population are as follows: America = 54%; Germany = 28%;

Commerce was the primary occupation of the inhabitants of Cincinnati from its earliest years. It began as a garrison town in the U.S. army's attempt to "pacify" the nearby Indians as well as those in the northwest corner of the state. With Fort Washington built nearby, local merchants supplied, and the town often housed, troops who were protecting the settlement and supporting the later fighting at Fallen Timbers. This brought both the debauchery and the economic stimulus of the soldiers to Cincinnati. After the Battle of Fallen Timbers ended the threat of violence from any remaining Indians in Ohio in 1794, the town grew quickly, becoming the major depot for local produce going to New Orleans via the Ohio to the Mississippi River and for the distribution of Eastern goods in the Miami Valley.[11]

Cincinnati's population came from every state in the country and many foreign nations. In 1840 Cist was reported that the largest contingents of citizens were from Pennsylvania (18.3%), Ohio (16.9%), New Jersey (12.1%), New York (10.2%), Maryland (8.1%), Virginia (6.3%), and Massachusetts (6.3%). People from the South were about 25.3% of the population; those from New England, about 15%. The single largest contingent was from the three states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, with a total of 2,677, or 40.6% of the population.[12] From the 1820s on, many of Cincinnati's most involved residents came from New England, despite constituting only 15% of the population. Many of them arrived in town with a strong sense of duty

Great Britain = 16%; France and Italy = 1%; and All Other States = 1%. See Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 39.

[11] Wade, *Urban Frontier*, 25-26.

[12] Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 39. Cist's figures are for male heads of households only, giving only a rough, relative set of percentages out of a total of 6,594 male heads of households in the city.

to society and a desire to build communities like the ones they had known in New England. One historian believes that this group had their greatest impact on local society using "their philosophical convictions in fighting social battles."[13]

In 1840, Henry Schaffer, composer of local city directories, published figures on Cincinnati's population growth. As an example of the incredibly rapid growth of the city in the period, the following table illustrates how its population more than quadrupled between 1819 and 1840, only twenty-one years:[14]

Table 2.1 Population in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1819-1840

1819	10,283
1824	12,016
1826	16,230
1829	24,148
1833	27,645
1835	29,000
1840	42,500

Source: Schaffer, *Cincinnati… Directory for 1840*, 482.

This high rate of population growth put strains on housing, food, and social living space in Cincinnati. Areas where the poor lived began to show signs of becoming run-down. The growing diversity of the population also put strains on people's ability to accommodate to new and changing circumstances, lowering the violence threshold for many of those in serious disagreement.

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[13] Dawson, *Yankees in the Queen City*, 35.

[14] Henry D. Schaffer, *The Cincinnati, Covington, Newport, and Fulton Directory for 1840* (Cincinnati: J.B. and R.P. Donogh, 1840), 482. CHS

There were very few African Americans among the earliest residents in Cincinnati. The first census in 1801 didn't list any, although apparently an article in the *Northwest Centinel*, April 19, 1794 mentions blacks living in the town by that year. By 1810 the official count was eighty, or 3.4 percent of a total population of 2,320.[15] During the 1820s the African American population grew faster than the population at large, in 1829 numbering 2,258 "blacks and mulattoes" out of a total of 24,148 residents, or 9.35 percent (see table 2.2).[16] While the majority of the white population early in Cincinnati's history came from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, most African American residents of early Cincinnati came from Kentucky and Virginia - both slave states sharing a border with Ohio.[17]

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[15] *Western Spy*, May 6, 1801 and Nov. 31, 1810, cited in Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," *Journal of Negro History* 39, no. 1 (Jan. 1954): 43n7. The total population figure for 1810 is from B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826* (Cincinnati: Morgan, Lodge, and Fisher, 1827), 57. Drake and Mansfield give 79 as the number of Negroes for 1810.

[16] Robinson and Fairbank, *The Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1829), 154-155. CHS

[17] Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 21.

Table 2.2 Population Statistics of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1810-1850

YEAR	BLACKS/MULATTOES	WHITES	TOTAL	% OF BLACKS
1810	80	2,240	2,320	3.4%
1815	200	5,800	6,000	3.3%
1820	433	9,381	9,814	4.4%
1826	690	15,540	16,230	4.3%
1829	2,258	21,890	24,148	9.4%
1830	1,090	23,741	24,831	4.4%
1831	1,194	24,883	26,077	4.6%
1835	2,500 (est.)	31,000 (est.)	33,500 (est.)	7.5%
1840	2,258	44,124	46,382	4.9%
1850	3,237	112,198	115,435	2.8%

Sources: Daniel Drake, *Notices Concerning Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Daniel Drake, 1810); repr. Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio 3, no. 2 (April - June 1908): 30; Drake, *Picture of Cincinnati*, 170, 172; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourth Census of the United States, 1820*, Vol. I, ser. No. 7 (New York: Norman Ross, 1990); Drake and Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826*, 57-58; Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 155; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830*, Vol. I, ser. No. 7 (New York: Norman Ross, 1990), 62; Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1831* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1831), 182; A.N. Marquis, *The Industries of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: A.N. Marquis, 1883), 22; Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, held at Putnam, on the 22nd, 23d, and 24th of April, 1835* (Putnam, OH: Beaumont and Wallace, 1835), Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/ mayantislavery/ (accessed March 14, 2007), 16, 28; Cist, Cincinnati in 1841, 34; U.S. Census Bureau, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), http://www2.census.gov/prod2/ decennial/ documents/ 1850a-27 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), 830.

African Americans in antebellum Cincinnati did not live in a single, segregated area (there was no *ghetto*), but were dispersed throughout the city in a number of "residential clusters" concentrated in the east end of the city and near the river. These areas were not exclusively inhabited by African Americans - many poorer whites, particularly Irish immigrants, lived there as well. But the visible concentrations of Negroes and mulattoes in these areas caused local residents to refer to them as "Little Africa" and "Bucktown" (see the map in Figure 2.1). By the late 1820s wooden tenements, rented mostly by white landlords on three to five year leases, dominated

the areas where they clustered. The crowding promoted health problems and fire hazards.[18] Most African Americans likely lived under these conditions.

Work was often difficult for African Americans to get, particularly for men. Women were frequently the only employed members of a household. In 1815, local civic booster and improver Daniel Drake described blacks as "generally disinclined to laborious occupations, and prone to the performance of light and menial drudgery. A few exercise the humbler trades." In actuality, local labor practices relegated them to common labor on canals, roads, and other construction projects, to manufacturing, and to trades such as boot-blacking, barbering, and huckstering, or working as porters, waiters, stevedores and messengers on the wharves and steamboats. Women typically worked as cooks and as other types of domestics.[19]

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[18] Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati": 44-45; Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., "Introduction," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 2-3; Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Race and the City*, ed. Taylor, 97,99. In Taylor's study of 1850s Cincinnati, he was able to plot the residence of virtually every African American in the city in 1850 and determined that they all shared neighborhoods, streets, and residences with whites through the whole period from 1820 to 1850. See Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., "City Building, Public Policy, the Rise of the Industrial City, and Black Ghetto-Slum Formation in Cincinnati, 1850-1940," in Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed., *Race and the City*, 158-159.

[19] Taylor, Frontiers of Freedom, 100-103; Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Report on the Condition of the People of Color in the State of Ohio, from the Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Putnam, on the 22d, 23d, and 24th of April, 1835 (Putnam, OH: Beaumont and Wallace, 1835). Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/ (accessed March 14, 2007), 3; Drake, Picture of Cincinnati, 172; Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati": 45.
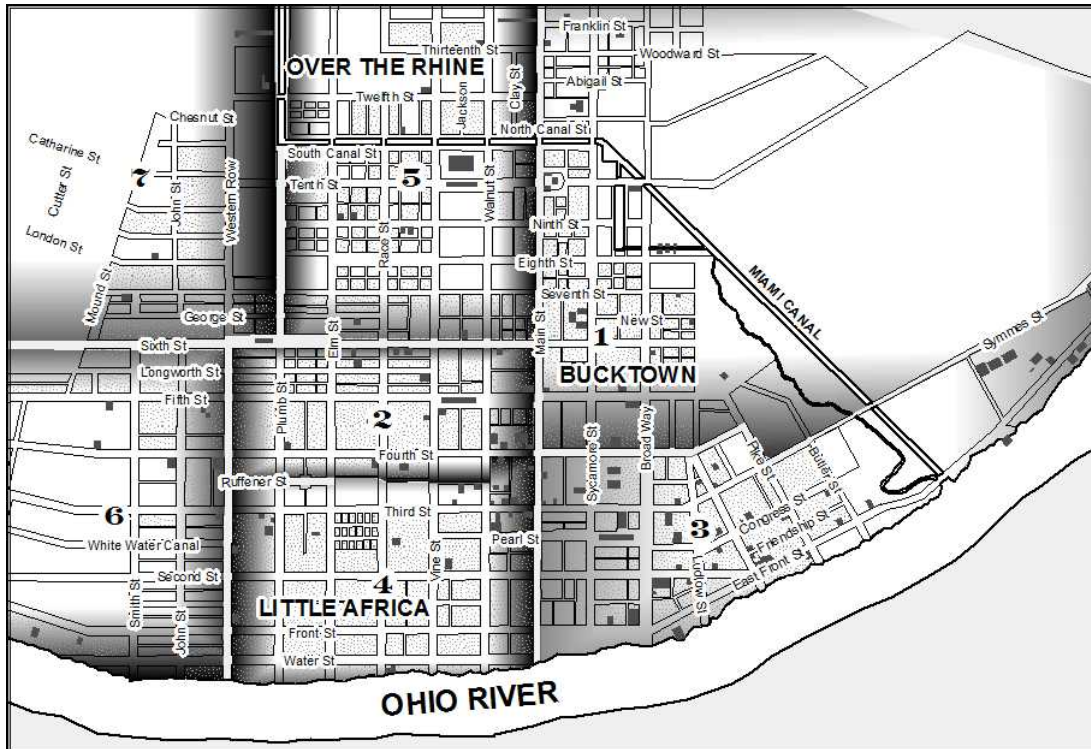
Figure 2.1 Map of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1825-1841, showing wards and neighborhoods (wards 6 and 7 were added after 1836).

Adapted from Map 4.1, "Cincinnati in 1850," Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati" in Taylor, ed., *Race in the City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); this map was adapted from Doolittle and Munson, *Topographical Map of the City of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Doolittle and Munson, 1841).

From the mid-1830s on, increasing numbers of African Americans in Cincinnati received an education, acquired skills -- or were finally able to use the ones they had -- and began increasingly to buy property in the city. Carter Woodson identified two reasons for this progress in the community. The first was the development of the steamboat and its use on the local waterways. African Americans working on the boats as servants received tips and those working as stewards contracted for supplies and made profits, which increased their incomes. Many of these individuals subsequently went into business for themselves. The second factor driving this improvement in living standards in the black community was an emerging acceptance of the black mechanic. In 1840, they were reported to be getting as much work as they could handle.[20] Some whites began to get agitated about this rise in Negro prosperity and acted on it in various ways throughout this period. The first organized efforts to prevent African Americans from buying property didn't occur until 1842. That year a group of white citizens under the banner of the *Cincinnati Anti-Abolition Society*, claiming natural white superiority, petitioned both houses of the Ohio state legislature to pass laws to "effectively prohibit negroes and mulattoes from purchasing or holding real estate hereafter within our territorial limits." They further suggested nullifying all contracts entered into by African American as "most expedient in attaining the end desired."[21]

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[20] C[arter]. G. Woodson, "The Negroes of Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History* I, no. 1 (Jan. 1916): 10.

[21] "A Petition," *Cincinnati Post and Anti-Abolitionist*, Jan. 22, 1842.

African Americans in Cincinnati, and throughout the state of Ohio, lived under the burden of discriminatory Black Laws, designed to discourage them from moving into the state. Put in place with the first constitution in 1804 and strengthened in 1807, they required a $500 bond of security signed by white people within a short time of arriving in the state in order to live and work in the state. They were further prevented from testifying in court against whites - giving white perpetrators of crimes against them a free pass when there were only black witnesses.[22] The ramifications of these laws on the black community will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

Despite living virtually all over town, African Americans were able to build a sense of community because most of their institutions, such as churches, hotels, and schools were concentrated primarily in the "Bucktown" area of Ward 1, in a factory district (see Figure 2.1). This created a kind of "commons" where people had the opportunity to interact and create group cohesion.[23] The lives of Negroes and mulattoes, and their families, in the Bucktown and Little Africa areas of town -- their everyday activities, their celebrations, their associating with each other -- were the very practices of building a community and gave a sense of presence to those places in Cincinnati.

Cincinnati was booming during the 1820s and 1830s; and immigration from Europe helped to drive a significant portion of the astonishing growth it experienced,

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[22] See Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).

[23] Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience in Antebellum Cincinnati": 98, 115-116. The most comprehensive account of the resilience of the African American community through this period, especially in relation to their desire to stay in the city after each of the riots in this study, is Nikki Taylor's *Frontiers of Freedom*.

and was acknowledged as such. As local lawyer and booster Timothy Walker wrote in 1831,

> We have doubled numbers within seven years, and are at this moment increasing faster than ever. In twelve years we shall rival Boston, unless Boston quickens its pace. The fact is, three years make a generation, not in the course of nature, but of unparalleled emigration. Not a twelfth part of our population was born here. We are congregated together from every line of latitude and longitude under the whole heavens. I have seen every sort of people except Turks crowding our streets.[24]

Many community leaders, like publisher Timothy Flint, took a decidedly pro-immigrant position in the early 1830s:

> It holds true as a general principle, that emigrants are enterprising men. Indolent, sluggish, shiftless people stay at home. It requires force of character to sunder all local ties and take one's march for a distant abode. The very determination and decision involved in the act of emigration are good omens of future thrift.…Tell me that a city is peopled by emigrants, whether from other nations or other states, and I will venture to say, without having seen them, that they are true and trusty men.[25]

Germans began arriving in Cincinnati from the very beginning of settlement in 1788. The first mayor of the town (1802) was David Zeigler, from Heidelberg. The German community remained small through the 1820s, making up only about 5 percent of the total population within the city. In the 1830s many Germans came to the city because of economic decline in Germany and the promise of new opportunity and a chance to "start over." It is estimated that in 1840 approximately 20 percent of Cincinnati's residents were born in Germany; by mid-century, including those of

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[24] Timothy Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. I," *New England Magazine* 1, no. 1 (July 1831): 30.

[25] Quoted in Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. I": 33.

German parentage, the figure climbed to more than 40 percent of the population.[26] During the 1820s and 1830s most Germans were artisans and mechanics, working in the crafts and in manufacturing.[27] The German move into the brewing industry, which they eventually came to dominate, didn't begin until the 1840s.[28] The German community was residentially concentrated in a district locally referred to as "Over-the-Rhine," just north of the Miami Canal (see Figure 2.1).

Germans who arrived in the 1820s, called *Zwanzigern*, worked to accommodate and assimilate to the culture and customs of their new community, and were well-regarded by their fellow Cincinnatians.[29] While a few in this community became Whigs, many of those who arrived in the 1830s, called *Dreissigern,* were attracted to the Democratic party's projection of equal opportunity and justice for "all men," often clashing with the Whig's tendency to anti-liberal fundamentalism, temperance, and sabbatarianism.[30]

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[26] Bruce Levine, "Community Divided: German Immigrants, Social Class, and Political Conflict in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati Since 1820*, ed. Henry D. Shapiro and Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 48. Shaffer's 1840 city directory gives a figure of 8,000 Germans out of a total population of 41,500 (his figures are suspiciously "rounded off"), which generates 19.3 percent; Greve's figures are 14,163 Germans out of a 46,382 total population. See Schaffer, *Cincinnati Directory for 1840,* 483 and Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati*, 1: 685.

[27] Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 72.

[28] Timothy J. Holian, "Cincinnati and Its Brewing Industry: Their Parallel Development through the German Community," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 29 (1994): 69-70.

[29] Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 57-58.

[30] Levine, "Community Divided": 53. Sabbatarianism was a movement by some Calvinist and evangelical Protestant Christians to legally prohibit commercial activity on Sundays, including mail delivery and alcohol sales. Catholics and immigrants were among it vocal opponents, as it advocated

Local non-Germans registered varied reactions to Cincinnati's growing German population and developing community. The early immigrants, mostly Protestant and assimilationist, melded into the community. German immigrants of the 1830s, increasingly Catholic, less skilled and facing language difficulties, were refused admittance to native societies and clubs in the city. This helped to create an increasingly insular German community of cultural societies, churches, newspapers, and benevolent associations. Politically "docile," for the most part, they would not begin to have local social and political influence until their numbers increased in the 1840s.[31]

Irish immigrants constituted the largest percentage of the new arrivals in the United States between 1820 and the early 1850s, when they were exceeded by German immigrants. Between 1815 and the beginning of Ireland's potato famine in 1845, between 800,000 and one million Irish came to America. They settled the cities of the East and Northeast and were pulled into the Old Northwest and the South to work on canal projects in the 1820s and 1830s.[32] Many of these immigrants developed negative and competitive attitudes toward African Americans, with whom they often shared neighborhoods, jobs, and racial stereotyping by native whites. A desire to distance themselves from Negroes and mulattoes, as well as punish them, played a significant

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using the law to impose a singular, conservative view of Christianity and its practices on the entire community.

[31] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 166-168.

[32] Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 13, 44-45; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 38.

role in Irish immigrant involvement in anti-abolition and race riots in the 1830s and 1840s in cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.[33] Although Cincinnati's Irish population grew during the 1830s, drawn to the area by mostly unskilled work opportunities on canal and other construction and building projects, it was much smaller than those of larger east coast cities during the period of this study.[34] The residents of Cincinnati did participate in a national discourse about the Irish in America about their character and their (un)suitability for American citizenship. Their supposed violence, Catholicism, and assumed tendency to intemperance were typically believed to be due to their environment and ignorance, thus, changing their environment would change their character.[35] It was assumed their new environment, full of opportunities, would turn them into A*mericans*. Ironically, several Irish immigrants played a role in local fistfights with African Americans that led up to the 1841 riots in Cincinnati (see Chapter 7).

Jews in antebellum Cincinnati, while relatively few in number, were important to the early cultural and economic growth of the city. Jews shared neighborhood space

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[33] Important studies in the past two decades have examined Irish re-construction of themselves as white Americans in east coast cities and the role of collective racial violence in these racial constructions. For Philadelphia, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 1999); for New York, see Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*.

[34] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 166. By 1840 male Irish participation in the workforce in Cincinnati was calculated at only 7.5 percent. By 1850, after the first great wave of Irish immigration had begun in the 1840s, and after the last riot in the present study, that percentage had doubled to 15 percent. See Ross, *Workers on the Edge*, 72; see also 136, table 5.5 for statistics on the distribution of Irish and other ethnic groups in various trades in the city in 1840 and 1850.

[35] Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, 51-59. Vigorous anti-Irishism was a product of the period when many more Irish emigrated to the U.S. during the 1840s and 1850s. By this time many Americans had begun to confuse *nationality* (American) with *ethnicity* (the proper one in this case being A*nglo-Saxon*), writing many European immigrants, along with people of color, out of citizenship rights. Ibid., 68-103.

with African Americans. The synagogue at Sixth Street and Broadway, Kal Kodesh B'nai Israel, was in the core of the area that was most involved in the 1841 race riots, and was near the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) (see Figure 7.1) The first Jews arrived in Cincinnati, from England, in the early-mid 1810s; the first from Germany arrived between 1817 and 1820.[36] By 1824 there were twenty families and they organized the Holy Congregation (K.K.) B'nai Israel. They purchased a lot between Fifth and Sixth streets on the east side of Broadway in 1829; the building was dedicated September 9, 1836.[37] A group of German Jews that splintered from this first group started a second congregation in 1839, calling themselves K.K. B'nai Jeshrun.[38]

In the mid-1830s reports of pogroms (riots to remove Jews from communities) in Europe, particularly in Hamburgh, Germany, began to appear in Cincinnati newspapers.[39] And yet, while Jews had experienced anti-Semitism in other parts of the United States, as well, their relationship with the surrounding gentile community in Cincinnati was unusually cordial from the beginning, and remained so throughout the

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[36] Jonathan D. Sarna, "'A Sort of Paradise for the Hebrews': The Lofty Vision of Cincinnati Jews," in *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati since 1820*, ed. Henry D. Shapiro and Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 132-135.

[37] Ann Debra Michael, "The Origins of the Jewish Community of Cincinnati, 1817-1860," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 30, no. 3/4 (1972): 156, 158. This congregation's history is oddly intertwined (and unexplored) with that of the African American community: they bought the lot in 1829, dedicated the building they erected in 1836 (about the time of the riots), and the 1841 riots partially took place within and in front of the building at Sixth Street and Broadway.

[38] Michael, "The Jewish Community of Cincinnati": 159. This congregation did not incorporate under the laws of Ohio until 1842.

[39] See, for example, "Riot in Hamburgh [*sic*] and Attack on the Jews. - Hamburgh, Aug. 4," *Western Christian Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1835, and "Persecution of the Jews," *Catholic Telegraph*, June 30, 1836.

period of this study.[40] Some evidence of a positive attitude about Jews on the part of local public figures is shown by an article in the *Cincinnati Gazette* in which the editor Charles Hammond used the occasion of the congregation of K.K. B'nai Israel ("a society which embraces many orderly and upright citizens") dedicating their synagogue building in 1836 to trumpet the virtues of its success as "a fine commentary upon the freedom and liberality of our political institutions."[41] In antebellum Cincinnati, as in the rest of the United States, non-Jews' objections to Jews were primarily religious. They had not yet been racialized with fixed, essential characteristics as they would be later in the century when much greater numbers of Eastern European, rather than Western European, Jews would immigrate to America.[42]

A number of visitors to the city in the 1830s remarked that Cincinnatians did not seem to like each other very well. Early in the 1830s, Swedish visitor Carl Arfwedson noted, "Accustomed constantly to see emigrants, with whom they form new acquaintances, they show a degree of indifference to each other, and this characteristic influences their actions and stamps them with a certain want of feeling."[43] Englishman James Buckingham visited Cincinnati in 1840, making a similar observation: "One extremely unfavorable part of the American character,

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[40] Sarna, "A Sort of Paradise for the Hebrews": 133-135.

[41] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1836, cited in Michael, "The Jewish Community of Cincinnati": 158.

[42] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 171-72.

[43] Carl David Arfwedson, *The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 2: 132.

appears to me to be the absence of sympathy with sufferers, unless of their own immediate family or kindred." A story in the Cincinnati *Gazette* reported a severe tornado in Mississippi that killed 300-700 people on palatial steamboats on the river -- Buckingham could not believe there were no local public meetings, efforts at relief, etc.[44]

Visitors to Cincinnati frequently commented on the apparent lack of leisure activities for residents. English visitor Francis Trollope, residing there in 1828 remarked,

> I never saw any people who appeared to live so much without amusement as the Cincinnatians….They have a theatre, which is, in fact, the only public amusement of this triste [*sic*] little town….Ladies are rarely seen there, and by far the large proportion of females deem it an offense against religion to witness the representation of a play.[45]

The lack of leisure activities was related to what many believed was the overly pragmatic character of Cincinnati's residents. Cincinnatians did start museums, lecture series, libraries, and musical groups, but they tended to not be well-attended.[46] Some residents were involved in the associational life of the community, contributing to their own, others', or the city's improvement (see Chapter 3); and local residents did participate in and support activities they felt would benefit them in the short run, putting a high value on expediency.

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[44] James S. Buckingham, *The Eastern and Western States of America* (London: Fisher, Son and Co., 18420, 2: 407.

[45] Mrs. [Francis] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 3rd ed. (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1832), 1: 99.

[46] For a discussion of attempts to develop literary and artistic aspects of the city , see Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, Chapter 8, "The Place of the Arts," 228-257.

C. Class Stratification and Class Consciousness

Class in the antebellum American city was not a clear-cut aspect of society, especially in a booming city like Cincinnati, where financial successes and failures came and went daily. The understanding of class that informs this study is that of historian E.P. Thompson:

> Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited and shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different (and usually opposed to) theirs.

Thompson's understanding of class making resonates with theories of practices, as it is an "historical phenomenon" not a "structure or category…an active process, which owes as much to agency as conditioning," something that we carry out "in human relationships." A Marxist critical of orthodox Marxism's theorization of culture as a secondary construction, Thompson's studies of class show it to be "a social and cultural formation…as much as an economic formation":

> Class consciousness is the way in which the [experience of productive relations] is handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not.[47]

Class in antebellum Cincinnati was not a simple matter of how much money one had available. Consciousness of class identification and positioning was enacted through a variety of social and cultural practices - some involving basic necessities, such as food, clothing and shelter, and others concerned with more discretionary aspects of living - such as religious denomination, schooling, associational activity, or

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[47] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 9, 11, 13, 10.

social behavior and etiquette. Additionally, class was, and is, not constructed in isolation from other social identities, such as gender, race or ethnicity. These identities *co-construct* within the context of each other and are dynamic. One identity, such as class, may also be subsumed in another, such as race or ethnicity.[48]

In the first decades of the nineteenth century the nature of work environments in the shop shifted from the more social dynamics of the eighteenth-century, with some possibility of mobility from worker to owner that was typical of mercantile-based economies, to the impersonal relationships and limited mobility that dominated industrial capitalism. As this occurred, the older sense of mutual obligations faded as those powerless under the new system, as well as those newly powerful, discovered and began to try to protect their separate interests. Scholars have become aware of the breakdown of prior common cross-class male behavior in many American cities in the 1820s and 1830s.[49] As workers in workshops were increasingly separated from non-workers, and manual workers from non-manual ones, there was a similar separation of workers into enclaves of those who were like themselves in neighborhoods and recreational activities, as well.[50] Labor unions, chambers of commerce, literary salons,

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[48] For a discussion of the problem of class subsumed in race in American thought, see Sherry B. Ortner, "Identities: the Hidden Life of Class," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 63-79.

[49] Studies concerned with antebellum Cincinnati that highlight this aspect of local class consciousness are Wendy Jean Katz, *Regionalism and Reform: Art and Class Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 5-6; and Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge*, especially Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

[50] Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*, 5; Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 232.

and self-help societies that the residents of Cincinnati developed in this period are examples of practices tied to this new consciousness (see Chapter 3).[51]

The rise of voluntary organizations in Cincinnati in the 1820s and 1830s was accompanied by a rise in other class-conscious, or class-performing, practices. Early in the city's history, when there were fewer leisure activities, (white) male residents of all backgrounds tended to join in local activities, such as going to saloons and joining volunteer fire departments. Growing class awareness was manifested in more activities involving a single group and fewer activities in which a diversity of people participated, from voluntary associations to other leisure activities such as gambling clubs, theatres, music concerts, and literary clubs.[52] As historian Stuart Blumin has pointed out, in voluntary associations, "more than in the workplace, the marketplace, and the home, decisions as to whether and how to be involved were voluntary expressions of social preference" in the antebellum American city.[53] Thus, the residents of Cincinnati began increasingly to sort themselves by their interests, and class interests were one of the strongest affiliations.

Religion - overwhelmingly some form of Christianity - was a constant and ubiquitous presence in antebellum America. Cincinnati before 1841 was home to dozens of Protestant churches, a Catholic Cathedral, and two congregations of Jews,

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[51] See Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*; also see Chapter 6, concerning voluntary associations as an expression of middle class consciousness in Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 192-229.

[52] Ross, *Workers on the Edge*, 164-165; Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*, 5.

[53] Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 192.

one of which had already built a synagogue by 1836.[54] Analysis of church registers in

Philadelphia in the antebellum period showed their memberships to have been

"shaped" not only by "proximity, old habits and loyalties, the effect of individual

pastors, and doctrinal disputes" but "also (and increasingly) shaped by class."[55]

Church membership was a part of the practices of class construction in Cincinnati, as

well. Those highest in social standing were typically Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or

Unitarians. Artisans, lesser tradesmen, mechanics, and laborers tended to attend

Baptist, Methodist, Universalist, Jewish, Catholic, and smaller Christian sects'

congregations.[56] Even within Cincinnati's African American community, by the mid-

1830s, affiliation with the African Methodist Episcopal, the Methodist Episcopal, or

the Baptist Church (see Chapter 3), was increasingly an expression of class

consciousness and a way of constructing the category of class, itself.

Many local civic leaders who were also boosters were in the habit of

describing a leveling trend in antebellum Cincinnati, effacing real tensions that

emerged as class consciousness increased sorting practices, in turn increasing

awareness and formation of classes:

> Of men of leisure and fortune, there are few or none….The general features of
> the fashionable portion of our community, are similar to those of the same

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[54] Drake and Mansfield, *Cincinnati in* 1826, 33-36; Cist, *Cincinnati in* 1841, 96-99; Michael, "Origins of the Jewish Community of Cincinnati": 156, 158-59. Drake and Mansfield lists 13 churches, including one "African" church at NE of Sixth and Broadway, a Catholic Cathedral, and a Jewish congregation that met in a frame building between Third and Fourth west of Main. In 1841 Cist lists forty churches, including four African American churches, and two synagogues - the "Jewish Synagogue" at Broadway and Sixth, and the "New Jews' Synagogue" at Third, between Sycamore and Broadway.

[55] Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 218-221; quote in on page 221.

[56] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 171.

class in the eastern cities, with an equal amount of refinement, if not a like degree of useless etiquette.[57]

If you ask who among us are *lions*, I shall be obliged to answer, all or none. We have few trees towering much above the rest. We hold to the doctrine of equality most pertinaciously. The upright man is the gentleman, no matter what his calling. The weight of influence is on the side of the mechanics. As a body they have been foremost in building up the city, and better citizens could not be desired.[58]

Alexis de Tocqueville, who stayed in the city when visiting Ohio in 1831, could have been speaking of Cincinnati when he noted that the lack of an identifiable leisure class had allowed (white) Ohioans to describe themselves as equals by their participation in work. Discussing Ohio against the backdrop of the slave state of Kentucky, just over the Ohio River, this place was different than others he had seen in America:

In Boston, New York, in Philadelphia, in all the great towns of the coast there is already a class which has acquired property and which had adopted sedentary habits and wants to enjoy wealth not to make it. In Ohio everyone has come to make money…there is not a *single*, absolutely not a *single* man of leisure….Everyone has his work, to which he devotes himself ardently. As yet people just don't know what upper classes are; the pell mell is complete. The whole society is an industry….Here a population is devoured by feverish activity, trying every means to make its fortune…the population seems poor to look at, for they work with their hands, but that work is the source of riches…work is honored and leads to all else.…[59]

Despite the lack of a distinct leisure sector of society, antebellum Cincinnati did have its elites. The wealthy elite were few in number in the city's early years, and

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[57] Drake and Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826*, 89-90.

[58] Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. I": 30-31.

[59] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 262, 264.

not always well thought of. The English visitor, James Buckingham, having already

noted American unfriendliness in Cincinnati, wrote further of American lack of

empathy in reference to Cincinnati elites. The city's richest families, he wrote,

> seemed to me, with very few exceptions, the coldest, most apathetic, and least
> hospitable of all the people we had met in the Union; and I do not think there is
> a city in the country the inhabitants of which think so highly of themselves,
> and affect such superiority over strangers and foreigners, as Cincinnati; though
> they are nearly all of them strangers themselves, being a collection of persons
> from all parts of the globe, from every section of the Union, and more
> heterogeneous perhaps than any other 50,000 persons settled on any other
> spot.[60]

If who we mean by "elites" are those who had power to make decisions at some public

or governmental level, financial wealth was not the only determinant of access to

power in antebellum Cincinnati. Historian Walter Glazer has shown the greatest

portion of the "general development of the city" was achieved through an

"associational network" of members of voluntary associations, "particularly the

interlocking directorate of multiple office-holders" which he has shown to have

existed in Cincinnati about 1840.[61] These men included a high percentage of

merchants, lawyers, ministers, bankers, and other businessmen; some were among the

wealthiest people in the city, but many were not. Glazer refers to them as the

"occupational upper class" with a "high percentage of old settlers, Yankees, and

property owners."[62] Adding those in city government to this pool, the elites in

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[60] Buckingham, *Eastern and Western States of America*, 2: 413-414.

[61] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, Chapter 4: "Participation and Power: Leadership," 123-156; quotes are
from page 146.

[62] Ibid., 102. Glazer does not include ministers in his list.

antebellum Cincinnati were those who called the important meetings, made the important decisions or were consulted before others made them, and were responsible for most of the public improvements and governance of the city and region.

Public booster rhetoric in antebellum Cincinnati preached a gospel of harmony and public spiritedness, obscuring the tensions in the city, including those of broadening class consciousness (see Chapter 3). In 1827, local lawyers and boosters Benjamin Drake and E.D. Mansfield were among those assigning the causes of prosperity to the laboring classes in the city: "The most numerous class of our citizens, consists of our Mechanics, and as a body, they may be referred to as one of the chief causes of our prosperity."[63] In 1832, Timothy Walker could still say, "It is a general observation that the laboring classes are more respected and have more influence, in new states, than in old; this is eminently true in reference to Ohio." [64]

By the mid-1830s local laboring men and women were beginning to organize on behalf of fairer wages and improved working conditions for themselves. In January, 1836, there was a Trades' Union organizational meeting, with representatives of eleven trades present.[65] Three weeks later delegates from "various societies of Journeymen Mechanics met…to form themselves into a General Trades' Union,"

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[63] B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826*, 89-90.

[64] Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. IV": 50.

[65] "Trades' Union Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 30, 1836. The eleven trades present were cabinet-makers, coopers, cordwainers (men's and women's branches) curriers, hatters, plane-makers, printers, saddlers, harness-makers, tinplate workers, and tailors.

electing officers and choosing newspapers to carry their minutes.[66] In March of 1836

Charles Hammond, editor of the *Gazette*, began an attack on unions, or *combinations*,

and on strikes, or *turn-outs*, which were becoming more common. Hammond believed

they were "in the nature of conspiracies against society - an anti-monopoly

monopolization." He reprinted articles from the *New York Journal of Commerce* and

wrote prefatory remarks and an editorial supporting the New York Supreme Court

making it illegal for workers to "combine" to "enhance prices by *pre-concert* or

association."[67] In May of that year the *victualers* (butchers) went on strike, closing the

meat markets for several days; they settled with the city council several days later.[68]

Union organization can be read as a clear sign of increasing consciousness of class

interests.

The middle classes were in the process of developing during the antebellum

period, positioning themselves in cultural opposition to what they saw as the amorality

of an acquisitive, commercially-oriented, mercantile elite. They promoted and

constructed a "civic identity based on ideals of modest self-control and...a feeling for

others" intended to counter narrow economic self-interest with a sense of public

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[66] "General Trades' Union," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Feb. 20, 1836.

[67] "Trades' Unions [from the *N.Y. Journal of Commerce*], *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 5, 1836; Editorial, "Trades' Union," *Cincinnati* Gazette, March 17, 1836; and "Important Decision - Trades' Union" [*N.Y. Journal of Commerce*], *Cincinnati Gazette,* March 18, 1836. The March reprinted article melodramatically recounts the very real problems a striker's family faced while he was on strike, without explaining the impossible choices with which he was faced.

[68] "Meat Market," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 7, 1836; "Butchers," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 9, 1836; "City Council and the Butchers," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 11, 1836.

spirit.[69] There was an increasing separation of manual from non-manual work under industrialization. The middle class is, however, notoriously difficult to define, encompassing, at that time, such disparate occupations as mechanics, lawyers, clerks, ministers, and shop-keepers.[70] Cincinnatians who were oriented toward a middle class identification were deeply involved in participating in the practices which constructed the culture of this social stratum, particularly those which projected *refinement* and public spirit.[71] In many cases, however, such as within the African American community, middle class identification was marked more by attitudes and outlook than strictly by income (see Chapter 3).

D. The State of the City

Cincinnati was a boomtown throughout the 1820s and 1830s, and as such, mitigated the effects of the national Panic of 1837 until 1840-41 (see Chapter 7). According to local lawyer and booster Timothy Walker, in 1832 in a published letter to friends in New England, "We have doubled numbers within seven years, and are at this moment increasing faster than ever. In twelve years we shall rival Boston, unless Boston quickens its pace.… [T]here is not a square in the city, where new buildings are not going up and obstructing the sidewalks with lumber."[72] In fact, one of the aspects of Cincinnati's phenomenal growth that awed Francis Trollope during her stay in the city in the late 1820s was the great numbers of houses and other buildings she

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[69] Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*, xiv, xv.

[70] Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 84, 244-249; Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 102.

[71] See Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*.

[72] Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. I": 30-31.

saw being moved through the city streets on the way to a new location: "One of the sights to stare at in America is that of houses moving from place to place….They make no difficulty of moving dwellings from one part of the town to another" -- brick as well as wooden buildings. The largest building she saw being moved was a two-story, eight-room house: "forty oxen were yoked to it. The first few yards brought down the two stacks of chimneys, but it afterwards went on well. The greatest difficulties were the first getting it in motion and the stopping exactly in the right place.…[T]he constant improvements going on there made it often desirable to change a wooden dwelling for one of brick."[73]

Throughout the period of this study, many writers believed that there was plenty of work in the city. In a published letter to relatives in New England, local lawyer and booster Timothy Walker claimed, "[In Ohio] so dear is labor, and so cheap is land, that any industrious man can earn money enough in three years to buy an ample farm"[74] -- giving a voice to the developing master narrative of "equal opportunity for everyone" that obscured the "unfree" nature of most non-slave "free" wage labor during the period.[75] Visitor Michael Chevalier concurred, in a published letter in 1835, stating that "laborers are wanted."[76] In 1836 the *Catholic Telegraph*

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[73] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 121-122.

[74] Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. IV": 50.

[75] For a full discussion of this "unfree" free labor, see Seth Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 335-361.

[76] Michael Chevalier, "Letters on America - The Western Steamboats, New York, May 1835," *Western Monthly Magazine* 4, no. 6 (Dec. 1835): 412.

reprinted a set of statistics about Cincinnati and included the statement that, "Wages

for all kinds of mechanical labor [are] high; the professions are crowded, as

elsewhere."[77]

By the late 1830s the economy was in a slump over much of the country.[78] In

addition, other conditions prevailed that had a direct negative impact on the economy

of Cincinnati. For instance, there had been a series of droughts that affected crops. By

1841the *Zanesville Gazette* of August 25 reported that its investigation of area wheat

crops showed that failures were worse than previously thought. The fields were

attacked by a fly, and had not yet recovered when attacked by a wheat rust and "again

well nigh ruined." Weight per bushel was significantly lower than usual. Wheat at

Zanesville was listed at $1/bushel and flour at $5.50/bushel. These rising wheat and

flour prices early in the 1840s could have led to perceptions of coming economic

stress.[79]

The bases of Cincinnati's commercial and early-industrial economy during the

1820s - 1840s had been the phenomenal harvests of corn, wheat, and rye produced in

its fertile, rain-drenched Miami Valley hinterlands, and the distribution of the products

that were the result of these grain harvests. Grain led to distilling; grasses and forests

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[77] "Cincinnati contains…" [from the *Cincinnati Mirror*], *Catholic Telegraph*, July 7, 1836. This article was also reprinted in *Western Christian Advocate* [Cincinnati], July 8, 1836.

[78] James Major Sharp, *The Jacksonians versus the Banks: Politics in the States after the Panic of 1837* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

[79] "Muskingum Valley Wheat Crop," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 28, 1841. A few days later, on Thurs., Sept. 2, 1841 - the day before the 1841 riots began - another indication of concern about the effects of failing wheat crops appeared n the Cincinnati *Gazette*, in an advertisement: "Fabrics are in great variety and supply in the warehouses ad several of he retail stores - despite concerns about the economy and the state of the wheat crop." See "Dry Goods - Fall Supply," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1841.

fed hogs, leading to a vigorous meatpacking industry, as well as production of leather, boots and shoes, harnesses, soap and candles as by-products. Forests also provided woods for domestic production of goods and for export, including white oak for shipbuilding in England.[80]

Cincinnati's economy was focused on the river in this period. Before the Miami Canal connected the city to eastern markets through the Erie Canal, the Ohio River carried the city's products to distant markets. By the 1830s there was a considerable manufacturing sector, and an increasing recognition of the fundamental importance of artisans and mechanics to economic life of the city.[81] While flour and pork were important primary industries, the 1820s and 1830s saw the continued development of paper, brewing and distilling, pottery, and furniture making industries. With the development of steam manufacturing, foundries and machine shops, book and newspaper publishing, and, after 1819, steamboat manufacturing became important industries.[82] The prosperity of the city, noted one French European visitor, seemed to rest on its people having decided from its earliest days to be "the capitol, or great interior mart of the West," making and distributing the everyday household and agricultural objects and products needed by prospering communities all over the West. Western vendors no longer needed to have most goods shipped across the Alleghenies

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[80] Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West: 1819-1838* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 21-22.

[81] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 32; Drake and Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826*, 89-90; Walker, "Letters from Ohio, No. IV": 50.

[82] Aaron, *Queen City of the West*, 32-37.

from eastern vendors. Everything one could want was now available from Cincinnati,

from pork and flour, tools and household furniture, to clothing and printing presses.[83]

Steam power applied to shipping made dramatic changes in the length of time

it took to ship products. But Cincinnati still suffered from the inability to adequately

access markets in the East and in the interior of the country until a series of internal

improvements changed the city's fortunes. One of the earliest and most important

transportation projects that helped Cincinnati was the Miami Canal. Started in 1825, it

was completed to Dayton in late 1828. The Extension, taking the canal all the way to

Toledo on Lake Erie was not begun until 1833, and completed in 1845. By connecting

with the East via Lake Erie, this canal completed the route from New York to New

Orleans through its connection to the Ohio River and then to the Mississippi.[84] Other

internal improvement projects that were pursued in the 1830s and 1840s were further

attempts to increase transportation efficiency and access.

Cincinnati's national and local image as a boomtown made its prosperity a

popular topic of discussion in the press throughout the period of this study. English

visitor Francis Trollope saw this prosperity in the late 1820s as due to

> the unceasing goad which necessity applies to industry in this country, and in
> the absence of all resource for the idle. During nearly two years that I resided
> in Cincinnati…I neither saw a beggar, nor a man of sufficient fortune to permit

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[83] Michael Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States Being a Series of Letters on North America*, trans. Thomas Gamaliel Bradford (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839; repr., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1966), 202-204.

[84] Harry N. Scheiber, *Ohio Canal Era* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 45, 50, 98-99, 123. Scheiber's study is still the most complete over-all treatment of canal building in antebellum Ohio. On the Miami Canal and Extension, also see John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 200-203.

his ceasing his efforts to increase it; thus every bee in the hive is actively employed in search of that honey of Hybla , vulgarly called money; neither art, science, learning, nor pleasure can seduce them from its pursuit. [85]

By 1835, booster Benjamin Drake would claim that Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington were all dependent on manufacturing for their "steady and onward prosperity." Cincinnati was "second to none" and the equal of Pittsburgh in the West or South for manufacturing.[86] No matter the vicissitudes of the economy, Cincinnati seemed to maintain enough of a lead in the region throughout the 1820s and 1830s to feed a constantly renewed master narrative of everlasting prosperity. In 1839, after two years of national financial decline as the result of the Panic of 1837, writer of local city directories Henry D. Schaffer claimed in seven years the city had grown 50 percent: "During the last and hardest year of all, not fewer than three hundred substantial brick and frame houses, and other buildings have been put up by our enterprising citizens. So that at the present hour, though business is torpid, the river low, and money a non entity, Cincinnati is more truly and genuinely prosperous than ever before."[87]

Cincinnati from the 1820s to the 1840s was a prosperous, bustling, compact walking city, but, as de Tocqueville noted, it was

an odd spectacle. A town which seems to want to get built too quickly to have things done in order. Large buildings, huts, streets blocked by rubble, houses under construction; no names to the streets, no numbers on the houses, no

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[85] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 60-61.

[86] B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835," *Western Monthly Magazine* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1836): 27-28.

[87] "A Brief History of Cincinnati" [from Schaffer's Directory], reprinted in *Catholic Telegraph* [Cincinnati], March 7, 1840. On the "Panic of 1837," see Sharp, *The Jacksonians versus the Banks*.

external luxury, but a picture of industry and work that strikes one at every step.[88]

In 1828 only the main street was paved, the sidewalk of brick, "tolerably well laid, but it is inundated by every shower, as Cincinnati has no drains whatever."[89] Wet, muddy, and obstructed streets and walkways were not the only problems one faced on a walk through the city. Pigs were the standard mode of garbage disposal and street cleaning, as well as a major staple commodity. In Francis Trollope's notorious book on American manners, the reader will find her famous description of the "immense numbers of hogs processed" in Cincinnati -- with snouts likely to brush against you on a walk down the main street, the stench and red-running brook of the slaughterhouses not very far from the central business district. Trollope intimated that she would have "liked Cincinnati much better" if there had not been so much business concerned with hogs. Their smell and presence was everywhere, and the evidence of their being processed into meat, leather, lard, and other products was ever present.[90]

Cincinnati, like other cities throughout the north and the Ohio Valley, experienced repeated outbreaks of cholera in the early nineteenth century. It was beginning to be a major health problem in Cincinnati about 1832, affecting everyone regardless of class or ethnicity.[91] In the summer of 1834 the disease was particularly

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[88] de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, 265.

[89] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 55.

[90] Ibid., 52-53, 119-120.

[91] Isaac Appleton Jewett, letter, Oct. 25, 1832, cited in James Taylor Dunn, ed., "'Cincinnati is a Delightful Place': Letters of a Law Clerk [Isaac Jewett], 1831-1834." *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 10, no. 4 (Oct. 1952): 270-271.

fatal locally; in July it was responsible for 22-30 percent of the deaths during any given week. By the end of August the disease appeared to have left the city momentarily.[92] During that same summer there was a severe drought in Cincinnati and the Miami Valley, drying up pasture land and affecting, in particular, the corn and potato crops.[93] By April of 1835 the *Western Christian Advocate* was reporting mixed improvement - that business was "up - cash appears to be plenty; population on the increase; health generally good; and improvements progressing." However, prices were up -- there was a scarcity of fruits, vegetables, and grain and groceries were very expensive.[94]

As historian Daniel Aaron has noted, nearly every visitor who recorded their observations of Cincinnati in this period had a favorable impression (Buckingham and Trollope, for very different reasons, are exceptions). The "more sordid and less attractive sections already disfiguring the city…the Negro shanties in the west end, the brickyard districts, and the tenements of the poorer folk, where inundation was most likely during the occasional flood periods and where cholera took its greatest toll" -- all of this escaped the gaze of most visitors who wrote of their visits.[95] This was most likely the case because they spent their time while in the city with residents whose

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[92] "Cholera," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 19, 1834; "Sickness and Death," *Western Christian Advocate*, July 25, 1834; "Health of Cincinnati," *Western Christian Advocate*, Aug. 8, 1834; "Office of the Board of Health," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 28, 1834.

[93] "The Season," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 19, 1834.

[94] "Cincinnati," *Western Christian Advocate*, Apr. 24, 1835.

[95] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 18.

cultural habits, particularly their class identification practices, corresponded most closely to those of their own middle class and elite backgrounds.

E. The Inhabitants' Sense of Cincinnati

Many local commentators, in a boosting mode, had an overall sense of Cincinnati as the most thriving, progressive city in the West. Only months before the anti-abolition and anti-black discourse in the city exploded in the 1836 riots, Benjamin Drake was describing the population as having the "habits, taste, and moral and intellectual culture" and a "quiet and orderly observance of the laws and municipal regulations" that are "important elements in the progress and permanent prosperity of a city."[96]

Cincinnati was known as a vacation spot for southerners in the summer, as the weather was more pleasant there.[97] A popular destination, visitors generally liked Cincinnati, but they apparently felt local accommodations were *sub-par*. The editor of the Cincinnati *Republican* stated that he believed this was because local capitalists "are too selfish to embark in any enterprise, however calculated to benefit or ornament the city, which they cannot feel satisfied will return them a heavier dividend, than an investment elsewhere…. [T]hey prefer building up new towns to fostering their own,

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[96] B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835," *Western Monthly Magazine*, Jan., 1836: 31.

[97] Drake and Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826*, 86-87.

where they have acquired their possessions."[98] Even some residents recognized that local adherence to a narrow efficiency might have gone too far.

Local writings of the period expressed a widespread belief that difference of opinion was divisive in a community - in a city or in a nation. One anonymous writer assigned blame for this to newspapers: "The Editors of newspapers, in no considerable degree, form public opinion upon great and exciting political subjects" - doing the thinking itself for many readers. He was convinced that "conflicting opinions, local jealousies, and sectional prejudices" come from "reliance of [sic] the opinions of newspapers." With a utopian view of the American political system in "beautiful harmony," he believed, like many others, that dissent would mar the system.[99] Somehow, the American Experience was supposed to magically make singular Americans out of all the peoples from different countries that made up the United States, as well as cities like Cincinnati. People frequently mistook quiet for harmony and agreement. In her 1837 extended essay on the proper duty of women in regard to slavery, local educator of women and influential writer Catherine Beecher indicated that she believed anything that had people disagreeing with each other was divisive. Its truth value or morality, for her, was of no consequence.[100] The logical consequence of this way of thinking was that an amoral thing, such as slavery, should be allowed to continue until its solution did not cause anyone to disagree any longer!

[98] "Hotels in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 29, 1836.

[99] T. [pseud.], "An Essay on Newspapers," *Western Monthly Magazine*, March, 1837: 91-92.

[100] Catharine E. Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 13-14.

The residents of antebellum Cincinnati, like the residents of any town or city, would have to figure out how to live among each other. The diverse and growing population, far from the eastern centers of population, publishing, and material culture, would also go about the business of creating a comfortable, sustaining place to live and work. How they did that, improving the city to improve themselves, bringing a sense of cohesion and belonging to the community, building the city and the socio-cultural ties of community itself, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

**From Self to Community: Improvementism and Community Development in
Antebellum Cincinnati**

When he assumed office in March 1825, sixth United States President John

Quincy Adams framed his priorities decidedly in terms of improvement, but

cautiously stayed close to the prevailing view of narrowly defined internal

improvements - talking about building roads and canals, and clearing rivers.[1] By the

end of the year he was confidently explaining his broad view of improvement in the

United States and the Federal government's active role in it. After discussing typical

internal improvement projects, he told Congress,

> the great object of the institution of civil government is the improvement of the
> condition of those who are parties to the social compact, and no government, in
> whatever form constituted, can accomplish the lawful ends of its institution but
> in proportion as it improves the condition over whom it is established.

Roads and canals were admittedly important, "but moral, political, [and] intellectual

improvement are duties…to social no less than to individual man." Equally broad was

Adams' view that, "among the first, perhaps the very first, instrument for the

improvement of the condition of men is knowledge" and that the government has an

obligation to involve itself in providing the people's access to this, as well.[2]

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[1] John Quincy Adams, "Inaugural Address" (March 4, 1825), in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, ed. James D. Richardson (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 2: 298.

[2] John Quincy Adams, "First Annual Message" (Dec. 6, 1825), in *Messages and Papers of the President*s, 2: 306-312; quotes are all from page 311.

In 1834, Cincinnati physician, booster, and improver Daniel Drake was invited

to speak to the Union Literary Society at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, about the

opportunities for developing a uniquely Western literature and the importance of this

project for the nation. Full of both gravity and expansive optimism for the endeavor

and its agents, he began his ode to improvement with a nod to knowledge, as well:

> The ancient and venerable maxim, KNOW THYSELF, has been generally
> addressed to individuals, but is equally applicable to communities. …This self-
> knowledge of [communities], is especially necessary for one of recent origins,
> where everything is still green….
>   …The many opportunities for bold enterprize [sic] …which a new country
> presents, constitute a kindred source of improvement [to traditional ways]; for
> occasions call forth ingenuity, and where the mind is left free to execute its
> schemes according to its own suggestions, it becomes fertile in expedients, and
> even failure does not bring discouragement….
>   …It is the peculiar distinction of the institutions and the public sentiment of
> the United States, that a youth of talents and virtue, may rise from the lowest to
> the highest walks of society, without being obstructed or frowned upon as he
> advances.[3]

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A. Introduction

Adams' broad view of improvement in 1825, well-articulated and widely

reprinted in local newspapers all over the nation, sketched a full range of

improvements - moving from the individual to the nation - that would occupy

Americans across the spectrum of incomes, ethnicities, and religions throughout the

antebellum period. Indeed, as Adams had proclaimed, "The spirit of improvement is

abroad upon the earth. It stimulates the hearts and sharpens the faculties not of our

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[3] Daniel Drake, *Discourse on the History, Character, and Prospects of the West…* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1834; repr., Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1955), 5, 9, 10; emphasis is in the original.

fellow-citizens alone, but of the nations of Europe and their rulers." He was anxious to keep up and stay ahead.[4] For Cincinnati booster Daniel Drake the key to the new nation staying ahead was the unique set of opportunities for national and individual improvement offered by the trans-Appalachian West - with Cincinnati as its natural capital. Both Adams and Drake hoped to tap into the national and local optimism that prevailed in the first several decades of the nineteenth century to build their own images of a growing, prospering nation and region.

During the decades of the riots in this study one could not pick up a newspaper or magazine in Cincinnati, or in much of the rest of the North, without reading of various kinds of improvements: self-improvement, mutual improvement, and literacy societies; philanthropic groups to help those in social or financial need; and committees that raised interest and funds for canal and railroad internal improvement projects. Cincinnati editor and booster Timothy Flint, after describing recent progress in the city's vicinity, noted in the 1820s that, "the whole country above, below, and on all sides, is on a march of improvement, of which this is a fair sample."[5] The word itself was so commonplace that it would be easy to miss the importance of *improvement* in the mind-set of Americans, and Cincinnatians, of this period. The word improvement, or some proxy for it such as elevation, uplift, progress, reform, or self study, is literally everywhere in the primary sources of the period. It was the

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[4] John Quincy Adams, "First Annual Message," 316.

[5] Timothy Flint, "Progress of the West," *Western Monthly Review*, 1, no. 1 (May 1827): 26.

conceptual pivot around which people assigned value or worth to persons, their behaviors, and the cultural products they constructed in antebellum America.

There were two distinct types of improvement discourse and practices in antebellum Cincinnati, and the rest of the United States. The first concerns the improvement of people and things generally, and will be the subject of this chapter. The second type specifically concerns race and improvement and the impacts one may have upon the other, and will be treated in the next chapter. There is interaction and a relationship between the two types - and to a degree, the separation between them is artificial. I believe it will be useful to understand improvement of people and things in Cincinnati, generally, before taking that understanding into the chapter on racial construction.

This chapter will explore the concept of improvement in this early period of city building in Cincinnati and its manifestation in a wide-spread improvement ethos. The dominant form of this ethos was a linkage of Protestant Christian perfectibility, Enlightenment self-knowledge, and democratically tinged republican revolutionary zeal that propelled several decades of rapid territorial and urban growth in the antebellum period. Ideologically, *improvementist* discourses and practices betray the embedded assumptions that those who participated in them held about what or who to improve, who should do the work, and what particular improvements meant. This study is focused on the discourses and practices of whites in Cincinnati, most of whom have an *imaginary Negro* in their heads.[6] This chapter will take a look at the

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[6] See Chapter 4.

improvements of real Negroes in order to, hopefully, prevent the white populations'

imaginary Negro from becoming the only image of African Americans in Cincinnati

the reader takes away from this chapter and to allow the reader to more clearly see the

imaginary Negroes most antebellum white Cincinnatians constructed when we

examine racial construction and improvementism in the next chapter. The chapter ends

with a look at booster/improvers in Cincinnati -- local improvers who crafted word

images that tied geographic, demographic, republican, and religious strands of

improvementist discourse to nationalist aspirations. The focus will be on those

booster/improvers who were involved in the discourses and practices of race making

in the city, as well -- contributing their familiarity with the city and a voice of

authority to the project of narrating the connection between improvement and the

meaning of race.

B. Self-Improvement as the Basis of All Improvement

Within the discourse on improvement in the antebellum United States there

was a widely shared belief that self-improvement was the basis of all other kinds of

improvement in society. Self improvement wasn't new in American culture -- a

particular concern with the self and its development was common in Enlightenment

thought. But the spiritual imperatives of the Second Great Awakening (1790s - 1840s)

in American Protestantism and the practical needs of a country with a western frontier

settling with newcomers cast home-grown self-help and self improvement doctrines in

new relief.

The antebellum framework for the "wisely constructed self," the *balanced character*, was "faculty psychology." Human nature was composed of faculties such as understanding (awareness, such as sensation or reflection) and will (action or motivation), which required balancing. The moral and rational powers were the highest, emotional or instinctive (animal) powers were in the middle, and the mechanical (vegetative) powers were the lowest. The ideal of a balanced character in antebellum American thought was important to both private and public life -- especially for public discourse, providing a common "language for the discussion of public issues" through a frequently-used analogy between the construction of individual character and that of the developing local community and nation.[7]

Throughout the nineteenth century there was a "progressive democratization" of the model of a *balanced character* -- from elite white males to women, African Americans and Native Americans, and to poor white men, with large segments of the population of the United States embracing some version of this ethos of the *self*. Religion and commerce may have had the greatest influence on these developments. The evangelical Christian call to be "born again" in the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century was often the first conscious "self-construction" many Americans encountered. For the creative and resourceful the spread and intensification of commercial relationships presented new opportunities for increasing one's income;

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[7] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5-7.

the *balanced character*, giving one a sense of mastery over oneself, was a decided asset in the new commercial environment.[8]

In a local essay on "The Power of Self Improvement," Cincinnatians read that humans, unlike other animals, were made for self-improvement. A human baby is initially helpless, but self-improving behaviors begin after just a few days; soon, "he has done it all himself, by his own diligence and activity."[9] This author links human agency -- the baby's "own diligence and activity" -- to self-improving behavior. A decade later, John Quincy Adams articulated what many other Americans in this period believed, that the relationship between improvement and being human was clear. There were three "laws of animal self-preservation." The pressure for daily food and the pressure for reproduction humans shared with other animals; the third law, the pressure to improve one's condition, was unique to humans: "There are rare examples of animals partaking of the social nature, but not of the principle of progressive improvement.…Of all the animal creation upon the earth, man is the only being always stimulated by the desire of bettering his condition."[10]

This makes the primary project of being human to "better one's condition" -- or improvement -- even in antebellum America. Cognitive neuropsychologist Elkhonon Goldberg theorizes, "Of all the mental processes, goal formation is the most actor-centered activity. Goal formation is about 'I need' and not about 'it is.' So the

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[8] Ibid., 8-9.

[9] "The Power of Self-Improvement," *Catholic Telegraph* 3, no. 19 (Apr. 4, 1834): 148.

[10] John Quincy Adams, "Society and Civilization," *American Review* 2, no. 1 (July 1845): 80, 84.

emergence of the ability to formulate goals must have been inexorably linked to the emergence of the mental representation of 'self.'"[11] Improvement is what we all do, as we bring the mental pictures of our "selves" into being. And it is what all sectors of the population in antebellum Cincinnati in the period of this study were doing. Using anthropologist Sherry Ortner's formulation concerning cultural projects, *human improvement* is the fundamental human project, and as such, is a primary site for the exercise of human agency. Ortner's *agency of intentions* (as opposed to an *agency of (unequal) power*) is directed toward desires, goals, and projects.[12] Improvement projects of all kinds in Cincinnati were sites for the exercise of agency on the part of individuals and social groups, and were therefore sites for the representation of self and identity. The American Revolution - the great national self-making project for individuals and the nation - helped to set this self-consciousness in motion. Improvement in antebellum America, and in Cincinnati, was often framed within a discourse of republicanism, freedom, or democracy. There was almost a sense of having earned the right to improvement, the right to improve one's self.

All classes and all ethnic groups participated in self improvement and mutual improvement projects of various kinds. The belief, expressed by John Q. Adams, that economic and infrastructure improvements in communities were linked to moral and

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[11] Elkhonon Goldberg, *The Executive Brain: Frontal Lobes and the Civilized Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25-26. The part of the brain that accounts for these functions is the frontal lobe -- much larger in humans than in other animals, including our closest primate relatives. Those parts of the brain that are associated with behaviors that distinguish us from other animals are larger than in other animals.

[12] Sherry B. Ortner, "Specifying Agency: The Comaroffs and Their Critics," *Interventions* 3, no. 1 (2001): 78-79.

other self improvements in the individual citizen was widespread in the country.[13] Self improvement was a way of performing self-motivated, agency-filled, republican independence -- a way of performing particularly as an American, continually reenacting the independence of the American Revolution. In Adams' "Third Annual Message" (1827) the link between free institutions and self improvement is more explicit:

> Internal quiet has left our fellow-citizens in the full enjoyment of all their rights and in the free exercise of all their faculties, to pursue the impulse of their nature and the obligation of their duty in the improvement of their own condition.[14]

The pursuit of the "impulse" of one's nature in "the free exercise" of one's "faculties" is another example of the *desires* and *intentions* aspects of Ortner's "agency of projects." For Adams, government in a free nation was there to help to instrumentalize the desires and intentions of its citizens - in a sense, it is a technology for the self improvement of its members.

Newspapers and their discourses played a critical role in self improvement - in bringing new information to people as well as informing them of opportunities to educate themselves and publishing articles on self improvement. English visitor Frances Trollope disapprovingly described "a brewer's drayman perched on the shaft of his dray and reading one newspaper while another was tucked under his arm" she

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[13] Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 48.

[14] John Quincy Adams, "Third Annual Message" (December 4, 1827), in *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 2: 378.

had seen when living in Cincinnati in the late 1820s.[15] While she didn't think much of the general diffusion of knowledge via the ubiquitous American newspaper, Trollope's account supports the idea that average people read newspapers, making the press a critically important field for the construction of public opinion and sentiment about public affairs in Cincinnati. She gives us a glance at a generally reading public in Cincinnati. Where she saw chaos and lack of attention to (her) traditions of literature, alternatively we can see a brewer's wagon driver interested in self-improvement, reading in his down-time -- and with two papers, interested in more than one point of view.

For local law clerk Isaac Jewitt, writing as "J.J.J." the cheap, ever-present American newspaper's "power is tremendous….[W]hen connected with the improvements in machinery, and the present facilities for communication, the rapidity of its action is immense. It forms, as it were, an intellectual railroad for the transportation of thought." Jewitt saw a free press as driving improvement: "We think that there is much for the congratulation of wise and good men. They know that, while the press is free, the tide of human improvement will know no returning flood. The hand will never again be put back upon the dial plate of time."[16] There was a keenly felt connection between personal or community improvement and the presence of the

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[15] Mrs. [Frances] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 3rd ed. (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1832), 126-128.

[16] J.J.J. [Isaac Jewitt], "The Condition and Influence of the American Periodical Press," *Western Monthly Magazine* 2, no. 20 (Aug. 1834): 393-407; quotes from pages 403 and 406. Jewitt wrote several articles for this magazine under this pseudonym; see James Taylor Dunn, ed., "'Cincinnati is a Delightful Place': Letters of a Law Clerk [Isaac Jewett], 1831-1834," *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 10, no. 4 (Oct. 1952): 259, 277 and note 47.

informing, connecting public square of the press - a dialectic between the press and its editors as improvers and the press itself as an improvement in the local culture.

C. Improvement and Associations

National debates about whether the federal government would pay for particular internal improvements didn't touch the day to day lives of Americans, urban or rural, as much as local improvements did, but they were pursued in similar ways. Most improvements, of all kinds, in antebellum America, including a number of kinds of self-improvement, were typically carried out through local voluntary associations of various kinds. Voluntary associations were, first and foremost, about projects, and Americans in the four decades before the Civil War were utterly focused on developing the new nation by developing its parts. Voluntary associations focused the energies of a group of interested individuals and compounded what they were able to do. French visitor Alexis De Tocqueville, noticing the tendency of Americans to band together to solve problems, remarked in the early 1830s,

> The spirit of association…is one of the distinctive characteristics of America; it is by this means in a country where capital is scarce and where absolutely democratic laws and habits hinder the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals, has already succeeded in carrying out…works which the most absolute kings and the most opulent aristocracies would certainly not have been able to undertake and finish in the same time.[17]

It was the way that democracies would "get things done."

Tocqueville spent a number of weeks in Cincinnati while he was in the United States, and his observations were echoed by local writers of the period. One of the

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[17] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 252.

most well-read pieces of the period was local Unitarian minister and improver James

Handasyd Perkins' essay "Associations, A Vital Form of Social Action." For Perkins,

as for Tocqueville, American "production of voluntary associations to an immense

extent" was the result of "no recognized orders, and no church, and yet much of the

same desire for action in masses, which has always existed."[18] This sense that

voluntary associations channeled a basic human impetus to mass action was echoed by

lawyer and booster Timothy Walker. Speaking of associations as the accumulation of

individual efforts swelling "into an ocean of social benevolence," Walker ultimately

saw them as critical to moving societies from "a bare and miserable skeleton of social

existence" to that "noble and expansive feeling which identifies self with

community."[19] The associating of the people of Cincinnati, and their associations --

their practices of working together to get things accomplished -- were what was

bringing Cincinnati into existence, materially and ideologically.

Daniel Aaron, cultural historian of antebellum Cincinnati, has identified a

relentless spirit of *associationism* in the city in the period under consideration. In a

nation with no centralized authority planning public enterprise and flexible class

divisions, he feels that "societies or associations" satisfied the need for social contact

and gave individuals a sense of belonging to something that also differentiated them

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[18] J.H.P. [James Handasyd Perkins], "Associations, A Vital Form of Social Action," *Western Messenger 8*, no. 6 (Oct. 1840), 274.

[19] Timothy Walker, Manuscript Journal, in the Walker Papers, CHS, cited in Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 127. No page numbers were given in the citation, and I wasn't able to find the quotation when I viewed the manuscript at CHS in November, 2007.

from each other -- harmonizing *individualist* and *cooperative* impulses in American culture while achieving goals through "joint effort" that individuals could not have accomplished.[20] People formed groups to achieve religious, commercial, moral, educational, literary, scientific, or professional goals - almost any aspect of local culture was amenable to having an association created on its behalf. This impulse was present in all sectors of society - regardless of national origin or race, class, gender, religion, or occupation. Organizing and participating in the various kinds of associations and societies in antebellum Cincinnati were important practices in the construction of social identities, such as class, ethnicity, religion, and gender, as well as race - as we will examine in the next chapter.[21] Associations were the way that antebellum Cincinnatians, like urban populations throughout the United States, organized and practiced the impulse to improve, "provid[ing] the central institutional context for community development."[22]

Mutual improvement groups were a natural outgrowth of the push for self-improvement. Cincinnati's commercial aspects were evident early in its history,[23] and

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[20] Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 110-137.

[21] One prior study that examines associational activity and class consciousness within the context of antebellum Cincinnati is Wendy Jean Katz's *Regionalism and Reform: Art and Class Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002). Chapter One: "Art and Associations in Antebellum Cincinnati", Pp. 1-26, is an extended discussion of art and other cultural associations, the construction of middle class consciousness, and the co-construction of female gender within that class consciousness. Another useful study of the emerging middle class, gender, and urban reform societies is Bruce Dorsey's *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[22] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 16.

[23] See Chapter 2.

some of the earliest mutual improvement groups reflected this. Merchants organized a "Chamber of Commerce" in late 1829 and early 1830 as a mutual improvement association.[24] In the mid 1830s many associations which merchants organized for themselves had reading rooms or libraries attached, such as the Canal Produce Exchange and Reading Room, started by local produce dealers in 1834 "to facilitate intercourse and diffuse knowledge."[25] In 1835, "in the spirit of improvement," the young men in Cincinnati established a "*library* and *reading-room*, to be appropriated to the use of young men engaged solely in mercantile pursuits."[26]

There were many groups organized in antebellum Cincinnati to mutually benefit its members in case of distress - a type of early insurance company. Groups such as the Franklin Benefit Society, started in 1827 by mechanics and tradesmen (it later had teachers, lawyers, and merchants in its membership), paid widows a fifty dollar annuity and educated the children of its members. Many local immigrant populations started their own mutual benefit societies, such as the Irish Erin Benevolent Society, with three-dollar annual dues, and the Scottish Caledonian Society and Scots Society, and the English St. George Society, with a primarily working class membership.[27]

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[24] See "Chamber of Commerce," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Monday, Nov. 23, 1829; "Chamber of Commerce," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Friday, Nov. 27, 1829; and "Chamber of Commerce," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Thursday, Jan. 20, 1831.

[25] "Canal Produce Exchange," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Tues., August 26, 1834. Members were reminded to "avoid all political, profane or loud conversations" while using the reading rooms.

[26] "The Spirit of Improvement," *Western Christian Advocate*, May 15, 1835. Italics are in the original.

[27] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 119-121.

Literary, scientific, and debate societies were common in this period, affording residents opportunities to discuss current events and literature, inform themselves, and sometimes practice their writing skills. The Washington Literary and Forensic Circle announced a meeting in 1829 for "mutual improvement" to perpetuate the principles of free government as "the most essential means of securing happiness of the American people…to disseminate a knowledge of science…[and] to promote the interests of virtue."[28] The Ohio Mechanics Institute sponsored public lectures, debates, and discussions on a wide variety of topics, as did the Cincinnati Lyceum, which was a little more "high toned" than the Institute's activities, but met in their facilities on Thursday nights.[29] Greve's and Aaron's histories of Cincinnati describe near catalogues of these organizations in the 1830s and 1840s, including the Useful Knowledge Society, the Inquisition Society, the Franklin Society, the College of Teachers, and the Society for Investigation, among others. Some of them did not last long; but the push among the public for information and stimulation was so great in this urbanizing environment, that others soon took their place.[30]

Two literary groups are worth mentioning because their middling and elite class members included a high percentage of improvers and boosters, male and female. The Semi-Colon Club (1829-1845) was the better known of the two, started by

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[28] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Friday, Feb. 6, 1829.

[29] Charles Theodore Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Biographical Pub. Co., 1904), 1: 648-649; Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 133-135. The Lyceum had an additional goal of creating a public library.

[30] Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati*, 1: 645-650; Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 25-137, 126, 128.

a local intelligentsia dominated by transplanted elite and middle-class New Englanders. Their meetings were characterized by reading each other's literary offerings, light food and drink, and perhaps dancing a reel or two. Its membership was a *Who's Who* of local "movers and shakers." Meeting at the home of Samuel Foote at Third and Vine, or nearby at William Greene's or William Stetson's home, the group read and critiqued pieces anonymously from male and female members, among whom were Lyman, Catharine, and Harriet Beecher, Judge Timothy Walker, Rev. James H. Perkins, Judge and editor James Hall, the novelist Caroline Lee Hentz and Professor Hentz, Rev. Calvin Stowe, astronomer O.M. Mitchell, booster/improvers Dr. Daniel Drake, Benjamin Drake, E.D. Mansfield, and William Greene, educator Nathan Guilford, and future physicians Elizabeth and Anne Blackwell and their sister.[31] Cincinnati was still culturally underdeveloped by East Coast urban standards, and the club filled a need in its members for familiar intellectual and social contact.[32] As an improvement society, its mission was to,

> act upon the *public* welfare, by increasing the amount of the *private* and domestic virtues…kindly feelings, and…friendship, and…the knowledge that public prosperity is better promoted by the exercise of private virtues than by acts grounded on maxims of political expediency.[33]

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[31] John P. Foote, *Memoirs of the Life of Samuel E. Foote, by his Brother John P. Foote* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1860), 176-179; Louis L. Tucker, "The Semi-Colon Club of Cincinnati," *Ohio History* 73, no. 1 (Winter 1964): 13-26, 57-58. Calvin Stowe would eventually marry Harriet Beecher and Elizabeth Blackwell would become the first woman to earn a medical degree in the United States.

[32] Tucker, "The Semi-Colon Club," 19.

[33] Foote, *Memoirs*, 181.

Though the membership of the Semi-Colon Club has been described by one historian as a community "brain-trust,"[34] the less formal nature of the Buckeye Club, with a very similar membership and a commitment to discussing community issues and current events makes it more of a community "think-tank." Started by physician and improver Daniel Drake in 1833 to stimulate and soothe his daughters after the death of their mother, and meeting at his home, it was not dominated by New Englanders, and had a more critical and discursive tone than the more exclusive Semi-Colon Club.[35] Participant E.D. Mansfield wrote, that its

> main object was the discussion of interesting questions belonging to society, literature, education, and religion….The subjects were always of the suggestive or problematical kind, so that the ideas were fresh, the debate animated, and the utterance of opinions frank and spontaneous….Nor was that meeting an unimportant affair; for nothing can be unimportant which directs minds whose influence spreads over a country.[36]

These clubs' importance for this study rests in the high number of improvers and boosters, as well as promoters of African colonization for free blacks, in their memberships.[37] Although discussions of slavery, the "negro problem," or colonization, some of the most critical topics of the day, were not recorded for either group, they would have been most likely in the Buckeye Club because of the social and civic nature of their discussions. Given the partially overlapping memberships of these associations, the booster/improver and colonizationist members of the two groups

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[34] Tucker, "The Semi-Colon Club," 16.

[35] Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 269-270.

[36] Edward D. Mansfield, *Memoirs of the Life and Services of Daniel Drake, M.D.* (Cincinnati: Applegate and Co., 1855; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1975), 224-225.

[37] Colonization, in the context of improvementism, is discussed later in this chapter.

spent a lot of time together, mirroring each others' opinions and reinforcing accepted boundaries.

It is often difficult to classify an improvement as simply "self-improvement" or a "charitable society." Those with more financial or educational resources often organized a society from which others would benefit. Those who utilized the group might use it as self or mutual improvement. A good example of this is the Cincinnati Mechanics Institute, discussed below. In a labor environment where the past dynamics of mutual obligations between "owners" and "producers" had begun to shift toward the more antagonistic industrial model, voluntary associations where the "laboring classes" continued to have contact with owners in an atmosphere of ritualized obligatory relations may have helped to slow down or minimize the early effects of antagonistic class divisions due to growing class consciousness. At the same time, white workers, both American-born and immigrant, often projected or mapped their anxieties about the consequences of shifting labor relations and their attending antagonisms onto African Americans, the group least able to gain public sympathy. In the generally racialized community culture and labor market of antebellum Cincinnati (see chapter 4), cross class practices among those classified as white, whether they were those of the Mechanics Institute, or those of the race riots and anti-abolition riots examined in chapters 5, 6, and 7, eased class tensions while reinforcing a collective sense of whiteness in the community.[38]

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[38] For discussions of this reinforcing of collective whiteness in antebellum New York and Philadelphia, as well as the role that anti-black violence played in the construction of working-class white identity, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*,

There were associations that were clearly directed at the improvement of "others." These were groups aiming at the social or moral improvement of others as a way to improve society, and their communities, as a whole. A good example was the Emigrants Friend Society was started in 1835 "to educate the children of foreigners, with a view to qualify them for usefulness, the enjoyment of civil liberty, and the blessings of free institutions." By autumn, 1836, 500-600 girls and boys were enrolled in local schools supported by local school funds run by this organization.[39] The developing local middle class, with which most local boosters and improvers identified, had a deep interest in instilling a sense of both respectability and public spirit in newly arrived foreigners, as well as in native-born mechanics, artisans, and laborers. It was also important that this pool of potential voters identify their own interests with booster projections of public interest for consolidating support for improvement projects that required tax dollars for support.[40]

Mechanics and artisans had their associations as well, started by both themselves and others. The Mechanics Institute of Cincinnati was started by John P. Foote and other businessmen and professionals in 1828 at a public meeting. Its object was "the advancement of the best interests of the mechanic, the artisan, and manufacturer, by the more general diffusion of useful knowledge, among the aforesaid

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rev. ed. (London, U.K.: Verso, 1999, especially pages 95-97 133-163; and Noel Igantiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, Routledge, 1995), especially pages 96-102, 111-112 .

[39] John Allen, "Emigrants Friend Society," *Western Christian Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1835; "Immigrants Friend Society," *Catholic Telegraph*, June 22, 1837: 228-230; and Caleb Atwater, *A History of the State of Ohio, Natural and Civil*, 1st ed. (Cincinnati: Glezen and Shepard, 1838), 299-300.

[40] Katz, *Regionalism and Reform*, 2-6.

class of citizens." Classes, meeting one to three times a week, were "established by voluntary association of young men" adopting a mutual course of instruction with help from professional teachers. In the summer women were offered classes in natural philosophy. For a three-dollar annual fee a member could attend lectures in the branches of mathematics, French, chemistry, geography, or architectural drawing, and use the library.[41] There were more *ad hoc* efforts by artisans as well. During a building boom in the city early in 1841, many of the buildings had been put up by the mutual efforts of the mechanics themselves -- each trade contributing to erecting the building. As one editor pointed out, "In this way they get employ for themselves, and by and by may sell their property so as to obtain something."[42]

Voluntary associations of various kinds were one of the chief kinds of improvements offered by the booster press to impress investors, settlers, and tourists they wanted to attract. City Directories, in particular, contained entire sections dedicated to "Scientific and Literary Institutions" and "Religious and Benevolent Societies."[43] Even gazetteers such as B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield's *Cincinnati in 1826* included sections covering "Religious Societies and Public Charities" and

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[41] Atwater, *History of the State of Ohio*, 301-303; Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 133. In 1840 the Institute asked more than thirty "public spirited, literary, and scientific gentlemen" to lecture or teach classes at the Institute - most promptly agreed. Classes were to be free, except for a fee for Architecture. None who could not pay were to be turned away. It isn't clear whether Negroes or mulattoes could register for and attend these classes as well as whites. See "The Mechanics Institute," *Western Christian Advocate*, Nov. 27, 1840.

[42] Editorial, "Building in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 2, 1841. It seems a little unusual that there was unemployment during a building boom - perhaps this was due to undercapitalization. These kinds of groups seem to be an early form of general contracting by committee.

[43] See, for example, Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for 1829* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1829), 177-182, 190-197; and Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1831* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1831), 204.

"Literary and Scientific Institutions." Charles Cist's *Cincinnati in 1841* published sections on the "Chamber of Commerce," "Charitable Institutions," "Benevolent Societies," and "Science and Literature."[44] They were indicators of the level of civilization present in the city to potential residents and businesses; they indicated available amenities as well as the culture and "tone" in the community.

D. Improvement in the African American Community

African Americans also thoroughly embraced the improvement ethos by establishing and joining voluntary associations of various kinds. Very few of the groups in which whites were involved allowed the participation of non-whites, nationally or in Cincinnati. So they established their own self-help, mutual-aid, temperance, benevolent, and charitable societies and organizations to help themselves and each other to procure: food and shelter, spiritual comfort and companionship, a place to be properly buried when local cemeteries discriminated against them, legal redress when criminally or civilly wronged, access to an education and technical training, relief from the misery of gambling or alcohol abuse, and eventual access to the vote. In the process of participating in these societies, they learned, like those in similar associations everywhere, the values of joining together for a common cause, making alliances, compromise and negotiations, book-keeping, and other administrative and civic skills that would be useful in establishing and maintaining

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[44] B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826* (Cincinnati: Morgan, Lodge, and Fisher, 1827), 33-40, 40-48; Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: Charles Cist, 1841), 49, 99-102, 102, 109-111. *Cincinnati in 1826* is notable for listing an "African Church…hold[ing] its meetings in a frame building, erected for the purpose, standing east of Broadway and north of Sixth street." Ibid., 35.

strong African American communities all over the North in this era of their nearly

non-human status.[45]

African Americans in antebellum Cincinnati were very involved in the discussion

and practices of self and mutual improvement. Despite few primary sources, it is

possible to sketch the types of efforts that were present in the period and to find

notable successes. For the majority of persons of color in the city, however, available

improvement energy and initiative went toward securing basic survival needs and

aiding those just arriving in the city - particularly fugitive slaves passing through the

Underground Railroad to Canada, or farther west. Cut off from participation in the

public culture and commonweal of the community-at-large, they created a partially

parallel and sometimes intersecting community and culture in the "public square" of

the two neighborhoods where there were significant African American residential

"clusters," and in which their institutions were located. These institutions were a

critical part of improving the lives of all African Americans in the city.[46]

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[45] See Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), Chapter 12: "Fruits of Discrimination - Seeds of Community: Associational Activities of Urban Blacks," 196-215. There is a brief treatment of these associations in antebellum free African American communities, with particular reference to women's organizations, in James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Freedom: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 128-129.

[46] These two neighborhoods were "Bucktown" in the East End Factory District and "Little Africa" in the Central Waterfront District. See Map 2.1 in Chapter 2. African Americans did not dominate either neighborhood, but existed in large enough numbers, and their institutions were located there, that they were *visible* in these neighborhoods. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 96-125, esp. 115; Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., "On Slavery's Fringe: City Building and Black Community Development in Cincinnati, 1800-1850," *Ohio History* 95 (Winter/Spring 1986): 5-33.

During the early 1830s free Negroes and mulattoes began organizing efforts at the

national level to improve their lives and help those trapped in slavery. The American

Society of Free Persons of Color held its initial five-day convention in Philadelphia,

September 1830, with *improvement* in mind - on a much larger scale than had ever

been envisioned before. The group formed partly in response to reports of 1,000 of

Cincinnati's African American population fleeing to Canada after the 1829 riots.[47]

After first mentioning the expediency of forming a settlement in Canada "in order to

afford a place of refuge to those who may be obliged to leave their homes, as well as

to others inclined to emigrate with a view to improving their condition," much of the

rest of this document described the various aspects to consider in improvement and

independence in Canada.[48]

Mutual improvement was an extension of self-improvement in the African

American community, as well. Perhaps the single most important promoters of mutual

improvement in the African American community in Cincinnati were churches.

African American churches were often the first institution in the community, and they

constituted some of the earliest formal mutual improvement efforts that helped to

create and stabilize African American populations into communities. Initially

separating from white churches to escape typical relegation of African Americans to a

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[47] The 1829 riots are the subject of Chapter 5 of the present study.

[48] The full name of the organization was The American Society of Free Persons of Color, for Improving their Condition in the United States; for Purchasing Lands; and for the Establishment of a Settlement in Upper Canada. This group would soon back away from any colonization or emigration efforts and concentrate on the more radical position of obtaining civil rights in the United States. See Howard Holman Bell, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), i-vi; "Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Color," ibid., 5-12.

back or upper gallery "nigger pew" and discrimination in participation and

governance, black churches provided a solid foundation for community growth.

Regardless of the part of the community they served, the three black Protestant

denominations in Cincinnati carved-out a space where members of the community

were able to put together "strategies of uplift and mutuality" and develop critical

leadership skills.[49]

The "moral reform movement" in antebellum African American communities was

an outgrowth and "public extension of the black church," most of its efforts headed by

ministers. However, it was aimed at the secular black community, those not members

of churches. Its aim was to raise the social status of African Americans; it was, as

Nikki Taylor admits, "essentially a respectability campaign." Under the circumstances

it was an astute strategy that recognized that most whites would judge all Negroes and

mulattoes by the actions of a single drunk, or thief. They believed that reducing the

incidence of immoral or criminal behavior in the black community reduced feelings of

animosity on the part of whites. In Cincinnati the Moral Reform Society of the

Colored Citizens of Ohio was lead by the Rev. David Nickens (president), pastor of

the African Union Baptist Church, and his brother Owen T.B. Nickens.[50]

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[49] Emma Jones Lapsansky, "'Since They Got Those Separate Churches': Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American* Quarterly 32, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 54-78; Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 84-93, 89. Bethel AME (First Ward) was attended by the masses and the African Union Baptist Church (Fourth Ward) by the black middle-class; both were completely independent of the control of white churches. Deer Creek Methodist Episcopal was affiliated with the white-led denomination; its class make-up isn't clear. See Taylor, 88-89.

[50] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 90, 89, 91. Taylor's coverage of this movement is on pages 88 to 93.

Rather than being imitative of "white values," within the African American community the discourse and practices of respectability were used as "weapons of protest" against whites' negative attitudes about them - a way of fighting back.[51] They were the everyday "weapons of the weak," adapted, like those of the Malaysian peasants in James Scott's seminal study of subaltern resistance, to a local situation where open resistance was "dangerous, if not suicidal."[52] Cincinnati's black middle class did not have the luxury of using only organized and formal methods familiar to their white cohorts. Patrick Rael has shown that the advice to non-elites from elites in this racial uplift movement fit into four general categories: education, occupations, moral vices of the cities, and personal presentation. Promoters believed that some African Americans "had hampered their own elevation through their own behavior. It was not simply that they had acted in ways that failed to embody moral elevation, but that in doing so they had supplied ammunition to blacks' enemies, and had thus helped poison the public mind against themselves." For African American leaders it became an issue of agency: if whites believed that blacks could not "keep up" then, while fully recognizing the insidious effects of prejudice, blacks had to use the means at their disposal, however meager, to take control of what they could in their lives, and elevate themselves[53] -- as individuals and as the group of people they were becoming.

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[51] Ibid., 90.

[52] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), xv-xvi.

[53] Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 188-189.

African Americans in Ohio were denied access to the public school system until 1849, except for a brief period between 1825 and 1829, and when children whose skin was "light enough in color" were allowed to attend schools with white children.[54] The earliest formal education efforts in Cincinnati's African American community were initiated by sympathetic whites. The first school for African American children in Cincinnati was opened by Lancaster Seminary in 1815; in 1817 the Female Association for the Benefit of Africans was established by whites to "bestow" on African Americans "religious instruction and the rudiments of education."[55] By the mid-1820s African Americans in the community were beginning to organize to educate themselves[56] - meeting in abandoned outbuildings or "converted pork houses" because of wide-spread hostility and mob violence at the idea of educating (or educated) negroes and mulattoes. These early schools were started by men such Henry McPhereson (1826, Sixth and Broadway), Henry Collins (1826, 7th between Broadway and Deer Creek), and Hugh Brown (1827, New Street), among others. None of these efforts lasted more than a few years.[57] In 1834, Owen Nickens, Rev. David Nickens,

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[54] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 46; 93-94. A school for white children at Sixth Street and Vine began to admit "colored children of a light hue" in 1835. See Lyle Koehler, *Cincinnati's Black Peoples: A Chronology and Bibliography, 1787-1982* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Arts Consortium, 1986): 17.

[55] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 46; Oliver Farnsworth, *The Cincinnati Directory* [1819] (Cincinnati: Morgan, Lodge, and Co., 1819), 42.

[56] African Americans who could read or count had been teaching each other to do so clandestinely, in *ad hoc* efforts, since first arriving in the American colonies; some had arrived here from Africa literate in Arabic, others arrived from other colonies literate in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, or learned these languages after arriving.

[57] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 47. After the 1829 riots there is a gap in the historical record of independent local black schools between 1829 and 1834. Taylor believes they may have gone "underground; prior to 1829 they had been known to operate covertly. This void was also partly filled

and Rev. William Paul Quinn of the A.M.E. Church worked together with students from Lane Seminary to create an evening school for forty to fifty adults who could not attend in the daytime.[58] The combination of violent opposition from many whites, the difficulties of financing, and the fact that both students and teachers were often only in the community a short time made many of these schools brief, through earnest, efforts.[59]

On Jan. 1, 1836, Cincinnati's black community started the Colored Education Society, a mutual aid society, to finance its own schools. They intended to educate all African American children - those of its membership as well as poor, destitute, and orphaned children.[60] By 1839 this organization supervised three private schools for African American children: two were completely supported by the African American community and the third was funded by the local all-white Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. In 1835 black contributions to CES had been $150; in1838 they rose to $900,

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by the teaching efforts of young, white students from Lane Seminary, and their allies in the black community. Ibid., 93-95.

[58] E[dward] S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America, from April, 1833, to October, 1834* (London: John Murray, 1835; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 2: 402; William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in *Race and the City*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 36.

[59] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 47-48.

[60] Amzi Barber, "Of the Present Condition of the Colored People in Cincinnati," in Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of the Second Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Held in Mount Pleasant, Jefferson County Ohio…1837* (Cincinnati: Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, 1837). Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection. http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/ m/ mayantislavery/, (accessed Oct. 28, 2008), 62; *Philanthropist*, Dec. 19, 1836, cited in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 97n109.

indicating that the community as a whole was in an improved financial condition and more able to contribute to the educational fund.[61]

For the first three decades of the nineteenth century the African American population in Cincinnati was fairly focused on its day to day survival in a city where racial discrimination was a constant fact of life. But by 1840 a "middle class," increasingly educated, and with some expendable income and good organizational skills had emerged, helping to create the institutions that would build a viable African American community in the city.[62] By 1835 African Americans had established two philanthropic benevolent societies in Cincinnati. Hamilton County' Poor Fund excluded African Americans from relief as an extension of state laws excluding them from official poor relief, so these organizations filled a critical need in a community often denied jobs and living in crowded housing. In the early 1830s a group of African American men established the Cincinnati Union Society "for the relief of persons in distress." By 1835 it had one hundred male members and was collecting $250 a year for relief purposes. In 1835 a group of forty African American women organized the Female Benevolent Society to "work for the poor." [63] These efforts were

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[61] Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," 37.

[62] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 104.

[63] Stephen Middleton, The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 131-134; Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Report on the Condition of the People of Color in the State of Ohio. From the Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, held at Putnam, on the 22d, 23d, and 24th of April, 1835. London: Beaumont and Wallace, 1835. Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection. Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/ m/ mayantislavery/, (accessed March 14, 2007), 11. This source also mentions a third benevolent society "of a kindred character." See Putnam, 33.

complimentary to self and mutual improvement groups and educational efforts from within and from outside the African American community.

In the 1830s and 1840s (and later) there were notable and noted examples of joint and individual African American improvement, achievement, and success in Cincinnati, providing a clear counterpoint to the imaginary Negro inside the heads of most whites. The ability of these individuals to negotiate a way through the prejudiced social and business worlds of the city would have been points of local black community pride in an era of "racial uplift" discourse. Many African Americans in the city, including several women, the majority of whom had already purchased their own and others' freedom from slavery, had accumulated thousands of dollars worth of property and buildings between 1835 and 1840.[64] African Americans ran visibly successful businesses in Cincinnati from the 1830s on. The Dumas House (later the Dumas Hotel), between Fourth and Fifth on MacAllister Street (known as Eastern Row) in the first ward, was a boarding house in late 1830s/early 1840s. A common lodging spot for African Americans visiting or new to the city, it was a well-known and active station on the Underground Railroad where river workers and fugitive slaves mingled and "exchanged information."[65] In September, 1838, a group of

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[64] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Report on the Condition of the People of Color in the State of Ohio*: 11-12; C[arter] G. Woodson, "The Negroes of Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History* 1, no. 1 (January 1916), 9-10. Another source mentions a man who owned seven houses in the city and four-hundred acres in Indiana; his net worth in 1840 was between $12,000 and $15,000. See Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 133.

[65] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 150-51; Taylor and Dula, "The Black Residential Experience," 116. Because of its connection with the Underground Railroad, it is even more surprising that this Hotel was still operating in the 1860s and 1870s. By then it had three stories, spacious rooms, and ballrooms for

African American men organized a joint stock company and real estate firm, the Iron

Chest Company, to purchase lots and build buildings. Each member of the company

contributed $1 a week, not a small sum at that time. In the late 1830s the company

built three buildings in Cincinnati, leasing them to whites. By 1840 the Iron Chest

Company's property was worth $9,000.[66]

In general, there were economic gains among local African Americans in the

late 1830s -- from a combination of making what they could not get another way, self-

help, the aid of persistently sympathetic local whites, and their own resilience. The

Irish were not yet present in enough numbers to effectively compete with African

Americans for service-sector jobs, as they had in cities like New York and Boston.[67]

Canal and river commerce continued to thrive, even in the wake of the local effects of

the nation economic downturn following the "Panic of 1837," providing good work

opportunities. By the 1840s almost one-quarter of the African American work force

was employed on the several hundred steamboats that plied the waters of the area, or

in one of the auxiliary trades and services related to river traffic and commerce. A sign

of increasing prosperity in the late 1830s was the "impressive numbers" of lots and

large dances. See Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological, and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing, 1926), 180.

[66] Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," 35; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 132-33. The Vice-President was Gideon Langston, John Mercer Langston's older brother.

[67] By 1850, local booster/improver Dr. Daniel Drake would indicate that the situation had changed. He partially rationalized shipping all blacks to Africa because Europeans, mostly Irish and Germans, were taking over "negro employments;" the poor of those nations having enriched the United States. See Daniel Drake, *Dr. Daniel Drake's Letters on Slavery to Dr. John C. Warren of Boston*. Reprinted from the National Intelligencer…. (Washington, D.C.: Shuman's, 1940), 31-32; 32-33.

homes purchased by African Americans - nine-tenths of which in 1840 had been purchased between 1836 and 1840.[68]

Negro and mulatto elites in antebellum Cincinnati took their responsibility to better the lives of their poorer and less-educated fellows seriously. Elites and other leadership within the community were not isolated from their constituency, socially or residentially. Their position as leaders was determined not by white elites, but through consensus reached at large community meetings. Historians James Oliver Horton and Stacy Flaherty distinguish between "local black achievers and leaders" in ante-bellum Cincinnati as examples for pride or emulation.[69] However, achievers can be perceived as leaders. In addition, the practices of these persons undoubtedly contributed to the funds available for improvement projects within the African American community.

E. Abolition and Colonization as Improvements

Although African Americans and whites lived in neighborhoods among each other, they lived their day to day lives in separate but intersecting communities of affiliations and family networks. Many of the important intersections between blacks and whites in antebellum Cincinnati were connected with improvements offered to African Americans by white organizations in the city. Two very different types of groups evolved with very different views of improving the Negro and mulatto

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[68] Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," 33-34. Local white abolitionist and educator Amzi Barber estimated in 1840 that Cincinnati's African American community was worth $228,600, including three churches worth $19,000. Amzi Barber, *Report on the Colored People of Ohio*, cited in Cheek and Cheek: 35 and note 18.

[69] James Oliver Horton and Stacy Flaherty, "Black Leadership in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Race in the City*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., 71, 91, 71-73. While Horton and Flaherty's study is primarily concerned with the 1840s - 1860s, its conclusions apply to the 1830s, as well.

populations, as well as opposite views of how to improve the community at large. Local "abolitionists" and "colonizationists" both felt American slavery was a national sin and had to be abolished. They differed tremendously on what the abolition of slavery meant for black citizenship and for what it meant for the make-up of American communities.

Most Northerners were not in favor of the continuation of slavery - but they were at a moral and intellectual impasse about how to rid an increasingly democratic republic of it. Many shared then Congressman John Quincy Adams' feelings, and it scared them into a corner:

> The conflict between the principle of liberty and the fact of slavery is coming gradually to an issue. Slavery has now the power, and falls into convulsions at the approach of freedom. That the fall of slavery is predetermined in the counsels of omnipotence I cannot doubt; it is a part of the great moral improvement in the condition of man, attested by all the records of history. But the conflict will be terrible, and the progress of improvement perhaps retrograde before its final progress to consummation.[70]

James Thome, abolitionist son of a slaveholding family and Lane Seminary student, also viewed improvement and anti-slavery as linked. He felt that continuous attacks on the American Anti-Slavery Society wouldn't stop abolition. People who wanted to end slavery were "forming themselves into other associations. Many hold this language:

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[70] John Quincy Adams, Diary entry, Dec. 13, 1838, in *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (1874-1877; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1969), 10: 63.

'Slavery stands in opposition to the spirit of the age, to the progress of human improvement; it cannot abide the light of the nineteenth century.'"[71]

When the American Colonization Society was founded by congressmen, clergy, Supreme Court justices, wealthy planters, bankers, and businessmen in 1816, the motives of its founders were a grab-bag: the gradual end to American slavery, protecting slavery from the threat of free blacks, civilizing Africa, and protecting free blacks from white prejudice. For these men, the answer to each concern was the same: the removal of free Negroes and mulattoes from the United States to Africa. Avoiding the "delicate" issues of slavery itself, it presented itself as an improvement organization -- with both the improvement of blacks (in a far away land) and American communities in mind.[72]

The Ohio State Colonization Society, founded in 1826, was instituted with one stated reason for its existence:

> To give encouragement and aid to the free people of color resident in this state and elsewhere in the United States: to remove, with their consent, from our country, to the coast of Africa. The object is to remove from us that unfortunate race of men, who are now, as aliens on their native soil. - A people who do not, but in a small degree, participate in the privileges and…unities of the community - and who, from causes in their nature inevitable, and reason insuperable; never can be admitted to the full enjoyment of those rights as fellow-citizens.[73]

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[71] James A. Thome, "Speech of Mr. James A. Thome, of Kentucky," in *Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati; Speech of James A. Thome and Letter of the Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Cox against the American Colonization Society* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834): 10. CHS

[72] See P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), especially 23-35.

[73] David Smith, *The First Annual Report of the Ohio State Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States .With an Appendix* (Columbus: Ohio Society for Colonizing Free People of Color, 1827), 3. CHS

But it became clear fairly quickly that the main effect of removing free Negroes and

mulattoes to Africa was to allow the institution of slavery to continue less threatened

by the presence and example of free blacks. African Americans themselves, largely

hostile to the goals of the American Colonization Society, understood the pernicious

and contradictory character of its improvement agenda, and the fallacies buried in its

two main selling points. Rev. Peter Williams wondered aloud in New York in 1830,

how Africa would be improved

> by the removal of the free people of color of the United States there, while they
> say they are the *most vile and degraded* people in the world. If we are as vile
> and degraded as they represent us, and they wish the Africans to be rendered a
> virtuous, enlightened and happy people, they should not *think* of sending *us*
> among them, lest we should make them worse instead of better.[74]

He then addressed the improvement of free blacks, identifying as Americans, with

American cultural tastes:

> We are to be improved by being sent far from civilized society. This is a novel
> form of improvement. What is there in the burning sun, the arid plains, and
> barbarous customs of Africa, that is so peculiarly favourable [sic] to our
> improvement? What hinders our improving here, where schools and colleges
> abound, where the gospel is preached at every corner, and where all the arts
> and sciences are verging fast to perfection? Nothing but prejudice.[75]

The arguments in favor of colonizing blacks in Africa were based on a race

making ideology that saw free blacks as "evil" and a disease in the country's social

fabric - it will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. Many of the more vocal

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[74] Peter Williams, "Slavery and Colonization: A Discourse Delivered at St. Phillip's Church, July 4,
1830," in *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, ed. Carter G. Woodson (Washington, D.C.: Associated
Publishers, 1925), 79.

[75] Peter Williams, "Slavery and Colonization," 80.

and literary members of the "brain-trust" Semi-Colon and Buckeye Clubs were supporters of colonization projects. While there is no record of their ever having considered a piece on colonization, or a related subject, off-the record conversations of this hot-button issue could easily have taken place, consolidating opinion.[76] Semi-Colon Club member Rev. Lyman Beecher expressed in his addresses and articles what many of his fellow colonizationists felt, that abolition without colonization was, "nothing but a headlong, reckless purpose to amalgamate the blacks and whites, and any affected childish pity that any of them [blacks] born in this country should leave it." The greatest "impediments" were acknowledged to be "prejudice, is there anything more unreasonable and obstinate" and "wicked[ness], is it less obstinate because it is criminal?" "Expediency" demanded separation of the races.[77] The aims of the colonization society were an inconsistently-articulated, but dominating part of the community ideology in Cincinnati in the period from the late 1820s through the early 1840s, and beyond.

After 1830, those who espoused what William Lloyd Garrison called "immediate abolition" were increasingly labeled simply "abolitionists." In Cincinnati they also tended to see African Americans as viable members of the community and believed, to one degree or another, in equal rights for blacks and whites, and did not

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[76] Members who were known to have supported colonization schemes included, Lyman, Catharine, and Harriet Beecher, Daniel Drake, Timothy Flint, James Hall, E.D. Mansfield, and Timothy Walker. Caroline Lee Hentz wrote novels sympathetic to slavery, portraying slaves as "happy" and "content." Other members, such as Samuel and John Foote, William Green, and William Stetson allied themselves with anti-abolition forces in the city during the 1836 and 1841 riots covered in chapters 6 and 7 of this study.

[77] Lyman Beecher, "Union of Colonizationists and Abolitionists," *Spirit of the Pilgrims* 6, no. 7 (July 1833): 398, 396; Lyman Beecher, "Dr. Beecher's Address," *African Repository* 10 (Nov. 1834): 282.

advocate colonization, frequently speaking against it. James Birney, editor of the

Cincinnati abolitionist paper *The Philanthropist* in the late 1830s, was particularly

critical of the clergy's support of the colonization society, because "the very principle

on which the scheme rests, recognizes ignorance, vice and degradation, as essential

and immutable elements in the condition of the freeman of color."[78] White

colonizationists did not believe in equal rights, and felt the intellectual, physical,

moral, and spiritual condition of blacks could only be improved by removing all of

them from the United States - preferably to Africa; the American communities in

which they lived could only be improved by removing them, as well. The race making

dimensions of these groups will be discussed in the next chapter. What is important to

consider in this chapter is their status as improvement organizations.

The most visible whites in the city talking about equal rights as improvement

and Negroes and mulattoes staying and improving along with everyone else in the

United States -- staying in Cincinnati as part of the community-at-large -- were a

group of Lane Seminary students and several young women from New York. The

students, under the leadership of immediate abolitionist Theodore Weld, began

teaching school, preaching, and helping in any way they could in the black

community, even staying with black families to get to know them better. Weld had

come to the school in 1833, when it first accepted students, in order to bring

immediatism to the West as an improvement strategy. He and his cohorts believed in

the improvement of blacks in the United States, and saw colonization as a strategy to

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[78] James G. Birney, "The Clergy - The Colored People," *Philanthropist*, March 26, 1839.

prop-up slavery. They also believed in an improved community with Negroes and mulattoes as citizens with full civil rights.[79]

The supporters of colonization and the immediate abolitionists were involved in dueling improvement projects in Cincinnati, competing for the support of public sentiment, as well. Colonizationists had visions of the city progressing *because* there were no blacks and of blacks improving because they lived in Africa and not in the United States. "Immediate" abolitionists like Weld envisioned a community with blacks in it; they believed that improvement was possible for blacks and for the community-at-large, with blacks present - because they had already improved themselves and the cities in which they lived.

Many colonizationists were improvers in other ways, and involved in other improvement projects in the city and state, as we will see in the final sections of this chapter. Colonization was part of a larger project of improvement and development for the city and the nation for these improvers. In the next chapter we will examine some of the racial ideology behind their point of view and their practices that differentiated them from the immediate abolitionists. For white immediatists who worked on improvement in Cincinnati's black community, this work, in the context of their Christian evangelism, *was* their improvement project. They believed the city and the nation would redeem themselves spiritually and socially, and answer the promise of equality, through their practices in the community. Equality and justice were their greater community development project.

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[79] For a more complete discussion of Weld, his fellow abolitionist Lane Seminary students, and the young women from New York, see Chapter 4.

F. Local and Internal Improvements in Antebellum Cincinnati

There is a second type of improvement discourse about improving people and things in Cincinnati, and not based on self or mutual improvement, but based instead on the notion of improvement *for the common good*. Generally speaking, local public improvements[80] and internal improvements[81] fall within this discourse. The farther away from self and mutual improvement one goes -- past benevolence and philanthropy -- to local and internal improvement, framed as "contributing to the common good" - the less we see an African American presence in the practices associated with this discourse. They participated in building roads, canals, and other public works,[82] but were excluded from the planning of, the awarding of contracts for, or the celebrations of these projects. African Americans occupied an almost "parallel universe" in Cincinnati in this period in relation to a (white) community-at-large. There are overlapping nodes of contact in employment, housing, places to get supplies (groceries, mills, lumber yards, etc.), and within families. But at the points of public

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[80] Public improvements in this study are those kinds of local "civic" projects that are pursued for the common good and paid for either with public money, such as city streets, street lighting, or a common school system, or with private funds such as hospitals and clinics, or libraries.

[81] John Larson's recent study shows *internal improvement* being used the way John Quincy Adams used *improvement* in the vignette that opens this chapter -- to "refer to all kinds of programs to encourage security, prosperity, and enlightenment among the people of the United States." The first post-Revolutionary generation thought in terms of "roads, canals, and schools," but in the early nineteenth century the meaning narrowed to refer to "public works for improved transportation." The "spirit of improvement" that had overtaken so many Americans beginning in the 1790s was constantly redefined as Americans shifted gears in their own attempt to survive in the new country and identify themselves as new people. John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3, 30.

[82] Nancy Bertaux, "Structural Economic Change and Occupational Decline among Black Workers in Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati," in *Race and the* City, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., 133.

local or internal improvement -- where self, or mutuality within a single, narrowly defined group breaks down in a discourse about efforts toward "the common good" and where the public sphere, the commonweal, is created -- suddenly, in Cincinnati, there are no African Americans involved in these groups, except occasionally as laborers.

The planners, boosters, funders, and builders of these local and internal improvement projects were many of the same individuals involved in the more self-oriented improvements that we've already examined - making them major improvers in the city. As we will see in the chapters on the riots, many of these improvers played major roles in the discourses and practices connected with these riots. Local and internal improvements were the public face of the city, and they became the focal point for boosters attempting to attract financial investment and new (white) energetic, skilled settlers to the area. Self-improvement *was* considered the basis of all improvement. However, backed and structured by a network of social, commercial, and familial connections and ties, including the "interlocking directorate" of men with "high associational activity" in the city articulated by historian Walter Glazer,[83] these men, improvers and boosters alike, "ran the show," with their hands on the ways to make things happen -- and their own prerogatives in mind.[84] Indeed, they were the

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[83] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 141-147.

[84] The term *men* is significant: those involved in local improvements and internal improvements in Cincinnati were, to an overwhelming degree, male - and white. One area where women are visible in improvement in Cincinnati is in social and moral improvement. See the discussion of Catharine Beecher in the section on boosters at the end of this chapter; one of Beecher's projects was the articulation, and enlargement, of a sphere for women to shape and improve society - the realm of social and moral education.

developers of the community as a whole -- the *community developers* - in antebellum Cincinnati.

An impressionistic list of these Cincinnati improvers could be compiled whose names appear repeatedly in local city directories and in newspaper reports of lists of exploratory committees, officers of voluntary associations, organizational memberships, and signed memorials to the legislature. It would include lawyers, businessmen, physicians, editors, merchants, even ministers. Many of these men - like Benjamin and Daniel Drake, James Hall, Timothy Flint, and Charles Hammond, were also boosters - approaching their favored projects from the organizer's *and* the lobbyist's position. A number of those who would be on this list were among those involved in the discourses surrounding the three riots we will be examining, or were involved in some way in the riots themselves.

Local improvements in antebellum Cincinnati were typical of those in any new town: streets, water, and housing. The first record of Cincinnati municipal debt was in 1828 - the city had recently spent a great deal of money grading and paving streets and alleys, and on other "public improvements."[85] Local newspapers reported local municipal problems and improvement projects of continuing interest in the period. Many problems were slow in being improved such as keeping enough water in the pipes for drinking and fire protection in a quickly growing city. The story first appeared in 1829; in 1836, as the city's "population and improvements increase" the city's lack of control over the water supply became more problematic. A unanimous

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[85] A.N. Marquis, *The Industries of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: A.N. Marquis and Co., 1883), 21.

City Council vote to seek acquisition of the waterworks by writing a state law that would allow the city to purchase it failed to solve the problem. In 1839 the city finally bought the water works for $300,000 after declining to buy it for $30,000 fifteen years earlier.[86]

Antebellum Cincinnati suffered from a chronic shortage in housing and other buildings. In 1841 in a synopsis of the periodic counts of buildings erected since 1815, Charles Cist noted, "although hundreds of tenements have been added, year by year, to the accommodation and enlargement of the city, there has been no period within the last twenty years, in which the supply has overtaken and kept up with the wants of the community."[87] Even during the building boom of 1841,[88] "all the houses built are readily rented the moment finished, and the majority are rented long before they are finished."[89] One of the most common types of booster article in newspapers, or item in Cincinnati gazetteers, is one that celebrated the number of houses or other buildings that had been built in the previous year. For instance, in January 1831, the *Gazette* published a chart of the number of brick and wood buildings of two, three, and four stories erected in the city during 1830 - under the title, "Improvements in the City." That same year the Cincinnati City Directory reported the number of buildings erected

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[86] "To the Public. The Cincinnati Water Company," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1829; Publius [pseud.], "Waterworks," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 22, 1836; Marquis, *Industries of Cincinnati*, 25.

[87] Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 40-42. In 1839, 394 new buildings (280 of brick, 111 frames) were built; in 1840 406 buildings (260 of brick, 146 frames) were built.

[88] "Building in Cincinnati," and Editorial, *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 2, 1841.

[89] "City Improvements," *Weekly Chronicle* [Cincinnati], Oct. 23, 1841.

in 1829 as 496 and the number for 1830 as 475.[90] The editor of the Cincinnati

Republican, Charles Ramsay, believed, in April of 1841, that at least five hundred

buildings would be built that year - 80 percent of them houses.[91] Reports of this type

were frequent in local papers, directories, and gazetteers.

As widespread as improvementism and the booster ethos were in antebellum

Cincinnati, not everyone was happy with the local results. Even in the mid-nineteenth

century, S.R., who had last been in Cincinnati in 1829, bemoaned the massive

changes: the loss of the "*thriving village* of old acquaintances" to a "city of

strangers…how I love and pity you." Approaching the city in 1841, he could not find

old landmarks -- "the old steam mill... it could not withstand the spirit of

improvement….Stately palaces, churches and seminaries too, deck our city. With all

this outward show of 'improvement' does the morality and happiness of your city

improve with the same pace?"[92] But most of the discourse was typically in the spirit of

boosterism: "to preach, spread, and inculcate unqualified optimism."[93]

During the period of this study, the most common improvements discussed in

the press were internal improvements - roads, canals, and railroads. Even though there

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[90] "Local Improvements," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Saturday, Jan. 22, 1831; Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for 1831*, 196-97.

[91] "Building in Cincinnati," and Editorial, *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 2, 1841. Ramsay also reported several whole blocks of stores going in on Columbia, Lower Market, Broadway, Fifth, and Third Streets, as well as the laying of the cornerstone for a "large new Catholic Church for the Germans."

[92] Letter to the editor: "Where are They?" by S.R., *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 30, 1841; italics are in the original.

[93] David Hamer, *New Towns in the New World: Images and Perceptions of the Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 62.

were fewer projects overall than other in forms of improvement, the amount of

financial gain that was at stake and the number of people who stood to benefit in some

way, directly or indirectly, made these projects of central importance. Along with

completing the Miami-Erie Canal from Cincinnati to Dayton, and then to Toledo on

Lake Erie, the main project of interest in Cincinnati in the late-1820s was procuring an

extension of the National Road from Nashville to Cincinnati.[94] In the mid-1830s,

around the time of the 1836 riots, there were a number of projects being promoted: a

Charleston Railroad from the Carolinas to Cincinnati,[95] the more local Little Miami

Railroad, and an extension of the Whitewater Canal into Ohio from Indiana.[96]

Discussions of all of these projects were intertwined with the discourses surrounding

the 1836 riots. The major project during the 1841 riots was the attempt to promote

Cincinnati as the site for a new National Armory.[97] For the purposes of this study, the

importance of these projects lays in what they meant to the men who worked as

improvers and boosters to promote them and to carry them out. As we will see in the

upcoming chapters on the riots, many of the citizens involved in promoting these

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[94] "National Road," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 13, 1829.

[95] "Central Railroad: Proceeding in Cincinnati," *Western Christian Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1835; "Charleston Railroad," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 26, 1836.

[96] "Public Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1836. This article was just to the right of the article Hammond reprinted from the *Evening Post* on the Jan. 22 "Court House Meeting," presided over by the Mayor, in which James Birney was asked to stop publishing the abolitionist *Philanthropist* and the city leaders denounced abolition as a threat to their commercial interests (with the south). They were not given a copy of the meeting notes as the other local papers were (it is probable that Hammond's fair-mindedness created a sense that he wasn't in support of the meeting to those present). "Public Meeting" was also published in the *Cincinnati Whig*, Wed., Jan. 27, 1836; "Great Internal Improvement Meeting," *Catholic Telegraph*, Dec. 29, 1836.

[97] *Proceedings of a Public Meeting of the Citizens of Cincinnati, on the Subject of a Western National Armory, September30, 1841* (Cincinnati: Printed at the Republican Office, 1841). CHS

projects were involved in some way, pro or con, with the discourses and meetings surrounding the riots, or with the violence itself. It is the overlap of their interests, as well as their discourses, that I will examine.

G. Boosters, Place Making, and the Community

Boosterism in antebellum Cincinnati -- the promotion of various improvement projects, including the city and its region -- was widespread among the residents of the city.[98] Boosterism has been, and is, a feature of "urban development in 'new countries.'" It is a response to competition between cities and between other improvement projects for capital, public support, and a virtuous and hardworking population to come to the city or to benefit from the improvement. The large number of towns founded in the Old Northwest from the 1790s-1870s created a highly competitive environment in which Cincinnati's boosters participated.[99] Like ancient city-states described by geographer Yi-fu Tuan, this competition can drive a local sense of "patriotism" and a city's "heightened awareness of its own individuality."[100]

Urban boosters filled two roles in a new and growing United States. As historian Carl Abbott has noted, antebellum boosterism in the Old Northwest was both "a response to the concrete problems of urban growth and a literature of prophesy, an

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[98] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 14-15; Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 8, 150; Sally F. Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise': The Booster Ethos and Resistance to Abolitionism in Jacksonian Cincinnati," in *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*, ed. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron (Turnout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 214-215; also see Hamer, *New Towns in the New World*, 11-12.

[99] Hamer, *New Towns in the New World*, 11, 12.

[100] Yi-fu Tuan, Space *and Place: the Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 173.

affirmation of the great destiny and mission of the American people."[101] As participants in what Abbott terms "collective entrepreneurship," boosters have been primarily studied in relation to the economic aspects of their participation.[102] But historian Sally Griffith has pointed out, because economic activity was completely tied to the "very existence of towns and cities in nineteenth-century America," boosters were frequently concerned with what appear to be non-business issues. Booster ideologies "fused economic and moral values [and] addressed the need…for both economic and social order," their rhetoric "alternat[ing] between the languages of empire and republican virtue."[103] I maintain that the boosters' "literature of prophesy [and] affirmation of the great mission of the American people" was itself "a response to concrete problems of urban growth" -- and it was sometimes a non-economic response, from elsewhere within the local culture.

As promoters, one of the chief aims of boosters was to show that their project was in the public's interest, to gain public support. Through the use of various technologies, such as public meetings, pamphlets, and the press, the private interests of business practitioners were melded with, and molded into, a prevailing public interest. Boosters lent their names and support to all kinds of public improvements, economic and non-economic, tying the two together in the public mind. Cincinnati boosters such as Dr. Daniel Drake and editors E.D. Mansfield, Charles Hammond, and

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[101] Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 10-11.

[102] Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 5, 9. For a discussion of scholars who have studied the economic strategies of boosters, see Chapter 1 of the present study.

[103] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise," 214-215, 217.

Timothy Flint helped to link the economic and the social through their participation in canal and railroad projects, as well as starting and managing schools, lyceums, libraries, museums, Negro colonization societies, and hospitals. Their authority in non-economic matters may have derived from their involvement in more purely economic projects: a booster/improver's credentials moved with them from project to project. Boosterism, understood in its more economic sense, was the "'official culture' of nineteenth-century American towns and cities."[104] However, its methods of working were applied to many urban problems. In Cincinnati this included purely economic, moral, intellectual, or social concerns, as well as curbing various impediments to the city's dominant development ideology.

Boosters played a commanding role in the actual building of nineteenth-century American cities. But cities and regions are imagined as places by boosters and potential and actual residents before, and as, they bring them into existence. Political scientist Alev Çinar and historian Thomas Bender assign the "social reproduction of [the publicly imagined community] over time" to "the interplay of social practices and imagination."[105] From the standpoint of practice theory, the construction of a "public imagination" *is* a social practice, that is, "[human] action considered in relation to

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[104] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise,'' 215.

[105] Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender, "Introduction," in *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City*, ed. Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii. This comment was made in the context of critiquing Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* for its lack of a treatment of the social or cultural reproduction of the imagined community.

[social] structure."[106] The process of creating this collective imagination uses the

production of "collective narratives" and marks the city, or its parts, as having certain

characteristics, such as new or old, or white or black. Çinar and Bender argue that

these "collective imaginings" are constitutive of space as well as of "communities"

and other "solidarities."[107] I argue that they are constitutive of *place*, as well - an entity

Tuan has most simply defined as "enclosed and humanized space." Reconstructed

from the open-ness of space, places, further, "are centers of felt value where biological

needs…for food, water, rest, and procreation are satisfied."[108]

But "place exists at different scales" - at a very intimate, experiential level,

such as a domicile, and at a more distant and symbolic level, such as a public

ceremony.[109] Boosters who published or gave speeches played a powerful role in

antebellum Cincinnati, as elsewhere, in place making at the symbolic level, as well as

at the more material level. As Tuan has noted, "A function of literary art is to give

visibility to intimate experiences, including those of place."[110] Boosters read back to

actual and potential local residents their own intimate experiences of the city as a

crafted consensus, as "public culture." Historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron

describe merchants as being in the position of negotiating between public and private

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[106] Sherry B. Ortner, "Introduction," in *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 12. For a general discussion of practice theory, see chapter 1 of the present study.

[107] Çinar and Bender, "Introduction," xiv, xv.

[108] Tuan, Space *and Place*, 54, 4.

[109] Ibid., 149, 136-148.

[110] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 162.

worlds.[111] Many boosters were merchants, and even when they weren't, they were generally in a similar position in the marketing of projects and the idea of projects to a local public from whom they wanted support and to a wider public from whom they solicited consumption of the end product. Boosters made effective use of their unique dual focus as improvers, both inwardly focused on the immediate funding and the practical needs of the projects they supported, as well as outwardly focused on establishing a positive public opinion, a consensus in favor of, and financially supportive of, the project. The discursive practices of boosters were useful tools to bring these two perspectives together to make places.

Tuan has noted that places can be made more "visible" through "rivalry and conflict with other places…. Human places become vividly real through dramatization."[112] Competition through boosterism increased Cincinnatians' sense of Cincinnati as a place, with all the meaning that goes with place-ness. The rhetoric of boosterism in Cincinnati, which made the city more "visible," relied on weaving several distinct strands of thought together into coherent and meaningful images of Cincinnati, or its region, as a place with which many of its (white) residents could identify. This rhetoric typically fused the two concepts of an ideal (or idealized) landscape and geography, and a virtuous population arriving at the locale, with the free and republican institutions the people created in this place. This formula helped to establish the sense of a singular people wedded to a singular place and their singular

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[111] Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants," in *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants*, ed. Adelman and Aron, 4.

[112] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178.

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culture, as problemitized by anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson.

People's physical and conceptual resistance to "established spatial orders…means that

space and place can never be 'given,' and that the process of their sociopolitical

construction must always be considered."[113] Boosters were masters at forging a sense

of natural linkage between a people and a space through the agency of their institution

building, constructing Cincinnati, and other cities, as places.

The writing of local Cincinnati boosters like Timothy Flint, interested in

internal improvements with clear and positive economic consequences, offered the

public a synthesis of freedom, the agency of a virtuous and hardworking population,

and their wonderful institutions, including cities. Contrasting the rise of Cincinnati

with that of Tsarist imperial Petersburg in Russia under forced labor in the 1820s, Flint

noted,

> How different are the fostering efforts of liberty…. No troops are stationed, no
> public money lavished here. It is not even the state metropolis. The people
> build and multiply imperceptibly and in silence. Nothing is forced. This
> magnificent result is only the development of our free and noble institutions,
> upon a fertile soil. Nor is this place the solitary point, where the genius of our
> institutions is working the result. Numerous cities and towns, over an extent of
> two thousand of miles are emulating the growth of this place.[114]

Veering away from the pure environmentalism of the period, Flint stated that it was

the orderly agency of the population developing "free and noble institutions" on the

"fertile soil" that had made Cincinnati. It was a good fit of good people on good land

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[113] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of
Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1992): 6-23; quote on page 17.

[114] Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years… in the Valley of the Mississippi…* (Boston:
Cummings, Hilliard, 1826; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1968), 39.

creating good institutions - and he and others promoted Cincinnati as the model for others to copy.

This linkage of geography, a virtuous population, and their free institutions had already been a strain in American thought for decades when Flint was writing in the 1820s. Historian Peter Onuf noted that it was an important component of Thomas Jefferson's thinking before 1800 and evident in a number of his writings which were widely read. Jefferson re-imagined Virginia's colonial history, establishing in his mind the Virginians (and the Americans, by extension) as a separate and sovereign people on a distinct land, voluntarily beginning a new society, separate from the British and their King. This linkage of the idea of a nation to a sovereign people of English (and then European) immigrants, coming to the American land voluntarily to create a new society, was present in his widely circulated *Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774), and a deeply imbedded assumption in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1788). Onuf has shown that, "Jefferson's conception of Virginian and American nationhood assumed a fundamental relationship between a particular people and its territorial domain." Jefferson's imagery reflected a "quasi-organic relation between an industrious people and a fertile continent," issuing from the people taking the land (from its original inhabitants) and building free institutions upon it.[115] The

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[115] Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: the Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 152-155, 21, 163; see Chapter 5, 147-188, for Onuf's discussion of Jefferson's construction of slaves as a captive "nation" leading to his belief (or rationalization) in blacks as a separate nation. My discussion of Jefferson here is heavily indebted to Onuf's treatment of his thought in this work.

ideological cohesion of this imagery made it apt to be borrowed by other boosters for use in other contexts.

Cincinnati booster/improver Daniel Drake enlisted the linkage of an ideal geography, a virtuous people, and their free institutions to project his view of the region of the West saving a national unity which many Americans were feeling was starting to fragment. In 1833 Drake delivered an address to the Literary Convention of Kentucky on the need to build uniform and harmonious institutions and literature in the Mississippi Valley, including the Ohio Valley -- for its own sake, and as an example to the nation. He began his overall unification argument, like Jefferson, with a reference to using force in the past to tie together "the remote sections of a great empire." But in the new American nation, "a profound policy of the people…through the federal and state governments, has laid the foundations of union on the plan of nature." People had arrived from many other places, with many ways of doing things. For the "plan of nature" to be reflected in the people's institutions, they must reflect a harmony of the people's interests. Drake argued for the people of the West to "foster western genius, encourage western writers, patronize western publishers, augment the number of western readers, and create a western heart."[116] Drake assumed that the people, the land they occupied, and the culture they would create should properly mirror each other.

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[116] Daniel Drake, "Remarks on the Importance of Promoting Literary and Social Concert in the Valley on the Mississippi…," (Louisville,1833), in *Physician to the West: Selected Writings of Daniel Drake on Science and Society*, ed. Henry D. Shapiro and Zane L. Miller (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 226, 239.

Catharine Beecher was a longtime booster and improver of women's education, and like Flint and Drake, was a public intellectual and literary figure in antebellum Cincinnati. She also drew on this linkage of a particular people and their institutions to a particular geography in her understanding of the relationship between cities. Her discussion of why northern abolitionism was wrong, for men as well as women, was framed as a problem between sovereign *communities*, negotiating like nations. She began by contrasting the American case with the British one: the effort to end slavery in Britain happened within a single "community, of which the actors were a portion." But in America, abolitionists from one community objected to slavery practices in another community. Each community had its own "practices in trade and business," as in other matters -- in effect, each had its own culture: "Are not the northern and southern sections of our country distinct communities, with different feelings and interests?"[117] Beecher took Jefferson's reading of sovereign state and national identities and Drake's reiteration of the West as a sovereign region with its own culture equal to that of the East or South, and restated them at the community level. Her *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism* rests on a deep assumption that a (white) population in a location -- a community, whether city or section -- has a right to rule itself without interference, to practice its own culture. In describing the justification of sovereignty at the community or city level, Beecher completed the identification of peoples with places and their institutions, from the macro to the micro level.

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[117] Catharine E. Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837; repr., Freeport, NY: Book for Libraries, 1970), 10, 11, 12.

Boosters of all kinds relied on shared understandings about the community to reach their audience, and in this way helped to create dominating assumptions about the community, as well as mirroring them back to its residents. Supplying ideological cohesiveness to community leaders' ideas about the city and region's residents, institutions, and development was another important way in which the practices of local boosters contributed to what historian Walter Glazer calls a sense of "community-ism" in antebellum Cincinnati.[118] The language of boosterism, an idealized view of city or region with all the problems, failures, and disagreements removed, bridged the gaps between the individual, the city, the region, and the nation by projecting the improvement of one as the improvement of the others. Its imagery both tapped into and helped to create a sense of community corporatism, many groups and individuals working together toward the common goal of a prosperous, improving city. This spirit of "community-ism" and the practices it informed were the ways that antebellum Cincinnatians would solve their most pressing problems - whether they were concerned with improving merchants' and farmers' access to southern and eastern markets or with the troubling presence of Negroes and mulattoes and their abolitionist allies in the city.

H. Conclusion

Antebellum Cincinnatians of all descriptions were involved in the discourse and in the enacting of practices of improvement, from canal and road-paving projects, to literacy and temperance campaigns, to establishing hospitals, libraries, and abolition

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[118] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 41.

and colonization societies. There was wide-spread interest and support for improvements of all kinds in the community. However, the majority of the organization work, fund-raising, and management of permanent and ephemeral associations dedicated to improvements was performed by a core of businessmen, merchants, educators, lawyers, ministers, newspaper editors, and other professionals and their families. This helped to give the improvement ethos in Cincinnati, as elsewhere, an air of respectability and civic mindedness - an important part of many residents' sense of themselves as part of a great middle class. There was an overall sense that improving oneself was improving the community, and improving the community was good for oneself - an important linkage in the spread of the booster ethos throughout the city.

The intersection of improvementist discourse and practices with those of race making turned community development in Cincinnati into what anthropologist Sherry Ortner calls a *serious game*, "involving the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials."[119] In this game, all improvement was not equal, and all persons were not equally improvable. This chapter explored improvement in Cincinnati, generally. The next chapter examines race making in antebellum Cincinnati, including some of the ways in which it intersected with dominant ideas about improvement and development in the community. Relying on the familiar sense of "community-ism" and the authority of its boosters and improvers, a majority of white residents tacitly supported

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[119] Sherry B. Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 144.

through inaction, or actively participated in, discourses and practices that

discriminated against African Americans, privileging white access to the benefits of

developing the community.

Chapter 4

Racial Consciousness and Race Making in Antebellum Cincinnati

In late February 1839, according to James G. Birney, local editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Philanthropist*, a meeting of the Cincinnati Colonization Society, an auxiliary of the Ohio State Society, was "held in the chapel of the Cincinnati College," with Judge Jacob Burnet as Chairman and William Greene, Esq., as Secretary. Among the many men present were Mr. Gurley, F.W. Thomas, Rev. W.H. McGuffy, Robert Lytle, and Mr. Searles. The audience "indecorously" interrupted the proceedings with giggling while the constitution was being "adopted, article by article.…The most trivial circumstance would give rise to unrestrained mirth...." When Samuel Black signed his name to the document, it was read out loud in a peculiar manner and the "room began a general giggling as if it were ludicrous, that even the name of *Black*, should be associated with a *colonization society*."

Robert Lytle rose and began to speak, and "a faint hiss was heard." He shouted, "That comes from an abolitionist: it is the only compliment I would accept from an *abolitionist*," and became "so violent" that, while some gave him "boisterous" applause, "he was loudly hissed by others." The room erupted; a colonizationist at the back of the room admitted that *he* had hissed! Calls came for throwing out both Lytle *and* the hisser, when "a justice of the peace, near the door, who had…a few minutes before joined the society, cried out at the top of his voice, 'Mr. President, is it allowable for niggers to come in here and hiss white men? Here's a damned nigger

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among us, and I heard him hiss.'" "Knock him down! Knock him down!" was yelled

all around, and a group rushed the door. Adding to the confusion, "the ladies became

alarmed, and one of them began to scream in agonizing tones, 'O, the mob! The cruel,

cruel mob!'" A Negro man standing near the door, perhaps "solicitous to hear what

colonization benevolence was projecting for his benefit, was kicked out of the house.

There is sufficient evidence that he had not hissed, or behaved in any respect

indecorously." At the end of the report, Birney theorized, "True, it is somewhat

awkward for Piety and Profanity to pull together like true yoke fellows; but use may

teach them to accommodate their motions to each other."[1]

A. Introduction

The above account of a Cincinnati Colonization Society meeting is a useful

entry into race making in this antebellum city. It contains many elements of local

negative race making: bombastic and hyperbolic pronouncements, a refusal to look at

evidence contrary to one's argument, the assumption that a black person or abolitionist

caused the problem, and an eventual resort to violence. Projecting the group as an

improvement organization, the Colonization Society publicly pursued its goals on

behalf of the community at large. The members and other supporters of the local

Colonization Society, men and women, were drawn largely from among the elected

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[1] "The Colonization Meeting," *Philanthropist*, March 12, 1839; the italics are in the original. Birney's final comment is, no doubt, a reference to the fact that the largest single vocation among the members of the local colonization society was that of Christian Minister -- and they could still carry on this profanity- and violence-laced meeting. It isn't clear if Birney was present at this meeting (it is unlikely he would have been allowed to be in the room), or if he based his re-creation, from which these quotes are taken, on a report from someone who was present.

officials, lawyers, ministers, editors and other writers, businessmen, physicians, teachers, and other professionals of Cincinnati and their families. The colonization project was a sharp articulation of the extreme position among whites that viewed Negroes and mulattoes as inherently and unredeemably inferior and degraded -- and insisted on their removal from the community. At the other end of the spectrum were a small, but clear-minded, group of white citizens -- drawn from the ranks of those who were immediate abolitionists and others in the community that viewed racial prejudice as morally wrong, or a sin, believed in the equality of whites, Negroes, and mulattoes, and found ways to practice their beliefs in Cincinnati -- to the rising hostility of their opposition. While those taking these opposing positions kept up a vigorous discourse in the press (and presumably elsewhere, as well), most white members of the community had only rare opportunities to confront their own points of view and probably fell somewhere between these poles. Despite the ambivalence of many white residents, the extreme position of believing in innate black inferiority and favoring Negro removal dominated in Cincinnati, resulting in the series of anti-black and anti-abolitionist riots examined in the chapters that follow this one.

This chapter will examine how the white residents of Cincinnati understood race -- how they thought about it and how they felt about it. It will examine some of the cultural practices they deployed to bring races into existence. It will also examine the ways in which local residents' understandings about race intersected with those about the improvement of themselves and their community. Racial construction in a community becomes noticeable and a problem when it results in prejudice, and

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ultimately, in the practices of discrimination. Examining Cincinnati's discourse on

prejudice spotlights many of the reasons for racial construction in the white

community. But it is in unpacking the most volatile and most frequently raised "hot

button" topic in the discourse - *amalgamation*, or race-mixing of any and all kinds -

that we begin to see the connection between white Cincinnatians constructing and

maintaining social identities and using violence as a strategy for solving the city's

Negro problem. Finally, an examination of local booster writings and speeches of the

period will show how race plays a central role in their deft syntheses of the discourses

on the West/Cincinnati as the "perfect" place and the local people as the ideal people

to carry on the promises of the experiment of the United States. Boosters' participation

in local race-making discourse created handy projections of Cincinnati as a white city

for others to consume.

B. Preliminary Thoughts on Identity and Race Making

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study assumes that race, like other social

identities such as gender, class, and religion, is socially - that is, culturally and

ideologically - constructed. Identities, both ascribed and self-assigned, are constructed

through the everyday practices of living as humans - the face to face "little routines

people enact, again and again, in working, eating, sleeping, relaxing, as well as the

little scenarios of etiquette they play out…in social interaction," or the *micropractices*

of human social life.[2] Greetings (or lack of them), ways of talking to, and about, each

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[2] Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (Jan. 1984): 154.

other and behaving with each other are our performance of who we believe ourselves to be and expect others to be.

One of the fundamental problems with *identity* itself as a concept for the researcher is that it is the result of a number of processes, carried out by real persons. By focusing on the end product -- *identity* -- rather than on the processes involved, both the processes and the agents of those processes of identity construction are obscured. It also discourages us from asking why particular identities are constructed in the first place - what is identity construction doing, or what is the goal of the constructor? Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have described the consequences of research focused on the noun end-result of *identity* instead of on the processes of *identifying* and *identifying with*, or on the agents, the doers, of these actions of identity formation. Their argument centers on the problems of 'identity' as an analytical concept due to its ambiguity, "contradictory meanings," and "reifying connotations." [3]

Anthropologist Thomas Biolsi provides a partial solution to some of the problems with identity as a static concept. His concept of *race technologies* reinstates the sense that race is something we do, something that a person can wield, like a tool or technology (physical, such as a lever, or intellectual, such as algebra) to achieve some other goal. There are no biological bases for the concept of race.[4] Biolsi has called it a "*concrete* abstraction," both "*socially constructed*" and a "*social fact*."

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[3] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29, no 1 (Feb. 2000): 1-47.

[4] One of the most cogent explanations that the concept of race has no biological bases was produced by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in 1998 as a revision of UNESCO's 1964 statement concerning race. See American Association of Physical Anthropologists, "AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of Race," *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 3 (Sept. 1998): 714-15.

Rather than an identity, worldview, or structure, it is a "*technique that one exercises.*"[5]

Building on Foucault's understanding that persons turn themselves into acting subjects in struggles against various defining regimes of power,[6] Biolsi's four types of *stating, classifying, mixing, and spacing* race technologies allow the researcher to focus on the behaviors and practices with which persons and collectivities define themselves - the actual processes of race-making. While Biolsi's focus is on active "technologies of the self,"[7] no identity is constructed without reference to an "other" and his conceptualization gives the researcher access to "technologies of the other" as well. Thinking of racializing behaviors as technologies wielded by persons or segments of the population in Cincinnati to achieve a particular stating, classifying, mixing, or spacing goal solves some of the difficulties of the static-ness of the noun *identity* articulated by Brubaker and Cooper by acknowledging and identifying the agency of the participants in the behavior, as well as reminding us of the intentions and projects, and the specific goals of the makers that underlie these behaviors.[8]

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[5] Thomas Biolsi, "Race Technologies," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, ed. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004): 400; italics are in the original. While supplying a partial solution to some of the problems with identity mentioned by Brubaker and Cooper, Biolsi never refers to their work.

[6] "This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects." Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 212.

[7] Biolsi, "Race Technologies," 401.

[8] See the discussions of agency and projects in the Introduction and Chapter 2.

C. Prejudice and Race Making in Antebellum Cincinnati

As humans, we create all kinds of categories to differentiate between things because our brains are hard-wired to do so. Categories are strategic and a necessary part of managing our world. That doesn't mean that all categorizing is helpful to us. We make racial categories out of clusters of physical characteristics as one way of sorting "in" and "out" group members. In our distant, pre-urban past this may have been adaptive to human survival in protecting small, vulnerable groups of people. The in-group prejudges the out-group and attaches meaning to an identifying characteristic that they don't share with the out-group, which they attach to the prejudgment, as well.[9] Assigning this prejudgment to all those who share the identifying characteristic is how humans produce racial prejudice.

In nineteenth-century America, with multi-generational, permanent chattel slavery directed only at people of African ancestry, and widely so, the nature of racial prejudice became rather complicated: which came first - Negro slavery or color prejudice? The local discourse on race and prejudice included both points of view. Both dark color and slavery became icons for a whole host of negative characteristics that many persons of European ancestry assigned to those of African ancestry. By the 1820s, slavery and anti-Negro prejudices were so intertwined and interdependent in

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[9] When humans have a thought, particular neural cells are activated in their brains. Hebb's Law, as summarized by neuroscientist Carla Shatz, states that, "*neurons that fire together, wire together.*" See Larry R. Squire and Eric R. Kandel, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules*, 2nd ed. (Greenwood Village, CO: Roberts and Co., 2009), 64-65, and Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself* (New York: Viking, 2007), 63. This simultaneity is what produces what we call a "habit of thought." Each time the two or more elements are brought together, their connection is strengthened, strengthening the habit of thought.

Cincinnati in the non-slave North, as well as in the slave South, that slavery and Negroes functioned as tropes and signifiers for each other.

The white residents of antebellum Cincinnati, like their cohorts in the rest of the United States, inherited many negative and stereotypical ideas about Africans and American Negroes and mulattoes from their European and recent American colonial pasts.[10] Up until the 1810s, the idea that humans were a single species, from a single original human line - known as *monogenism* - was the dominant belief in America, in and out of scientific circles. People generally believed that the different physical characteristics they assigned to so-called races were due to the environments in which they originated, so changing the location of one's residence would change one's physical characteristics. But increasingly in the period leading up to the Civil War, the prevailing racial theories came from *polygenism*. Multiple origins allowed room for characteristics to be inherent and resistant to the effects of environment, education, or moral suasion. This paved the way for the development of essentialist beliefs and constructions of races to overtake those of Enlightenment environmentalism. For southerners, these ideas justified and rationalized slavery; in the north they were the platform for viewing increasing numbers of Negroes and mulattoes in urban areas as

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[10] An accessible overview of these developments in American intellectual and social history before the War of 1812 is Winthrop D. Jordan's *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), especially Parts Four and Five, 315-569. This book is somewhat dated; the author, like many scholars of the 1960s, still believed that races really exist. See "Note on the Concept of Race," 583-585.

foreigners, aliens, and a pathology in the body of the community, the state, and the Republic.[11]

Although this present study is particularly interested in popular, public discourses and practices of racial consciousness and race making, rather than those of scientists or scholars, there is no abiding boundary between them. Natural and social scientists create their ideas in a larger informing socio-cultural context of which they are a contributing part. As sociologist Löic Wacquant has said about race,

> the continual barter between folk and analytical notions, the uncontrolled conflation of social and sociological understandings of "race"… is intrinsic to the category. From its inception, the collective fiction labeled "race"…has always mixed science with common sense and traded on the complicity between them.[12]

In antebellum America, scientific ideas and practices were covered in the local press -- less frequently, but right along with notices of local improvements and the hog prices. Scientific and non-scientific discourses informed, reinforced, and sometimes disagreed with each other; they were not utterly distinct discourses.[13]

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[11] For a discussion of monogenism vs. polygenism in American nineteenth-century thought before the Civil War, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 30-72. For a discussion of polygenism and pro-slavery arguments, see George M. Fredrickson *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 71-96.

[12] Löic Wacquant, "For an Analytic of Racial Domination," *Political Power and Social Theory* 11 (1997): 222-23.

[13] The best recent attempt to manage the popular and scientific discourses on race in this period at the same time and their interactions, including those of African American thinkers, is Bruce Dain's *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Older, but still useful examinations of the scientific construction of race in America are William Stanton's *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) and Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 30-112. A good overview of the development of American Ethnology in the study of Native Americans in this

Provisions of both the Northwest Ordinance (1787), the first U.S. law in the

territory, and the Ohio state constitution (1802) outlawed "involuntary servitude" --

that is, slavery.[14] This makes the state appear progressive, but the debates on these

sections of the Territory's and Ohio's legal codes betray a persistent interest in

introducing Negro slavery into the state.[15] Additionally, the dominant belief, state-

wide, was that slavery *and* "its pernicious effects" should be banned from the state.

Many whites considered the existence of free blacks an "evil side effect" of slavery --

and believed they should be discouraged from settling in Ohio.[16] In many people's

minds, without southern slavery, there would be no free blacks in their northern

communities.[17] Opposition to slavery in antebellum Ohio typically didn't have as

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period is Robert E. Bieder's *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).

[14] Jacob Burnet, *Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-Western Territory* (New York: Appleton and Co; Cincinnati: Derby, Bradley and Co., 1847; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1975), 306-307; Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 18-23; Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 7.

[15] Burnet, *Notes,* 332-333; Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 18-23; and Middleton, *The Black Laws*, 7-17and 18-41. In 1842 a correspondent for *The Liberator,* who had been traveling in Lawrence and Gallia counties in Ohio, wrote that he had only met two abolitionists. But he had "met with many, who said to me that they would hold slaves here if the laws permitted…" See "The Cause in Ohio," *Liberator*, Aug. 5, 1842. Gallia and Lawrence counties are several counties east of Cincinnati, along the Ohio River, across from, what was then, Virginia.

[16] Governor Thomas Corwin, speaking to the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society in 1833, and desiring to show that Ohio had done all that could be done to keep Negroes out of the state since its origins in 1803 - and now needed colonization schemes - stated that the anti-slavery provisions of the state Constitution were intended to keep its inhabitants "forever relieved, not only from the positive, but from all the incidental mischiefs [sic] of negro slavery." American Colonization Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States* (Georgetown, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1833), vii.

[17] It is a common fallacy among Americans of all ethnic backgrounds that all Americans of African ancestry whose ancestors arrived in America before Emancipation in 1865 are the descendants of slaves. There were a small number of people who came to the Colonies or the United States as free

much to do with feelings of moral repugnance at keeping persons of African ancestry as property as it did with the belief that slavery was bad for white people, degrading their work ethic and sense of utility: "…it would ultimately retard the settlement, and check the prosperity of the Territory, by making labor less reputable and creating feelings and habits, unfriendly to…simplicity and industry." And they believed slavery would leave them with an unintelligent and ignorant, lazy, dependent, criminal, and profligate black population who brought disharmony to the communities in which they lived, in or out of slavery, because they looked and behaved differently than the dominant white populations.[18] Without blacks, many whites assumed themselves to be homogenously harmonious, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. Hatred of slavery didn't often translate into a belief in a diverse community.

Prejudice against Negroes and mulattoes dominated at the state level from the state's origins. Although discriminatory measures were successfully fought in the first Constitutional Convention (1802), subsequent additions to the Constitution in 1803, 1804, and 1807 systematically whittled away civil rights for African Americans. The only delegates to be consistently re-elected to all of these Conventions were anti-Negro, indicating the white population in the state favored policies that restricted the

people, or bought out an indenture soon after arriving, and they and their families were never in slavery. However small a number, their histories should not be written out of our accounts of free black populations.

[18] Burnet, *Notes*, 306-307. According to one local colonizationist, the problem with slavery was that it enfeebled whites, making them lazy. Slaves were furniture, mere household items: "The Negro has become an essential item in the domestic arrangements of every family. Without him every comfort of domestic life would at once disappear." This is why they must be relocated elsewhere. See "Office of the Cincinnati Colonization Society…," *Cincinnati American*, Sept. 27, 1831.

civil rights of Negroes and mulattoes more than the first delegates did.[19] By the 1807

Constitutional Convention those defined as Negro, mulatto, colored, or black were left

without the vote, the right to testify against whites in a trial, or the right to serve in the

military or on juries - responsibilities Americans considered obligations for citizens.

Additionally, Ohio's Black Codes, or Black Laws, added the requirement that to live

in the state Negroes and mulattoes had to carry "signed and notarized" proof that they

were not slaves, known as "free papers," and secure a $500 bond from two residents as

a surety against future dependency on their county of residence. Lacking the bond and

witnesses, they could be deported to their last known out-of-state residence at any

time. Employers were also criminally liable for hiring African Americans without

checking for their "papers" and evidence that the bond had been paid.[20]

The Black Laws were the core of white Ohioans' and Cincinnatians' legal

construction of race. In highly organized societies, law codifies racialized social

categories, defining their content and boundaries, and stating their respective

privileges and disadvantages,[21] as well as punishments for violations of these social

protocols. Through both coercive and ideological means, law constructs races with

persons as "both conscious and unwitting participants."[22] Ohio's Black Laws put

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[19] Helen M. Thurston, "The 1802 Constitutional Convention and Status of the Negro," *Ohio History* 81, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 36.

[20] Middleton, *The Black Laws*, 47-56; Thurston, "The 1802 Constitutional Convention and Status of the Negro," 35-36.

[21] Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 9-10.

[22] Ibid., 13 and Chapter 5, "The Legal Construction of Race," 111-153.

structures in place that defined and limited the kinds of interactions allowable under the law, based on the existing racial prejudices of the delegates to the conventions and their constituencies. Differential treatment for Negroes and mulattoes was not only allowed, but required under these laws - giving potent structuring sanction to whites to hold prejudicial attitudes about, and to use prejudicial practices against, African Americans.

The racial prejudice and discriminatory practices encoded in the Black Laws also constituted a form of *structural violence* or the *violences of everyday life*, "those entrenched processes of ordering the social world and making (or realizing) culture that themselves are forms of violence: violence that is multiple, mundane, and perhaps all the more fundamental because it is the hidden or secret violence out of which images of people are shaped, experiences of groups are coerced, and agency itself is engendered."[23] This structural violence, in turn, created *social suffering*[24] among African Americans all over Ohio, and it was one of the important ways that state and local government enacted policies that helped to structure the practices which white residents deployed to create whiteness itself, as well as white spaces and places in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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[23] Arthur Kleinman, "The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence," in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 239.

[24] *Social suffering* results from "the devastating injuries that social force inflicts on human experience...from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people, and reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems." Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, "Introduction," in the special issue on Social Suffering, *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (Winter 1996): xi.

Despite the narrative of no-slavery in Ohio's constitution, black and white

residents of Cincinnati were well acquainted with the sights and sounds of slavery.

Kentucky, a slave state, was literally just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati's

wharves. A contemporary estimated that farmers and others in southern Ohio had

hired an estimated two thousand slaves from owners in Kentucky and Virginia during

the 1830s. Notices of "runaways" were often in the local newspapers; bounty-driven

slave-catchers frequented the city looking for them -- it proved to be a good excuse to

kidnap free Negroes and mulattoes and sell them into slavery. The threat of being

captured and "sold down the river" to New Orleans was constant and unrelenting --

and real -- for Negroes and mulattoes in antebellum Cincinnati.[25]

Slaves were often brought into the city by visitors from the South, and

typically housed in the black-owned Dumas Hotel, where they often had access to

information about connections to the Underground Railroad.[26] Local residents

witnessed slaves being driven to market like cattle, especially near the wharves.[27] In

high profile cases, local lawyer, and later Supreme Court Chief Justice, Salmon P.

Chase defended several fugitive slaves whose owners had knowingly brought them

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[25] Rufus King, *Ohio, First Fruits of the Ordinance of 1787* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1888), 364. For a good discussion of the consequences for Negroes, mulattoes, and whites of slave catchers prowling Ohio, especially in the south along the Ohio River, see Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws*, 92-97.

[26] Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 150-151; Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., and Vicki Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 116.

[27] Letter to the Editor, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ohio" [from the *Philanthropist*], *Liberator*, Dec. 11, 1840.

into Ohio - a non-slave state.[28] Residents were aware that slaves were kept in the city

at various times.[29] In 1834, white abolitionists working in Cincinnati's black

community reported, that "of the almost 3000 blacks in C[incinnati] more than three

fourths of the adults are emancipated slaves, who worked out their own freedom" and

that "it's probable that at least one third of the adult blacks in this city, are employed

earning money to buy their friends and relatives now in slavery."[30] Slavery was not

too far away for most Cincinnatians - temporally or spatially.

Local improver, booster, and physician Dr. Daniel Drake discussed blacks in

the city as early as 1815 in his *Natural and Statistical View of Cincinnati*. Admitting

that Ohio's "Black Codes" restricted the legal rights of African Americans in the state

and believing the social distinctions between whites and blacks were a "dark effect" of

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[28] Chase's first "fugitive slave" case, the 1837 "Matilda Case," was not successful for the fugitive; Chase won an acquittal on appeal on a technicality for abolitionist James G. Birney, who had hired Matilda, who appeared to be white, as a maid in his home. In his second case, in 1841, he successfully defended Mary Towns from the charge of being a fugitive slave on the grounds that she could not have been a slave in Ohio. Fredrick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), 31-36; Stephen Middleton, *Ohio and the Antislavery Activities of Attorney Salmon Portland Chase, 1830-*1849 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 92-102, 104-106; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50-54, 55-57, 62-63. The Middleton study has quite a bit of detail concerning the Matilda case.

[29] Gamiliel Bailey, Birney's replacement as editor of *The Philanthropist* while he campaigned for the Presidency on the new anti-slavery Liberty Party ticket, cataloged a number of situations of slaves being held in defiance of the laws of Ohio: slaves "kept" for a Kentucky relative, buying a slave to free them and never applying for manumission papers, and just plain bringing a slave into the city and keeping them there in slavery - including a young male slave held by a local minister. "Slavery in Cincinnati," *Philanthropist*, Nov. 11, 1840.

[30][Theodore] Weld to Lewis Tappan, Lane Seminary,[Cincinnati, Ohio], March 18, 1834, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah* Grimké, ed. Gilbert Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond. (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1934; repr. 1965), I, 134; Henry B. Stanton, "Great Debate at Lane Seminary," in *Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati; Speech of James A. Thome; and Letter of the Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Cox against the American Colonization Society* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834): 6. CHS This document is also available from the Oberlin College website, at www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/LaneDebates/.

slavery, his description of local blacks parallels the imaginary Negro in the minds of

many whites:

> In no town of the state is there so great a proportion of black population, as in
> Cincinnati.…At present the number of blacks and mulattoes does not exceed
> 200, counting all shades and ages. They are a thoughtless and good humored
> community, garrulous and profligate; generally disinclined to laborious
> occupations, and prone to the performance of light and menial drudgery. A few
> exercise the humbler trades, and some appear to have formed a correct
> conception of the objects and value of property, and are both industrious and
> economical. A large proportion are reputed, and perhaps correctly, to practice
> petty thefts.[31]

Drake grudgingly accepts that "a few" blacks work in trades, own property, and

understand money. But as his imagery of local Negroes begins to diversify and

individuate, admitting that some owned property and were "industrious and

economical" -- approaching what real Negroes in the community were doing -- he

counters with a belief that a large percentage of blacks are petty thieves! Even when

ambivalent, he ultimately justified Ohio's Black Laws to his readers.

In the 1820s the public discourse about a perceived "negro-problem" in

Cincinnati increased. In a piece on "present population" and "future prospects," local

magazine editor and booster Timothy Flint nervously believed that, "the blacks

increase still more rapidly than the whites."[32] From 1826 to 1829 there was an

appreciable increase in the local Negro and mulatto population, to an antebellum high

of 9.35 percent of the population in 1829. A fear of the number of blacks would

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[31] Daniel Drake, *Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country...*
(Cincinnati: Looker and Wallace, 1815), 171-172. Microfiche

[32] [Timothy Flint], "Present Population and Future Prospects of the Western Country," *Western Monthly
Review* 1, no. 6 (Oct. 1827): 332.

remain a local refrain throughout the period between 1827 and 1841, and beyond, even

as their numbers continued to go down throughout the antebellum period.[33] By the late

1820s there was widespread local support for colonization, preferably in Africa, as a

solution to the perceived increase in Negroes and mulattoes in the city. In an article

reprinted in the *Cincinnati Chronicle* by editor and booster E.D. Mansfield, the author

believed it was *necessary* to ship all blacks in the United States to Africa. He was

convinced that once blacks outnumber whites they would necessarily take revenge in a

race war against whites: "Shall we then supinely await the bursting of this storm of

blood and carnage upon us…?"[34]

Fear of numbers, expressed in overblown rhetoric, was also an important

element of the local job-competition discourse of whites:

> Ohio is being made a depot for all the free, decrepid [*sic*], and infirm, blacks, who are likely to become paupers on the public. Such as deprive the unfortunate white from procuring a decent livelihood by being brought in competition with the baser portion of blacks. We see it stated that 21 blacks from North Carolina recently passed through Cincinnati on their way to Mercer county in this state. Some six or eight from Virginia have recently come to this place. Is Ohio to be overrun by the hoardes [*sic*] of blacks from the South?[35]

What is true is that the African American population in antebellum Ohio grew at

approximately the same rate as the overall population, remaining at about 1 percent

from 1800 to 1860. They gravitated to cities, as opportunities for jobs and social

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[33] See Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2.

[34] "Liberia" [from the *New England Review*], *Cincinnati Chronicle and Literary Gazette*, July 4, 1829.

[35] "Fear of Competition" [from the *Ohio Sun*], *Philanthropist*, Aug. 13, 1839.

relationships to build a sense of community were greatest there.[36] But even in

Cincinnati, the antebellum Ohio city with the greatest number of African Americans,

after the 1829 riots drove more than 1,000 Negro and mulatto residents and their

families out of the city, their proportion in the city's population dropped below 5

percent, except for a brief period in 1835, and did not rise above 5 percent until after

1900 (see Table 4.1).[37] White Cincinnatians' sense of being "over-run" with blacks is

undoubtedly a reaction to their apparent visibility at all in a community seeking to

minimize their participation in everyday life of the city.

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[36] Allan Peskin, "Introduction" in John Malvin, *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*, ed. Allan Peskin (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988), 6-7.

[37] Also see Table 2.2; the figures for 1835 in thus table indicate that African Americans comprised 7.5 percent of the population in the city for that year. But these figures are estimates, and very anecdotal. The figures for 1840 (2,258) are less than those for 1835 (2,500), although there are no indications that large numbers of African American residents left the city as a result of the 1836 riots; so the 1835 figures seem exaggerated.

Table 4.1 Population Statistics of Cincinnati, Ohio, by Decades, 1850-1930[38]

YEAR	BLACKS AND MULATTOES	WHITES	OTHERS	TOTAL POPULATION	% OF BLACKS
1840	2,258	44,124	n/a	46,382	4.9%
1850	3,237	112,198	n/a	115,435	2.8%
1860	3,731	157,313	n/a	161,044	2.3%
1870	5,900	210,335	5	216,239	2.7%
1880	8,179	246,912	48	255,139	3.2%
1890	11,684	285,224	n/a	296,908	3.9%
1900	14,482	311,404	16	325,902	4.4%
1910	19,639	343,919	33	363,591	5.4%
1920	30,079	371,079	89	401,247	7.5%
1930	47,818	386,986	16,356	451,160	10.6%

Sources: Cist, Cincinnati in 1841, 34; U.S. Census Bureau, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), http://www2.census.gov/prod2/ decennial/ documents/ 1850a-27 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), 830; U.S. Census Bureau, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the... Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), 381; U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistics of the Population of the United States...Compiled from...the Ninth Census (1870)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), http://www2.census.gov/prod2/ decennial/documents/1870a-01 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), 231; U.S Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census of the United States...1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), http://www2.census.gov/ prod2/decennial/ documents/ 36894832vich03 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), I:208; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States...1920*,) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), http://www2.census.gov/ prod2/decennial/ documents/ 41084484v3ch07 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), I:784; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), http://www2.census.gov/ prod2/ decennial/ documents/ 10612982v3p2ch05 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010), I: 474.

Antebellum Cincinnatians engaged in a fully variegated discourse on racial prejudice - from denying it or defending it, to denouncing it as a curse on society. Some of the rare cases of local women participating in public discourse on community issues are associated with this issue - pro and con. There was an ongoing conversation about racial prejudice in the city - not everyone agreed. It was part of the larger public

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[38] The figures for 1880, 1890, 1900, and 1910 are all from the Thirteenth Census (1910).

conversation about race. Public conversations in Cincinnati about prejudice are some of the best sites for viewing the components of race making in the city.

The Ohio Colonization Society spoke for many white Ohioans in insisting that difference in skin color was the reason for white prejudice against blacks and their "degraded condition":

> In Greece and Rome…emancipated slaves became useful citizens, because nature had branded them with no characteristic difference of complexion. But can the Ethiopian change his skin? A Manumitted slave remains a negro still, and must ever continue in a state of political bondage; and it is obvious that he who is deprived of the inherent rights of a citizen can never become a loyal subject.[39]

But they give no explanation of why black or brown skin should expose a person to prejudice - and perpetual slavery.

The other major theory of the cause of prejudice was that it was due to slavery. The African American intellectual Hosea Easton notes:

> Most people suppose the existence of color to be the cause of malignant prejudice… [and that] color is an insurmountable barrier, over which there can be no social or political relation formed between white and colored Americans....The true cause of this prejudice is slavery.…Color cannot be an efficient cause of the malignant prejudice of the whites against the blacks; it is only an imaginary cause at the most. It serves only as a trait by which a principle is identified.[40]

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[39] Ohio State Colonization Society, *A Brief Exposition of the Views of the Society for the Colonization of Free Persons of Color in Africa* (Columbus, [OH]: Office of the Monitor, 1827); repr. *Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 7, nos. 2 and 3 (June and September 1912): 82-83.

[40] Hosea Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States and the Prejudice Exercised towards Them*… (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837; reprint, Philadelphia: Rhistorical Publications, 1969), 37, 38. The Rev. Hosea Easton was a black-identified intellectual of mixed African, Wampanoag, Narragansett, and European ancestry, living in New York in the 1830s. See the introduction in George R. Price and James Stewart, eds., *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 3, 5.

By the late 1820s slavery and color were so intertwined that they easily stood for each in the minds of many white Americans, North and South. In many aspects of culture, from child-rearing to literature to law, white Americas' beliefs and feelings about slavery became incorporated into their beliefs and feelings about people of African ancestry generally.

James Thome, a local abolitionist, son of wealthy slave-owners in Kentucky, and a student at Lane Seminary, spoke to the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1834 about his upbringing and learning prejudice in the slave South:

> The associations of youth and the attachments of growing years; prejudices, opinions and habits forming and fixing during my whole life, conspire to make me a Kentuckian indeed....I breathed my first breath in the atmosphere of slavery; I was suckled at its breast and dandled on its knee. Black, black, black was before me at every step; the sure badge of infamy. The sympathies of nature, even in their spring tide, were dried up; compassion was deadened, and the heart was steeled by repeated scenes of cruelty and of oft-taught lessons of the colored man's inferiority.[41]

A supporter of immediate abolition in 1834, Thome had previously been a member of the Colonization Society. In criticizing it, he admitted that, "its direct influence upon my mind was to lessen my conviction of the evil of slavery, and to deepen and sanctify my prejudice against the colored race."[42]

Those from the South were not the only white Cincinnatians raised in a culture viewing Negroes and mulattoes as inferior to whites. Hosea Easton described the

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[41] James A. Thome, "Speech of Mr. James A. Thome, of Kentucky," Delivered at the first anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the City of New York, May 6, 1834, in *Debate at the Lane Seminary*, 7.

[42] Tome, "Speech," 7.

discursive practices adults employed to construct race for young children and begin

their training in racially prejudicial thinking and behaving all over the North:

> Negro or nigger, is an opprobrious term, employed to impose contempt upon
> them [blacks] as an inferior race, and also to express their deformity of person.
> Nigger lips, nigger shins, and nigger heels, are phrases universally common
> among the juvenile class of society, and full well understood by them; they are
> learned early to think of these expressions as they are intended to apply to
> colored people, and as being expressive or descriptive of the odious qualities of
> their mind and body. These impressions received by the young, grow with their
> growth, and strengthen with their strength.[43]

Easton is describing what Leonard Cassuto calls the "racial grotesque." Its use

is an important element of race making in Cincinnati, as elsewhere -- it is where

imaginary Negroes (and Indians) are made. The grotesque is a liminal construction by

members of a self-defined group who want to see members of another group (against

which they have identified themselves) as non-human objects, but are, of course, stuck

with their humanity in the very act of denying it. Because they can not escape the

knowledge of their object's humanity, they construct these "others" as grotesque -

neither human nor object, but something in between.[44] Because the grotesque is where

we can see the breakdown of the construction of the imaginary Negro, it betrays itself

-- which betrays its maker as having made it. It is a sign of the kind of hidden self-

knowledge and guilt that creates inner conflict, within persons and communities, and

frequently leads to violence as a relief and resolution to the conflict. In Cincinnati, the

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[43] Easton, *Treatise*, 40.

[44] Leonard Cassuto, *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), xv.

presence of the racial grotesque, in many guises, is a sign of deep anxiety on the part

of its white makers -- of all classes and genders.

Child-rearing that relied on a racial grotesque as part of discipline was

common in all classes in the mid-Atlantic and New England states, from which most

of Cincinnati's residents had emigrated - as well as in the South:

> The universality of this kind of education is well known…go to sleep; if you
> don't the old *nigger* will car[ry] you off; don't you cry…the old *niggers'*
> coming…. In some families it is almost the only method of correcting their
> children…if they do thus and so, they will be poor or ignorant as a *nigger*; or
> that they will be black as a *nigger...*they will have hair, lips, feet…like a
> *nigger*…. See nigger's thick lips - see his flat nose…are sounds emanating
> from little urchins…. Higher classes are frequently instructed…by referring
> them to the nigger-seat, and are sometimes threatened with being made to sit
> with the niggers, if they do not behave…. The same or similar use is made of
> nigger pews or seats in meeting-houses.... Cuts and placards descriptive of the
> negroe's [sic] deformity, are everywhere displayed to the observation of the
> young, with corresponding broken lingo…. The effect of this instruction is
> most disastrous upon the mind of the community; having been instructed from
> youth to look upon a black man in no other light than a slave, and having
> associated with that idea the low calling of a slave, they cannot look upon him
> in any other light.[45]

Hosea Easton's comments above expose what many white Americans were

(and still are) loathe to admit publicly - their racial prejudice and how they pass that

prejudice horizontally to each other as culture. In the process of deploying the stating

technologies of the racial grotesque, they establish the bases for further deployment of

classifying technologies - where people are not only niggers if classify-able as

Negroes or mulattoes, but like niggers for their behaviors, even if white. This

reinforces association of the behavior with African Americans, as well as making a

new designation possible for whites *behaving like blacks*. Those persons making race

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[45] Easton, *Treatise*, 40-41, 43, 108; the italics are in the original.

bring these categories into existence by employing a spacing technology, such as the nigger pew or seat. Here is an early example of race being tied to place: the nigger pew is both a graphic statement of a separate place for blacks and for whites-acting-like-blacks, as well as a spacing technology for creating the categories of black/nigger, white, and nigger-like. The category of white is not stable -- it can fragment into white and nigger-like, which is perilously close to being black, itself.

One cannot be assured of being white -- its boundaries have to be constantly patrolled and its content has to be constantly reiterated and reconstructed. Members of Cincinnati's white male elite were in the habit of using the threat of *blackness* to manage each others' behavior -- indicating just how malleable and uncertain whiteness was at the time. Cincinnati lawyer and booster Edward D. Mansfield described Martin Baum, a local businessman and entrepreneur from Germany active in the city in the 1820s, as "dark and swarthy in complexion." Judge Jacob Burnet, state jurist and Chairman of the local colonization society in the vignette that opened this chapter, also had dark skin. A friend, Major Zeigler, a Prussian officer living in the city who was also "like Baum, of very dark complexion," habitually referred to Burnet and Baum as "his two black brothers."[46]

Another local duo of "swarthy" white, male elites, both lawyers, who referred to each other as the "Black Brothers," is described by fellow-lawyer and judge A.G.W. Carter. One was Nathaniel "Nat" Pendleton, a native of Virginia, elected as a Whig to Congress in 1840, "distinguished by a swarthy complexion, almost like that of an

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[46] Edward Deering Mansfield, *Personal Memories, Social, Political and Literary, 1803-1843* (Cincinnati: Robert Clark, 1879; repr. New York: Arno Press: 1970), 147-148.

Othello." The other was Tom Corwin, who was elected Ohio's Governor as a Whig in 1840 and was "distinguished for being black and tawny like Nat and Othello." The two men campaigned together in 1840, notorious as *black Tom and Nat...it was hard to say which was the blacker of the two.*" In a stump speech Corwin apparently told a story about a day the two of them approached the entrance to a "grand masquerade festivity" in New Orleans. They were able to buy tickets, but when they walked up the stairs to the hall, the doorkeeper kept Pendleton out, growling, "Stop - stop!...you cannot go in here - colored people are not allowed to enter here!" He looked Corwin over closely, then pronounced, "Oh, you can go in; you are a *white* man, you are, and not at all like that other fellow!" A political joke, Corwin believed that this settled, once and for all "the much mooted question. My friend here, *is* the darker horse!"[47]

This incident indicates a contradiction in the thinking of local white Cincinnatians. Race cannot both be an essential aspect of a person that is perceivable clearly by others and be able to be manipulated by others. Clearly Thomas Corwin was aware of the existence of "white Negroes," African Americans without recognizable signs of their African ancestry, and used his assumption that the doorman would draw on the same knowledge that "white Negroes" existed to play a practical joke on his fellow-Whig friend. Corwin was depending on white prejudice against Negroes due to assumed essential characteristics, as well as on knowing that race was not essential and was fungibly movable from person to person. Many whites were afraid that "phantom Negroes" might be lurking inside apparent white people, which allowed

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[47] A.G.W. Carter, *The Old Court House: Reminiscences and Anecdotes of the Courts and Bar of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thompson, 1880), 45-47.

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Corwin to harness the possibility that one might be hiding inside of Pendleton to strengthen the boundaries of his own whiteness and its privileges. Next to Pendleton, swarthy Corwin was suddenly whiter.

Playing this kind of practical joke is also a form of symbolic violence. By jeopardizing Pendleton's identity - in this case, others' sense of his social positioning - Corwin's joke threatened to jeopardize both his physical safety on the street at night in a strange city and his chances of raising money and being elected. This joke functioned as a categorizing and spacing race making technology against Pendleton, allowing Corwin to more freely use it as a mixing race making technology for his own benefit; he was then free to mix with other white people at the party. Corwin appears to have been at least partially aware of the ability to use race as a tool in pursuing other strategies, and in playing *serious games* within local Cincinnati society. During Cincinnati's race and anti-abolition riots, race would again be used to play serious games, "involving the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials."[48] Racial prejudice was an important tool in the local repertoire of race making techniques to achieve other goals.

Men and women of all classes in antebellum Cincinnati were involved in the public practices of race making as prejudice. Booster and improver of women's education Catharine Beecher defended anti-Negro attitudes, objecting to immediate abolitionists' desire to "remove the prejudices of the whites against the blacks, on

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[48] Sherry B. Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 144.

account of natural peculiarities." Since "prejudice is an *unreasonable* and *groundless* dislike of persons or things," Beecher believes that the feelings of whites aren't prejudice, since their feelings apparently are not groundless. "The worst and more irritating method [of removing prejudice] that could be attempted would be to attack a man as guilty of sin, as unreasonable, as ungenerous, or as proud, for allowing a certain prejudice." She feels accusations of "pride…selfish indifference, of unchristian neglect" against whites were unfounded: "This is the sure way to produce anger, self-justification, and an increase in strength of prejudice, against that which has caused him rebuke and irritation."[49]

Operating from an assumption of the white privilege to decide and discriminate, Beecher believes abolitionists should "work to increase [blacks'] intelligence, their usefulness, their respectability, their meekness, gentleness, and benevolence" -- then whites would be more amenable to changing their feelings. In other words, blacks should appeal to white pity.[50] Telling them they were prejudiced "tended to irritate the whites, and to increase their prejudice against the blacks."[51] The important issue for Beecher is whether whites are offended, not whether their actions

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[49] Catharine E. Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837; repr. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 26-27. This essay was originally a response to abolitionist Angelina Grimké's *Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States* (1836), chastising her for public appeals against slavery that she thought were inappropriate for a woman to pursue. Grimké answered in a series of twelve letters, published in the *Emancipator* and the *Liberator*; in 1838 they were republished as *Letters to Catharine E. Beecher in Reply to an Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*. See Milton Rugoff, *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 179-180.

[50] For an extended discussion of the problems with this paternalistic attitude at the core of much of the practice of benevolence, see Susan Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), especially "Introduction," 1-24.

[51] Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 27.

constitute prejudice, or violate their own stated values; whatever their values happen to be, they are assumed to be correct.

It didn't seem to be Negroes and mulattoes that bothered many whites -- as long as they were slaves and under the control of a white person. Despite wide-spread abhorrence of slavery, there was very little being done to eradicate it in the United States before the Civil War. It was free blacks that bothered whites. Hosea Easton noted the unique quality of prejudice against free blacks in antebellum America:

> If [a black man] should chance to be found in any other sphere of action than that of a slave, he magnifies to a monster of wonderful dimensions, so large that they cannot be made to believe that he is a man and a brother. Neither can they be made to believe it would be safe to admit him into stages, steam-boat cabins, and tavern dining-rooms.…Mechanical shops, stores, and school rooms are all too small for his entrance as a man; if he is a slave, his corporeality is so diminished as to admit him into ladies' parlors, and into small private carriages without being disgustful on account of his deformity, or without producing any other discomfiture. Thus prejudice seems to posses a magical power, by which it makes a being appear most odious one moment, and the next, beautiful - at one moment too large to be on board a steam-boat, the next, so small as to be convenient almost anywhere.[52]

It was as though the very idea of a *free black person* was, itself, racially grotesque to many northern whites, including many of the residents of antebellum Cincinnati.

D. Anti-Prejudice Discourse and Practice in Cincinnati

The most frequent source of anti-prejudice discourse in antebellum America was the anti-slavery periodical and pamphlet press. White immediate abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, James Birney, Theodore Weld, and Garrit Smith had all been colonizationists until they heard African Americans' emphatic criticisms of the efforts of the American Colonization Society to remove free blacks from the

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[52] Easton, *Treatise*, 43.

United States, and took them seriously. They began to spend time with African Americans, talking, working, praying, and eating with them, staying in each others' homes. Close interactions and friendships between African American activists and some white abolitionists changed the latter's approach to abolition -- the key to fighting slavery and discrimination towards free blacks was to fight white prejudice and to fight for racial equality. Abolitionists began to focus more of their work on teaching in schools, writing petitions, and helping in other ways in free black communities in the North. And they began a serious attack on prejudice which included their own self-examination. As historian Paul Goodman has shown, immediate abolitionism in the antebellum period represents the first cross-class, interracial efforts to combat racial prejudice in the United States.[53] Both Theodore Weld and James Birney were important participants in Cincinnati's discourse on race and prejudice. Weld is discussed later in this chapter; Birney and his abolition newspaper *The Philanthropist* figure prominently in the riots covered in Chapter 6 of this study.

Among the occasional Cincinnati voices challenging the dominant cultural view of prejudice and not originating in the anti-slavery press was "Ida," the writer of a six-page essay James Hall published in his widely-read *Western Monthly Magazine*. Ida argued that human improvement was "human nature" and tied patriotism to a more inclusive sense of siblinghood in the human family:

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[53] Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

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> The revolving planet, is *our country*, and every human being inhabiting it is our brother, no longer led by prejudice or deceived by life's illusions, every faculty of our soul, expanded by universal benevolence, and strengthened by moral discipline, should be directed to the great object of enlightening the still benighted portion of our race, and securing the virtue, freedom and happiness of the whole human family.[54]

This piece, lengthy and never commented on, claimed a global position in the discourse on prejudice, standing in the monogenesis camp in the debate about single versus multiple human origins, and framing the argument within universal improvement of every human in the "family." Hall, a municipal judge, was ambivalent, or selective, about prejudice. He was anti-abolitionist and didn't support free blacks, and yet he wrote a well-constructed article on Indian-hating, and he did publish Ida's six-page essay against prejudice.[55] When it comes to their attitudes about race, many antebellum Cincinnatians are clearly not easy to categorize.

There has been a tendency, even within scholarship on this period in American history, to relegate prejudice and racist discourse and other practices to the idea that "everybody was racist or prejudiced at that time." The primary sources, however, clearly show that there was a discourse in the community, a conversation with oppositions and resistances, about race and prejudice, and about just who Negroes and mulattoes, and whites, were. It was these differences of opinion in antebellum

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[54] Ida [pseud.], "Reverie. By A Lady," *Western Monthly Magazine* 2 (marked 3), no. 17 (May 1834): 261-262; italics are in the original. This piece appeared without comment from Hall or anyone else. Despite its atypical message, it elicited no response - perhaps as much for the author's assumed gender as for the point of view it presents.

[55] James Hall, "Indian Hating," *Western Monthly Magazine* 1, no. 9 (Sept.. 1833): 403-404. Hall had shown a prior willingness to publish female authors in the magazine, including several who were members of the Semi-Colon and Buckeye Clubs, such as Harriet Beecher and Caroline Lee Hentz. See the discussion of the Semi-Colon Club in Chapter 3.

Cincinnati that fed the growing conflict in the city over race between the 1820s and the 1840s. There *were* anti-prejudice and anti-racist discourses in Cincinnati - as well as anti-racist practices that seriously threatened the imaginary Negro that many whites carried around in their heads and assumed, or desired, to be real. These anti racist practices were *mixing* technologies that put real white people together with real African Americans and promoted the interaction of people of all shades of color and cultural orientations - and barriers between people began to break down.

The clearest, and most controversial, examples of anti-racist practices in antebellum Cincinnati come from students at Lane Theological Seminary and their male and female associates. Lane Seminary, sited several miles outside Cincinnati in Walnut Hills, is best known for the series of presentations and discussions on slavery, abolition, and colonization in February and March 1834, often referred to as the "Lane Seminary Debates." Student Henry Stanton noted, "A flourishing Colonization Society has existed among us almost from the foundation of the institution." The student discussions resulted in the addition of a student Anti-Slavery Society, formed March 10, 1834.[56] The students and the public listened to speakers present the pros and cons of two questions, each discussed for nine consecutive nights: 1. "Ought the people of the Slaveholding States to abolish slavery immediately?" and 2. "Are the doctrines, tendencies, and measures of the American Colonization Society, and the influence of its principal supporters, such as to render it worthy of the patronage of the Christian

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[56] Stanton, "Great Debate at Lane Seminary," 3, 7. This document describes the debates in detail, from the students' perspective.

public?"[57] The majority of student participants, decidedly anti-slavery but pro-

colonization when the discussions began, voted in favor of immediate abolition and

against colonization at their conclusion.[58]

The results of the eighteen days of discussions were troubling to Lane's anti-

slavery/pro-colonization faculty and trustees, but it was the subsequent activities of

abolitionist students in Cincinnati's African American community that bothered

President Lyman Beecher and the majority of the Faculty and the Board of Trustees

the most. It was this aspect of the Lane students that was continually referenced in the

press in the years following the debates. New Englander Theodore Weld was the clear

leader of the abolitionist students.[59] He believed that he was threatened with expulsion

after the debates for advocating the doctrine of "persons are to be treated according to

their intrinsic worth *irrespective of Color, shape, condition* or what not, " and

> mostly because I acted out this principle from day to day in my intercourse
> with the Colored people….If I ate in the City, it was at *their* tables. If I slept in
> the City it was at their homes. If I attended parties, it was *theirs - weddings -*

[57] Stanton, "Great Debate at Lane Seminary," 3. Lyman Beecher, President of the institution, initially told the students to "Go ahead, Boys" when they asked permission to hold the discussions. Subsequent conversations with faculty members convinced him to ask them to postpone such controversial conversations until "the subject could be examined freely and openly." The students went ahead with their plans. See Lawrence T. Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Antislavery in Antebellum America* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 78, 79.

[58] Stanton, "Great Debate at Lane Seminary": 4, 5. Full accounts of the eighteen days of discussions and their aftermath can be found in Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 74-122; Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1957), 64-78; and Lesick, *The Lane Rebels*, 70-166.

[59] Lane President Lyman Beecher was both awed by and a bit jealous of Weld: "Weld was a genius….but uneducated….In the estimation of the class, he was president. He took the lead of the whole institution….they thought he was a god. We never quarreled, however." Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865), 1: 321.

theirs - Funerals - theirs - Religious meetings - theirs…. During the 18 months
that I spent at Lane Seminary I *did not attend Dr. Beecher's Church once*.[60]

He had been steadily working in the black community - *amalgamating* - mixing, and

encouraging his fellow students to do likewise, since his initial arrival with the first

class of theological students in 1832.

These young people were already notorious in the city for mingling freely with

Negroes and mulattoes; after the Lane debates, the scope and depth of their

involvement increased. Early in 1834 four young women from New York -- Phoebe

Mathews, Emeline Bishop, Lucy Wright, and Susan Lowe -- responded to an ad in the

New York Evangelist and volunteered to go to Cincinnati to set up classes for women

and girls and do "social work" in the African American community. In a letter to

Theodore Weld, Samuel Wells writes of them:

> The Sisters are doing nobly. They are everywhere received with open arms.
> They visit, eat, and sleep with their people.…They attend the meetings of the

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[60] Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan [Rochester, N.Y., March 9, 1836], in Gilbert and Dumont, eds.
Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld…: 1: 270, 273; the italics are in the original. After a summer
vacation break, during which Beecher failed to return from a fund-raising trip to Boston in time to
participate in any discussions, the Faculty and Trustees disbanded the anti-slavery and colonization
societies, imposed a gag rule on any discussions of the issues, and threatened the abolitionist students
with expulsion. The students asked for and received honorable resignations and left the school. With the
school's only African American student, James Bradley, and their only supporting Trustee Asa Mahan,
in tow, they were successfully integrated into the new Oberlin Institute (to become Oberlin College). In
addition to the works by Abzug, Barnes, and Lesick already cited (see note 54 in this chapter) and
Stanton's firsthand account of the debates themselves, for the students' perspective on the debates'
aftermath, see John J. Miter, "A Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane
Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with That Institution" (Cincinnati: [n.p.], 1834). CHS This
document was reprinted in the *Liberator*, Jan. 10, 1835. The report on the faculty position, signed by
Lyman Beecher, Thomas Biggs, and Calvin Stowe, was published as "Statement of the Faculty
Concerning the Late Difficulties in the Lane Seminary," in *Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the
Cincinnati Lane Seminary: Together with the Laws of the Institution and a Catalogue of the Officers
and Students* (Cincinnati: Corey and Fairbank, 1834), 5-47.

coloured people more or less every Sabbath which produces a very favorable impression upon them.[61]

Three weeks later Wells wrote that not only had they organized twenty of the African American women into a Dorcas Society, but had clearly come to the point of view that "it is expedient to board in Coloured families, and I am inclined to think that in the spring…they will take that course."[62] With renewed energy for improvement projects in the black community after the debates, Lane students and "The Sisters" raised money and started a Lyceum in the community, as well as other new schools. Other Cincinnati residents noticed Lane students walking, talking, and sometimes eating and sleeping in the local black community, acting on Weld's principle that "faith without works is dead."[63]

Lane President Lyman Beecher was particularly critical of the students' working and teaching in the black community - for their interactions. He cautioned them, in particular, about their mixing practice of "social intercourse according to character, irrespective of color." He said to Weld, "If you want to teach colored schools, I can fill your pockets with money; but if you will visit in colored families

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[61] S. Wells to Weld, [Cincinnati, Ohio], Dec. 15, 1834, in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld*, 1: 178, n. 2; 178-180.

[62] S. Wells to Weld, Cumminsville [Ohio] 8th Jan. 1835 in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight* Weld, 1: 192. A Dorcas Society is a (usually) all-female group dedicated to providing food, and particularly clothing, to the poor. In this period they included sewing and knitting groups dedicated to this purpose.

[63] Weld to Lewis Tappan, Lane Seminary [Cincinnati, Ohio], March 18, 1834, in Barnes and Dumont, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld*, 1*:* 133. Also see Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 94-97; Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse*, 68-70; and Lesick, *The Lane Rebels*, 88-91.

and walk with them in the streets, you will be overwhelmed."[64] Beecher had shown

himself to be anti-amalgamation in the 1820s while serving on the Boston Board of

the Cornwall Foreign Mission School in Connecticut -- attended by "young men from

Polynesia, Malay, China, Japan, Portugal and New Zealand…many from American

Indian nations." He was opposed to two marriages of young white women to Native

American students or former students. Isaiah Bunce, an editor highly critical of the

existence of the school, blamed Beecher and the rest of the Board of the school in

Boston for deliberately arranging "the transaction[s] as a new kind of *missionary*

machinery" -- roasting them in the press. The school closed in 1827; Beecher was

stung.[65] When he began his tenure at Lane Seminary in 1833, he was overly-sensitized

to amalgamation issues.

E. Race and Improvement

The widespread spirit of improvementism that prevailed in white and black

communities in the antebellum North, and in Cincinnati in particular, apparently had

its limits when it intersected with race making. An English visitor noted, "In the States

without slaves, as well as in those in which slavery is admitted, the elevation of the

black seems impossible. An American of the North or of the South, whether he is rich

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[64] Beecher, ed., *Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, 2: 325.

[65] Henry C. Stuart, *Unvanquished Puritan: A Portrait of Lyman Beecher* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 154-156; the quotes are on page 154. Italics are in the original.

or poor, ignorant or learned, avoids contact with the negro, as if he were infected with the plague."[66]

Whites of all incomes in Cincinnati were resentful, jealous, and afraid of individual and group improvement in the black community. A working man expressed disgust that blacks would even consider acting in ways that were typical of whites in public. He explained,

> White men, who *work hard*, pay taxes, and support the various burthens [*sic*] and duties of citizens are naturally indignant when they see a set of idle blacks dressed up like ladies and gentlemen, strutting about our streets and flinging the 'rights of petition' and 'discussion' in our faces while we know that most of them are fugitives.[67]

Blacks were not to dress well and spend their time away from work enjoying themselves or exercising rights guaranteed by the constitution without regard to color, status, or race. They shouldn't be acting *equal* to whites.

Local white working men, in the early stages of labor organizing, were often hostile to black workingmen. They acted to keep African Americans off of work sites that were hiring workers, as well as keeping them from learning or practicing skilled trades. Sources from the period show a persistent fear of labor competition from Negroes and mulattoes on the part of whites. Cincinnati experienced a booming economy during the 1820s and most of the 1830s, not seeing serious effects from the

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[66] Michael Chevalier, "Letter XXVII, Augusta (Georgia), September 3, 1835," in *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States: Being a Series of Letters on North America*, translated from the Third Paris Edition (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Co., 1839; reprint, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1966), 360-361.

[67] "A Workey," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 1841. This letter appeared in the paper during the 1841 riots. The writer blamed abolitionists for the presence of Negroes in the city and believed blacks all stole for a living and for "their patrons," the abolitionists.

national downturn caused by the Panic of 1837 until 1840 or 1841.[68] But even in periods of labor shortages, local labor groups were vigilant to make sure "no colored boy could learn a trade or colored journeyman [could] find employment." The president of the Ohio Mechanics Institute was "publically [sic] tried" by that organization "for the crime of assisting a colored young man to learn a trade." White cabinet-makers "walked-out" instantly when their English employer hired a skilled young African American artisan: "they threw down their tools and declared that he should leave or they would. *'They would never work with a nigger.'* The unfortunate youth was accordingly dismissed."[69] The boundaries of whiteness were as carefully patrolled in working-class Cincinnati as in the middling and elite classes: a white master mechanic was likely to be viewed as a traitor to his race for helping a man of color to improve his skills.

There was an important discourse concerning whether Negroes and mulattoes were capable of improving. Practices in the community based on points of view in this discourse had major consequences for the relationships between African Americans and whites in the community. Fundamental disagreements existed between immediate abolitionists and supporters of abolition with colonization concerning the improvability of blacks and where improvement could or should take place. Booster/improver Dr. Daniel Drake, ultimately a supporter of colonization, claimed,

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[68] See Chapters 2 and 7 for discussions of Cincinnati's booming economy and subsequent downturn.

[69] All quotes are from Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Report on the Condition of the People of Color in the State of Ohio, from the Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, held at Putnam, on the 22nd, 23d, and 24th of April, 1835.* ([n.p.]: Beaumont and Wallace, 1835). Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/ m/ mayantislavery/ (accessed March 14, 2007), 3; italics are in the original.

> I do not myself…believe him [Negroes] equal in natural endowments to the white man, though of the same species. He is superior to several savage races, and in the aggregate equal, perhaps more than equal, to the Indian, who is more self-dependent, imaginative, and rhetorical, but less social, imitative, and improvable.[70]

Drake was a believer in the "happy Negro" trope, an assuager of his own guilt. Free blacks were "contented, if not positively happy, and with few exceptions seem incapable of forming the idea, or aspiring to a nobler condition than that of an inferior caste."[71]

In the 1834 "Preamble and Constitution" to their Anti-Slavery Society, the abolitionist students of Lane Seminary made it clear that they believed that free blacks were amenable to improvement: "We repudiate the doctrine that they cannot be elevated in this country. We believe that they *can* be elevated, we believe they *will* be." They also believed in equality between blacks and whites: Among their objects was the "elevation of both [free blacks and slaves] to an intellectual, moral and political equality with the whites."[72] In a letter to Theodore Weld, Phoebe Mathews, one of the "sisters" from Massachusetts that was teaching school in Cincinnati's black community, commented, "I was never engaged in a school in my life in which

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[70] Daniel Drake, "Letter Two: Cincinnati, December 31, 1850," in *Dr. Daniel Drake's Letters on Slavery to Dr. John C. Warren of Boston*, reprinted from the National Intelligencer, Washington, April 3, 5, and 7, 1851…. (Washington, D.C.: Schuman, 1940), 38.

[71] Daniel Drake, "Letter Three: Cincinnati January 4, 1851," in *Letters on Slavery*: 61, 62. During the 1830s Drake was a member of two local literary societies (the Semi-Colon Club and the Buckeye Club, which he started and which met at his home) where he was exposed to the thinking and fiction of novelist Caroline Hentz, who became well-known as an apologist for slavery, creating the "happy-slave" genre of fiction writing. While these ideas in Drake may not have originated with Hentz, his exposure to Hentz's thinking would have reinforced his existing disposition to engage in wishful thinking that blacks were content with their social and economic situation in the United States.

[72] "Preamble and Constitution of the Anti-Slavery Society of Lane Seminary," *Cincinnati Journal*, March 28, 1834; italics are in the original.

scholars were more apt to learn than in this. I cannot conscientiously acknowledge that in point of intellect they are in the least inferior to the whites." Some of her students even appeared to have been slaves.[73]

A central element of this discourse on the improvability of blacks was whether they showed *agency*, or *will*, as it was often called in this period. There was a widely expressed belief that blacks could not act on their own, or make decisions on their own. Dr. Daniel Drake, who had been writing booster pieces with negative images of African Americans since 1815, included in his rationalizations for colonizing free blacks in Africa that they have little "inward impulse to action which belongs to our own people."[74] Women's education booster Catharine Beecher believed that blacks "were taught to feel that they were injured and abused, the objects of a guilty and unreasonable prejudice - that they occupied a lower place in society than was right" because William Garrison's *Liberator* had convinced them of it; she implied they were not capable of that assessment on their own.[75]

Outside of African Americans themselves, the primary witnesses to their inherent agency, providing an important counter-narrative to whites' negative discourse about African American improvement, were their most important supporters

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[73] Phoebe Mathews to Weld, [Cincinnati, Ohio, March, 1835], in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld*, I: 212. Their ability to learn and their progress notwithstanding, Mathews' eighty-five female students were "very irregular in their attendance" -- due to their having "to labor so much for their own support and that of their friends that it is impossible for them to attend steady. And even some that are trimming the midnight Lamp to *purchase* their own *freedom*." Ibid., 211; italics are in the original.

[74] Drake, "Letter Two: Cincinnati, December 31, 1850," in *Letters on Slavery*, 33.

[75] Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 27, 28.

-- white immediate abolitionists. Local Lane student and abolitionist Theodore Weld

stressed the agency of free blacks as a critical factor in white support of their

"elevation." Of three reasons for Cincinnati's free blacks to have "peculiar claims

upon the benevolence of the community," the first was:

> Of the almost 3000 blacks in C[incinnati] more than three fourths of the adults
> are emancipated slaves, who worked out their own freedom…the public should
> see what blacks can do. The blacks here, having mostly emancipated
> themselves by their own efforts, are their own letters of introduction on the
> score of energy, decision, perseverance, and high attempt - an excellent
> material to work upon.[76]

The public debate on the "condition" of Negroes and mulattoes had centered on their

apparent dependency, in an era of Republican self-sufficiency and self-improvement.

As Historian Joanne Pope Melish has pointed out, "Powerless to demand

accountability from whites for their condition, people of color had little choice but to

accept the burden of proof of their inherent worthiness."[77] As their allies, abolitionists

adopted the same strategy. Abolitionists pointed to Cincinnati's African Americans as

exemplars of the agency of ex-slaves:

> Can slaves, if liberated, take care of themselves? We cannot answer this
> question better than by pointing to the colored population of Cincinnati. It is
> amusing to see the curious look which an emancipated slave assumes when he
> is asked this question. He seems at a loss to know whether he shall consider it a
> joke or an honest inquiry. "We did," they say, "take care of ourselves, and our
> masters too, while we were in fetters. We dug our way out of slavery - and
> now that we are free, all we ask is a fair chance." We know of no class of men

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[76] Weld to Lewis Tappan, Lane Seminary [Cincinnati, Ohio], March 18, 1834, in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld*, I: 134, 135.

[77] Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 257. Also see Chapter 7 of Pope's study as well as her article "The "Condition" Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the , Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 651-672. For a discussion of self-improvement in Cincinnati's African American community, and the community at large, see Chapter 3 of the present study.

who are better qualified to take care of themselves if placed under proper influences.[78]

Although their language was patronizing,[79] it is clear that Cincinnati's immediate abolitionists believed that Negroes and mulattoes, like all human beings, had agency in their lives and were perfectly capable of improving.

F. Abolition and Colonization as Improvement Technologies

As discussed in Chapter 2, both immediate abolitionism and colonization were pursued as improvement strategies by their adherents. For local immediate abolitionists like James Thome, "Slavery stands in opposition to the spirit of the age, to the progress of human improvement; it cannot abide the light of the nineteenth century."[80] Abolition, as an improvement technology, utilized three of the four racial technologies. It began with stating: because there is no more slavery, blacks are no longer slaves. The result of this, theoretically, would be a classifying technology: all blacks would be free, as all whites are free. The laws of the United States allowed the general population to mix freely, so reclassifying all blacks as free would result in immediate abolition ultimately being a mixing technology.

The essentialism at the core of colonizationists' beliefs about black and white people, on the other hand, resulted in a "master narrative" about the impossibility of black improvement in the United States:

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[78] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society Convention... Putnam*, 34.

[79] Patronizing aspects of white benevolence towards African Americans and Indians are discussed in Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*.

[80] Thome, "Speech" in *Debate at the Lane Seminary*, 10.

That class of the community to whom it [the Colonization Society] affords succour [*sic*], though nominally free, can, in fact, never be so in this country. A gloom hangs over them through which they can never hope to penetrate, and they groan under a weight of prejudice from which they can never expect to rise….No individual effort, no system of legislation, can in this country redeem them from this condition, nor raise them to the level of the white man, nor secure to them the privileges of freemen. It is utterly vain to expect it.[81]

The rhetoric of colonization stressed unchangeable, degraded characteristics and conditions that were deeply driven into the black body, beyond amelioration:

[It is] clear that causes exist and are now operating, to prevent their [Negroes and mulattoes] improvement and elevation to any considerable extent as a class in this country, which are fixed, not only beyond the control of the friend of humanity, but of *any human power*: Christianity cannot do for them here, what it will not do for them in Africa. This is not the fault of the colored man, *nor of the white man*, but an ORDINATION OF PROVIDENCE, *and no more to be changed than the laws of nature*.[82]

But as early as 1827, the Ohio Colonization Society betrayed their awareness of the central lie of their scheme of sending blacks "back" to their "native" country: "Who is there who does not know something of the condition of the blacks in the northern and middle states. They can be seen in our cities, and larger towns, wandering like foreigners and outcasts, in the land that gave them birth."[83] It's clear that colonizationists understood that most free Negroes and mulattoes were born in the United States. This made the constant reiteration of the discourse of the degraded state of free blacks an important race making classifying technology. The critique of this

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[81] American Colonization Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report*, v.

[82] *Fifteenth Report of the American Colonization Society*: 47, cited in "On the Condition of the Free People of Color of the United States," *The Anti-Slavery Examiner* [New York], No. 13, 1839: 4, footnote; the italics and emphasis are in the original.

[83] Ohio State Colonization Society, *A Brief Exposition of the Views of the Society*, 81.

line of thinking from local white abolitionists who acknowledged white culpability was acute:

> And shall we make the *present* degradation of the free blacks, *which is the work of our own hands*, the premises from which to draw the conclusion that 'they can never rise in this country,' and *therefore*, 'it is benevolent in *us* to transport them to a foreign shore where they can escape *our*' persecution?[84]

However, as Susan Ryan has pointed out, both white colonizationists and abolitionists framed their opposing arguments about the ability of free blacks to live in the communities of the United States in terms of a perceived current "degradation." This tended to reinforce the linkage of people of color and degradation in many white peoples' minds.[85]

By the late 1820s there was already talk of "disunion" between slave-states and non-slave states. In 1827, the Ohio Colonization Society bluntly offered the reasons for its projects: "The scheme…was devised…as the plan, and the only one, which could unite these two great divisions of our country in any efforts for the removal, or even the mitigation, of the greatest evil, and the heaviest curse, which afflicts our land…we should regard the black population among us as a great national evil, moral, political, [and] social."[86] Many whites in Northern and Western states viewed the free black population as a subversive element in American cities that needed to be removed -- an improvement not unlike removing boulders from rivers to aid navigation.

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[84] Henry B. Stanton, "Great Debate at Lane Seminary," 7.

[85] Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 94-98.

[86] Ohio State Colonization Society, *A Brief Exposition of the Views of the Society*, 81, 86.

Colonization was framed in Ohio, as elsewhere, as community improvement, and therefore, in community development terms - with an ambivalent mixture of benevolence and the racial grotesque. The editor of the Cincinnati *Whig* viewed colonization as "the only unexceptionable and feasible mode of improving the happiness and condition of the colored people and of relieving the nation of a population injurious to the public welfare and unacceptable to the whites generally."[87] Its aim, according to Jeremiah Morrow, President of the Ohio Colonization Society, was

> to give encouragement and aid to the free people of color resident in this state and elsewhere in the United States; to remove, with their consent, from our country, to the coast of Africa. The object is to remove from us that unfortunate race of men, who are now, as aliens on their native soil - A people who do not, but in small degrees, participate in the privileges and immunities of the community - and who, from causes in their nature inevitable, and reasons insuperable, never can be admitted to the full enjoyment of those rights as fellow citizens.[88]

Morrow, rejecting an environmentalist approach, accepted particular characteristics as inherent in an entire population, and therefore *racial*: this constructed racial difference precluded the possibility of American citizenship for blacks, as well. After disclaiming self-interest in the colonization scheme, the author suggested its benefits to the community at large:

> In the interests of the community…our country would be relieved from an evil viewed in the light of moral and political effect as at present great, but in prospect still more threatening. Who can contemplate with composure, and

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[87] "Colonization Meeting," *Cincinnati Whig*, March 1, 1839.

[88] David Smith, *The First Annual Report of the Ohio Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Columbus: Ohio Society for Colonizing Free People of Colour, 1827): 3. CHS

view with indifference the existence of a distinct *caste*, rapidly increasing, in the bosom of civil society; a race of men destined by a distinctive and indelible mark of color, to a lasting separation, and spread over and intermixed with the population, throughout the country.[89]

Colonization was intended to prevent the mixing of Negroes with the rest of the population, white and Indian. For Cincinnati editor and colonizationist Judge James Hall,

> if no other beneficial result could be produced than the transportation from our shores of an alien and servile population, who can never be amalgamated with our own people, not elevated to a political or moral equality with ourselves, the salutary influence of [the American Colonization Society] would be incalculably great. But it affords, perhaps, the only means by which civilization ever can be introduced into the heart of Africa.[90]

Hall saw colonization as the key to improving America, and (perhaps) Africa, as well.

While booster and improver Daniel Drake equivocated about Negroes and mulattoes in his public booster writings, he was more forthcoming about his true allegiances in private letters. He begins an argument for shipping all free blacks to Africa with,

> We do not need an African population. That people, whether bond or free, are in every part of the United States, a serving people, parasitic to the white man in propensity, and devoted to his menial employments….Negroes are not only unneeded, in general, useless in the free states, but in various ways they give us trouble, and are therefore, not to be desired.[91]

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[89] Smith, *First Annual Report of the Ohio Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour*, 3; quote is from page 4.

[90] [James Hall], "Travels and Researches in Caffraria," *Western Monthly Magazine* 2, no. 18 (June 1834): 332.

[91] Drake, "Letter Two: Cincinnati, December 31, 1850," *Drake's Letters on Slavery*, 31, 33.

European immigrants were taking over "negro employments…Every nation… [has] become burdened with its *own* poor."[92] Clearly Negroes and mulattoes, even if born in the United States, were not its own.

African Americans themselves early saw the schemes of the American Colonization Society for what they were - a racial spacing technology, and not an improvement technology. Groups of free blacks met in cities and towns all over the United States in the early 1830s to protest this great national Negro Removal project, passing resolutions that echoed the sentiments of the writers of an "Address of the Free People of Color of…Wilmington, Delaware:

> We are natives of the United States; our ancestors were brought to this country by means over which they had no control; we have our attachments to the soil, and we feel that we have rights in common with other Americans….But that…[the American Colonization] Society has become a barrier to our improvement, must be apparent to every individual who will but reflect on the course to be pursued by the emissaries of this unhallowed project, many of whom, under the name of ministers of the gospel, use their influence to turn public sentiment to our disadvantage by stigmatizing our morals, misrepresenting our characters, and …perpetuating our civil and political disabilities for the avowed purpose of indirectly forcing us to emigrate to the western coast of Africa.[93]

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[92] Drake, "Letter Two," *Drake's Letters on Slavery*, 31, 32; italics are in the original.

[93] Abraham D. Shad, Peter Spencer, and W[illiam] S. Thomas, "Address of the Free People of Color of the Borough of Wilmington, Delaware [July 12, 1831], quoted in W[illiam] Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization…* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832; reprint, New York: Arno, 1868), Part II: 37. The second half of Garrison's book was dedicated to addresses and minutes of meetings of African Americans critical of the American Colonization Society's aims. Ibid, II: 1-76.

Although there were small numbers of local blacks who desired to emigrate to Africa, Canada, or elsewhere outside the United States,[94] there was a consistent resistance to colonization's promises and threats throughout the antebellum period.[95] When interest in colonization schemes began to wane in the late 1830s, a renewed local effort was met with a protest meeting in Cincinnati's black community. Those present understood colonization's structuring function as a race-making technology, stating that it "fosters and sustains that prejudice, which they now declare to be invincible, by stigmatizing us as a worthless and inferior race" and then "apologizes for the sin of slavery and thereby…tends to the perpetuity of that accursed system." A significant portion of Cincinnati's African American community made a public stand that day, as free Americans, not to "consent to become an instrument of slaveholders, and their co-adjutor [*sic*], the American Colonization Society, to fasten more permanently upon the necks of our brethren, the galling yoke of bondage."[96]

The absurd position in which African Americans found themselves while pursuing the community improvement ethos in the face of pressure from white colonization groups was clear to English visitor to Cincinnati E.S. Abdy. White Americans believed that the country couldn't rely on free black labor to work its land -

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[94] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 59-63. Taylor has identified an "emmigrationist" position in free black communities of the period that made a distinction between colonization, which was directed by whites, and emigration, which followed a self-determination ideology.

[95] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 56-57.

[96] *Philanthropist*, March 5, 1839, quoted, in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 116. Taylor points out this strong stand on the part of the black community indicates the development of a "collective self respect" since the riots of 1829; a decade later alliances with other black communities and a wider range of local abolitionist support made possible a more effective resistance to racist policies and local sentiment. Ibid., 115-116.

and "the welfare of society, as well as that of the emancipated negroes themselves, required that they should be removed somewhere…. Between whig and tory what is the black refuge [*sic*] to do? The one would send him away because he enriches the country (the jealousy component) - the other because he impoverishes it."[97]

In 1831 African American groups in Baltimore went on record against the schemes of white organizations to colonize black Americans in Africa. In an editorial comment in support of the protesters, *Liberator* editor William Lloyd Garrison drew attention to the parallels between Georgia's removal of the Cherokees and the colonization of American blacks.[98] Englishman E.S. Abdy, unlike most Americans, also noted the connection between Indian removal and Negro removal: "The legislature of Georgia uses the same sort of language, when speaking of the Indians, that the Colonization Society employs to describe the descendents of Africa."[99] Indian removal, because it was articulated government policy that was being enacted in practices, provided a template for removal as an idea and as a mode of practice for coping with identifiably "unneeded" and unwanted populations of people.

One of the consequences of the discourse on prejudice that insisted that whites could (or should) never rid themselves of anti-black prejudice was that they had placed themselves in the position of arguing that they could not improve themselves. Immediate abolitionists threw it back at them as a criticism:

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[97] E.S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America from April, 1833, to October, 1834* (London: John Murray, 1835; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 3: 80.

[98] "Anti-Colonization Meeting" and Editorial: "A Voice from Baltimore," *Liberator*, Apr. 2, 1831.

[99] Abdy, *Journal*, 2: 86.

It is admitted on all hands, that there is a very extensive prejudice against the colored race, which prevents their freedom and their elevation, and it seems by some to be thought unavoidable.…Prejudice is always sinful, and especially when the means of removing it are at hand and when its effects are deeply and extensively injurious. This prejudice is not invincible, for many have already overcome it.[100]

As more whites slowly began to change their attitudes about opposing slavery, and about opposing the presence of free blacks in their communities, it became clear that white prejudice, no matter how early learned and ubiquitous, was not inevitable: "That the prejudices of education may be overcome, is proven by the fact, that many thousands of abolitionists have already overcome them."[101] As often as they found themselves arguing and showing that African Americans, like all humans, were certainly capable of intellectual, moral, physical, and vocational improvement, abolitionists found themselves having to argue and show that whites were capable of the moral improvement needed to see slavery and racial prejudice for what they were - violations of their core religious principles and of the rights due all human beings, and unconscionable breaches of the promises of equality and justice in the U.S. Constitution.

Black writers like Hosea Easton had noted a relationship between levels of black improvement and uplift and rising prejudice and violence:

The moment the colored people show signs of life - any indication of being possessed with redeeming principles, that moment an unrelenting hatred arises in the mind which is inhabited by that foul fiend, prejudice; and the possessor of it

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[100] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society Convention... Putnam*, 14-15.

[101] "S" [pseud.], "Black Laws of Ohio," *Liberator*, Apr. 4, 1835.

will never be satisfied, until those indications are destroyed; space, time, nor circumstance is not barrier to its exercise.[102]

Edward Abdy, visiting Cincinnati from England in 1834, noted the particular attitude of many whites when speaking of self-improving African Americans: "The abuse that is heaped upon the whole race proves that it is rising in the world." Discussions of improving blacks had "a degree of bitterness that indicates a disposition to be more angry with their virtues than with their vices."[103] African Americans who were improving were just as objectionable to many whites in Cincinnati as those who were not showing signs of improvement -- if not more so.

G. Amalgamation

The "hot button" topic in race relations in antebellum America, and in Cincinnati, was amalgamation: mixing of the races -- from being at the same job site, at the same school, on the street or in each others' homes, to interracial sexual relationships and marriage. No matter how banal the outward meaning of the word, it always carried an undercurrent of its more sexual meanings -- because of the fear on the part of many whites that the more innocent mixings would inevitably lead to sexual mixing, threatening a wide-spread imagined purity of whiteness. Amalgamation was inserted into headlines and written and spoken discourse by defenders of white superiority and privileges to provoke fear of a loss of white identity in antebellum

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[102] Easton, *Treatise*, 39-40.

[103] Abdy, *Journal,* 1: 117.

America.[104] The amalgamation discourse was an important practice in the patrolling of white identity -- and a site where *whiteness as property* can be seen, as it was being defended and protected.[105]

One of the reasons it was important in antebellum Cincinnati to know a person's race was to prevent amalgamation. In the 1830s African Americans were denied access to the public school system, while paying taxes to support it. A group of siblings who were assumed to be white -- from their "appearance" -- were removed from one of the common schools when it was discovered that they had a "colored women for a mother." Their apparent race changed overnight![106] Whites in northern cities were afraid that there were phantom-Negroes -- light-skinned mulattoes without "Negroid" features -- hidden amongst the white population. Whites in Cincinnati exhibited a variety of fears about white Negroes, as well as being attracted to and attractive to Negroes and mulattoes.

The discourse about amalgamation took several different forms in Cincinnati. There were blunt appeals, such as that of the local writer who felt that blacks and whites mixing was a sin against god -- so he advocated the spacing technology of separate places of worship: "Order" dictates "separateness."[107] Women's education

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[104] The way that amalgamation was used to rally people in antebellum America is similar to the way that reproductive rights or same-gender marriage are invoked by the "religious right" today.

[105] Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1709-1791. This article was also reprinted in *The Judicial Isolation of the "Racially" Oppressed*, ed. E. Nathaniel Gates (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 1-83.

[106] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society Convention... Putnam*, 20.
[107] Benezet [pseud.], "How Colonization Can Insult Jehovah!! Amalgamation" [from the *Cincinnati Journal*], *Liberator*, June 21, 1834.

booster and improver Catharine Beecher combined justification for anti-Negro

prejudice with the insistence that free blacks were being taught to act or think in

certain ways by reading William Garrison's *Liberator* -- inferring that they could

never have come to the same conclusions by referring to their own experiences:

> They were taught to feel that they were injured and abused, the objects of a guilty and unreasonable prejudice - that they occupied a lower place in society than was right - that they ought to be treated as if they were whites; and in repeated instances, attempts were made by their friends to mingle them with whites, so as to break down the existing distinctions of society.

Beecher claimed that this was "unpeaceful" and "un-Christian."[108] In fact, she was

very conscious of "existing distinctions," especially those of white privilege, and

constantly guarded against their erosion.

Some people resorted to more subtle and literary anti-amalgamation practices.

In 1837 someone delivered the following parody of Lord Byron's "She Walks in

Beauty" (1815), utilizing the racial grotesque, to the offices of the Cincinnati *Gazette*.

It was written on the back of a Queen of Spades playing card and "*Respectfully

inscribed to the* 'Knights of the Black Lines!' -- a reference to white men who woo

African American women, and a veiled nod to Lane Seminary students' alleged

behavior with African American women. Editor Charles Hammond, usually above

stooping to such rudeness, couldn't resist this time and published it:

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[108] Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 27, 28.

The Amalgamator's Wife
A Parody

She walks in beauty as the night
Of cloudy climes and starless skies;
And all that's most opposed to white,
Meets in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus shaded to that dark twilight
That Heaven to gaudy day derives.

One ray the more, one shade the less,
Had half impaired that *nameless* grace
Which kinks in ev'ry woolly tress,
And curls around the ebon face;
Where Congo's hue of loveliness
Makes permanent its dwelling place.

And on that cheek, and from that nose
So flat and yet so eloquent;
The fadeless hue, the sound that flows,
Speaks but of nights in Afric spent:
A sound that indicates repose;
A colour that is permanent.

- RUSTIC BARD[109]

This poem appeared when there had been no public discussions of

amalgamation or abolition for months - since a month or so after the riots in August,

1936. The parody in this poem is subtle from a twenty-first-century point of view -- it

can even appear Afro-centric and pro-black beauty. But from an 1837 point of view it

is a slap in the face: it is that the woman being described with the elevated language

and proper poetic form is *black* that makes it a parody. This is to show how silly it

would be to think of mixed-race romance the way a person would think of same-race

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[109] Rustic Bard [pseud.], "The Amalgamator's Wife," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Feb. 28, 1837.

romance. "She walks in beauty…" -- it was wrong for a white man to think these feminine graces were beautiful enough to become her "knight."

A specifically anti-mulatto subset of the amalgamation discourse emerged in Ohio in the late 1820s. Combining a belief that free blacks were slavery's evil side effect with a fear of numbers, one Ohio supporter of colonization viewed mulattoes as an infestation:

> We are suffering under many of the pernicious effects incidental to a slave population, without any of the few benefits which are derived from holding slaves. Immense numbers of mulattoes are continually flocking, by tens, and by hundreds, into Ohio. Their fecundity is proverbial. They are worse than drones to society and already swarm in our land like locusts. This state of things calls loudly for legislative interference.[110]

The author of a letter to the editor of *The Liberator* believed that colonizing Texas was better than Liberia for separating blacks from whites. But mulattoes were his greatest worry: "The intermixture between the whites and blacks, whereby the original pure blooded negroes are giving place to a race of republican blooded mulattoes; and these are becoming more assimilated to their white fathers and brothers in manners, information and sentiments, as well as in color." His main concern was to find a way to remove these mulattoes to someplace like Texas (voluntarily if possible), so they would stop mixing with white people -- the "evil" to which he repeatedly refers. The author never spells out the reason for this fear, except to suggest that the inability to

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[110] "Colonization Society" [from the *State Journal* (Columbus, [OH])], *African Repository* 3 (July 1827): 157.

tell the difference between blacks and whites is the problem; they have to be separated from each other.[111]

Concerning African Americans, local improver Dr. Daniel Drake, writing a decade after Cincinnati's race riots as though discussing farm animals, was most afraid of "mixed breeds of lighter hue…socially compelled to class themselves with the negro…and feel their degradation keenly." He was convinced of inevitable violence between "mixed breeds" and whites.[112] Drake was inspired in his beliefs, like many white Cincinnatians, by feelings expressed by the Managers of the Colonization Society of Connecticut in justifying their work:

> In every part of the United States there is a broad and impassible line of demarcation between every man who has one drop of African blood in his veins and every other class in the community. The habits, the feelings, all the prejudices of society - prejudices which neither refinement, nor argument, nor education, nor religion itself can subdue - mark the people of colour, whether bond or free, as the subjects of a degradation inevitable and incurable. The African in this country belongs by birth to the very lowest station in society; and from that station he can never rise, be his talents, his enterprise, his virtues, what they may. In consequence of this, it is that they are and what they are. And so long as they continue in these circumstances, they must be deeply and incurably degraded….They constitute a class by themselves - a class out of which no individual can be elevated, and below which, none can be depressed.[113]

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[111] Letter to the editor, *Liberator*, Jan. 22, 1831. Thomas Jefferson promoted the idea that amalgamation was a threat that needed to be solved with Negro removal as early as the 1780s in *Notes on the State of Virginia*; color, or race, is the implied reason: "Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture." See Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: W.H. Darby, 1861; repr., New York: Harper Torch Books, 1964), 139.

[112] Drake, "Letter Two: Cincinnati, December 31, 1850," *Drake's Letters on Slavery*, 35-36.

[113] "An Address to the Public," *African Repository* 3 (June 1828): 118-19; italics are in the original.

Mulattoes might be harder to detect, but that was why racial boundaries had to be vigorously patrolled: to avoid the taint of blackened blood and skin. White citizens who shared these beliefs had constructed a perfect tautology: by stating that Negroes and mulattoes were degraded and were bound to be treated in certain ways by whites, they meant to ensure that they would be treated in those ways. The spacing technologies of removal and other violence became easier to perform after the stating and categorizing technologies of colonization societies and public figures like Daniel Drake had been publicly aired.

There were reports of a lot of mulattoes in Cincinnati in the antebellum period. J.C. Browne, an ex-slave and mason who left Cincinnati to settle in Canada during renewed enforcement of the Black Laws in the months before the 1829 riots erupted, described the make-up of the city's African American population in the 1810s and 1820s. He noted that Cincinnati

> was full of women, without husbands, and their children. These were sent there by planters from Louisiana and Mississippi, and…Tennessee, who had now got fortunes and found that white women could live in those States. In consequence, they had sent their slave-wives and children to Cincinnati, and set them free. They had begun to come about the close of the last war. [114]

This group of mulatto children of Southern planters that Browne describes would have had a high percentage of mulatto mothers, as well - light-skinned women often being preferred by planters. Whether completely accurate or not, the perception within the

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[114] Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee, Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada; Related by Themselves, with An Account of the History of the Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856; repr., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 245. The war Drew refers to is the War of 1812 in the United States.

African American community from the late 1810s, and likely among whites in the antebellum city, was of a lot of mulattoes.[115]

There were also many romantic relationships and marriages across the "color line" in Cincinnati. When E.S. Abdy was in Cincinnati, he accompanied a white Lane Seminary student to visit an African American woman in her home:

> My companion and I were ridiculing the bugbear of "amalgamation" when he told me that a justice of the peace had mentioned in his presence, the circumstance of his having married four white men to colored women in the course of one winter. There is a practicing physician in Cincinnati, who has taken unto himself a wife from this degraded caste; not agreeing with the general opinion, that a connexion [*sic*] of this sort is made culpable by the matrimonial tie, and excusable without it.[116]

Amalgamation was even offered by one white ally of local African Americans as proof that Americans got along better than politicians would admit -- evidence in favor of repealing the Black Laws: "That there is no natural antipathy between the white and colored races, is proved by ten thousand facts, but by none more conclusively, than the vast numbers of persons in our country, of every intermediate shade of complexion between black and white."[117] The fear of amalgamation was expressed, and its occurrence was heavily patrolled, in a context in which it was present. The fear of mulattoes, likewise, was a reaction to their presence in the city -- and what that meant to those who feared them.

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[115] In 1850, Cincinnati had fourteen mulattoes for every ten blacks. The state of Connecticut and the city of New York City had three mulattoes for every ten blacks. It seems the perception of a lot of mulattoes in antebellum Cincinnati was not an inaccurate one. See Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing*: *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 42, n. 43.

[116] Abdy, *Journal*, 3: 17-18.

[117] "S" [pseud.], "Black Laws of Ohio," *Liberator*, Apr. 4, 1835.

Fear of amalgamation and its associated fear of mulattoes resulted in a shift throughout the first half of the nineteenth century from qualitative and visible indices of race, such as skin color, hair texture, or facial features, toward more quantitative, but invisible markers, such as blood quantums (percentages of racialized blood).[118] Race began to be driven inside the body, further naturalizing and essentializing assigned and lumped characteristics, because its outward signs had become less reliable as the number of persons of mixed ancestry increased in the population. Another consequence of driving race deeper into the body, and an important indicator of the phenomenon, is the *olfactory construction of race*. Thomas Jefferson helped to normalize the idea of "smelling blackness" in his widely-read *Notes on the State of Virginia*, believing that, "blacks smelled differently than whites, with a strong and disagreeable odor" and linking this to his "suspicion" of their intellectual and physical inferiority.[119] Mark Smith has shown that antebellum southerners, like Virginian Jefferson, deeply embedded in multi-generational, black, chattel slavery, used all of their senses to construct the blackness of their slaves and control them: taste, smell, touch, and sight. This was true for northerners' construction of blackness (and whiteness), as well. Whites were convinced they could "smell nigger," no matter how white a person appeared to be, an olfactory corollary to the "one drop rule." While the olfactory construction of race had always been present in the slave South, Smith notes

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[118] This is quite noticeable in the tangle of anti-miscegenation (inter-racial sexual relationship) laws in the antebellum period. See Eva Saks, "Representing Miscegenation Law," *Raritan* 8, no. 2 (1988): 39-69.

[119] Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 133.

that an increase in southerners' deployment of it accompanied an increase in the mulatto population. The discourse, and practices, of the olfactory construction of blackness increased as the need of whites to find non-visual means of detecting blackness became more acute.[120]

Though there are some differences in odor between groups of people due to different diets and cultural practices, most of the universal practice of assigning a "stench… to the other is far less a response to an actual perception of the odour of the other than a potent metaphor for the social decay it is feared the other, often simply by virtue of its being 'other,' will cause in the established order."[121] Like many groups of people, antebellum white Americans used "olfactory symbolism as a means of expressing and regulating cultural identity and difference."[122] The power of smells, real or imagined, comes from their strong connection with our emotions, by-passing much of our conscious and cognitive analysis. As anthropologist Constance Classen has pointed out, "To characterize a certain group as foul-smelling…is to render it repellent at a very basic physical and emotional level, and not simply at a cognitive level." That odors can be perceived at a distance also gives them a transitive quality, "invading" one from a distance, and symbolizing the transgression of boundaries.

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[120] Mark M. Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-47.

[121] Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures* (London: Routlege, 1993), 79, 80.

[122] Ibid., 81.

There is often a resort to spacing and segregating groups to avoid the "disintegrative power of the odor of the other."[123]

As the anti-mulatto discourse began to build in the antebellum United States, the olfactory construction of race became more prominent in the North, as well. As skin color and facial features became less certain signs of blackness, whites insisted more frequently that even small amounts of African ancestry left their traces in an indelible African smell.[124] A particularly good example is the controversy of Negroes and mulattoes riding on railroad cars in East-coast states that began in 1841. A prominent feature of the discussion of why the railroad companies insisted that a special Negro car, already called a "Jim Crow Car," was needed was that some white riders claimed that Negro and mulatto riders smelled bad.[125] There were public meetings in Massachusetts that passed resolutions calling for an end to Jim Crow cars.[126] William Garrison berated the railroads' policies in the *Liberator*,[127] but the editor of the Lynn, MA, *Record* had a more pointed analysis:

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[123] Ibid., 101, 103.

[124] Smith, *How Race is Made,* 7.

[125] "Outrage" [from the Dover *Morning Star*], *Liberator*, Oct. 1, 1841. Garrison mentions Jim Crow Cars again in an Editorial: "Horrible Affair," *Liberator*, Aug. 12, 1842.

[126] "Distinction of Color on Railroad Cars" and "Corporations," by "R.S.," [from the Lynn *Record*], *Liberator*, Oct. 1, 1841; "Brutal Outrage" [from the Lynn *Record*], *Liberator*, Oct. 8, 1841; "More Ruffianism," *Liberator*, Oct. 8, 1841. For reports on community meetings in Massachusetts that passed resolutions calling for an end to the Jim Crow Car, see the selection of reprints in the *Liberator,* Oct. 1, 1841; and "Eastern Rail Road - Colorphobia - Lynch Law - Robbery - Quakerism," by J.A. Collins and "Public Meeting," *Liberator*, Oct. 15, 1841.

[127] Editorial: "Rebuke of the Eastern Railroad for their Treatment of Colored Passengers," *Liberator*, March 19, 1941.

It is not the *color*, but the *freedom* of the color, that is so much hated and persecuted…. *The slaveholders don't object to riding in the same car with their slaves. They will not ride without them*…to feed and fan them, and take care of them and their children.…There is no 'offensive odor' to a servant or slave, but the colored free man emits an intolerable stench.[128]

In Cincinnati, with a high percentage of mulattoes, the olfactory construction of blackness accompanied a rise in social contacts between blacks and whites as race was driven inside the body, where it seemed less amenable to being altered, and where it retained its old essentialism. Situations of social amalgamation seemed to trigger its appearance. Like the phenomenon of the "Black Brothers" mentioned earlier in this chapter, it was used as a strategy for elite white men in Cincinnati to patrol the boundaries of each others' whiteness. A story still making the rounds in the 1830s and 1840s (indeed, still in the 1880s) concerned a "*mulatto* - a fugitive slave…from the wilds of Arkansas," whom local lawyer and Congressman Samuel Findlay had escorted all over town believing that he was General John Ross, the Principle Chief of the Cherokees, an apparently acceptable guest. After nine days "Ross" was arrested and returned "willingly" to his master in Arkansas. A chamber-maid claimed that both the "fashionable military hero" Sam Scott and Findlay "had shared the common bed of the mulatto at his room in the Cincinnati Hotel."[129]

This incident "became a standing and lasting joke among the old members of the local bar - at Findlay's expense." A.G.W. Carter, a fellow lawyer, remembered:

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[128] Editorial: "Eastern Railroad Company" [from the Lynn *Record*], *Liberator*, Aug. 13, 1841; italics are in the original.

[129] Mansfield, *Personal Memories, Social, Political, and Literary,* 197-198; Carter, *The Old Court House*, 86-87.

Other lawyers constantly asked him, "What's the price of niggers, Sam?" or "How about the African odor? .... How could you go to bed with it?"… "Was it *eu de cologne*, or *la Africaine*?" Findlay "declared, affirmed, and he swore that he didn't *sleep* with the nigger…and never heard of the nigger; but all to no purpose…. [H]e was forever known to his last days as the man who has slept with the "nigger," as the gentleman who was fond of turning-up…the ace of spades as his trump card, as a pirate who wore black colors.[130]

This joke makes the teller appear whiter by suggesting that Findlay couldn't "smell nigger" because he himself wasn't as white as he appeared to be. It reinforces the whiteness of the teller by compromising the whiteness of Findlay.

Ohio and Cincinnati abolitionists were constantly described by their opponents as promoting or favoring amalgamation -- often conflating the word's meanings of social mixing and equality and interracial sex. A report of the "Committee on Abolition and Colonization" of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Ohio decided that,

Abolition proposes the immediate, indiscriminate, and unconditional manumission of all slaves, to remain among and commingle with the white population.…This doctrine of amalgamation, inseparable from the scheme of abolition, is not only unacceptable, but also highly offensive to most of the American family.…[It] has met the frowns of the discreet of both sexes.[131]

Framing this discussion within the arms of the family allowed certain discretions and avoidances -- unspoken taboos. Mixing (of various kinds) being "highly offensive to most of the American family," grounds this passage within a framework of unified, single-lineage ways of thinking: the family, with its traditional structure of authority in place. This is partly a microcosm-macrocosm analogy, and partly a suggestion of a

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[130] Carter, *The Old Court House*, 87.

[131] "Ohio Annual Conference Report of the Committee on Abolition and Colonization," *Western Christian Advocate*, Sept. 11, 1835. This paper was the official Ohio organ for the Methodist Episcopal Church and published in Cincinnati.

literal construction -- part of the emerging discourse of a superior white "American

race' of Anglo-Saxons justifying American expansion toward Mexico and the Pacific

as its Manifest Destiny.[132] The "frowns of the discreet of both sexes" puts the topic in

a taboo space that is beyond the pale of polite society. Amalgamation is now the

"elephant in the room" -- no one is fully allowed to refer to it, but everyone knows that

it is there.[133]

There were those who were clear and direct in their accusations of the

abolitionists and amalgamation, assigning the rise in violence directed at them in the

mid-1830s to this imagined relationship:

> [Abolitionists] for their protection must stand indebted to those who they have
> vilified, whose motives they have aspersed, whose conduct and characters they
> have assailed by every term of contumely and reproach, and *whose identity as
> a nation of white men, they have sought to degrade by reducing it to the
> condition of mongrels.*"[134]

The *Liberator*'s coverage of anti-black and anti-abolition riots in cities and towns

throughout the country in 1830s indicates that white fears of real and imagined

amalgamation were frequently claimed as the cause of violent attacks.[135]

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[132] Reginald Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), especially Chapter 13, "A Confused Minority," 249-71.

[133] This piece was followed by a comment by editor T.A. Morris that "the preachers of the Ohio conference [of the M.E. Church] are unanimous on the following propositions: 1. Slavery is an evil. 2. It ought to be abolished in a gradual, constitutional manner. 3. The remedy proposed by "abolitionists," is worse than the evil itself." The sexual innuendo makes his argument for him. "Abolition, Etc.," *Western Christian Advocate*, Sept. 11, 1835.

[134] "From the *Commercial Advertiser*," *The Liberator*, July 26, 1834: 3; italics are in the original.

[135] Issues of the *Liberator*, especially in 1834-1836, published a steady steam of articles about anti black and anti-abolition riots that discussed local complaints about social amalgamation and their relationship to the violence. Also see Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing* and John M. Werner, *Reaping*

Abolitionists answered these accusations largely by distancing themselves from the charges as though they were anathema, compounding negative public sentiment about interracial relationships of all kinds. For instance, in 1835 the Kentucky Anti-Slavery Society drew up resolutions for its new constitution that specifically claimed to "entertain with no favor any plan of amalgamation between the white and colored people." One of the Vice-Presidents of this group was James G. Birney -- before he moved the abolitionist newspaper the *Philanthropist* to Cincinnati in 1836.[136]

Other abolitionists creatively attempted to show that abolition would actually stop amalgamation and minimize the consequences of its sexual form -- mulattoes, adding to the anti-mulatto discourse. Addressing the fear that abolition would lead to amalgamation, abolitionist Dr. Samuel Cox told his readers, "choose your own company, and allow [the black person] the same privilege; and for me I believe that amalgamation would be comparatively prevented. At present it is a process of accelerating forces." Claiming that "mulattoization" had effectively created a situation of no *blacks*, but many *colored people* in many districts, he believed this process would be stopped by abolition.[137] In effect, he believed abolition was an effective spacing technology to prevent race-mixing.

the Bloody Harvest: Race Riots in the United States during the Age of Jackson, 1824-1849 (New York: Garland, 1986).

[136] "Kentucky Anti-Slavery Society," *Liberator*, May 16, 1835.

[137] Samuel H. Cox, "Letter of the Rev. Samuel H. Cox, Against the American Colonization Society," in *Debate at the Lane Seminary*, 14. Cox's implication is that mulattoes are all made by white male masters and female slaves, under slavery; this is clearly not the case.

H. Booster/Improvers and the Discourse of Race in Antebellum Cincinnati

Local Cincinnati boosters played several important roles in the project of race making in the city. A number of these promoters and improvers of the local economy, of the "industrious and virtuous" population of the city, and of its free and republican institutions, were also deeply implicated in the processes of race making, bringing the construction of race into their syntheses. Using a common vocabulary of virtuous republican populations creating free institutions in a landscape that naturally fosters such creations, boosters projected idealized images of the city and region, fashioning and packaging a consumable imaginary for locals and prospective citizens alike**.** In this process, boosters also created stories of the people who belonged to Cincinnati and the Ohio valley, and to whom these places belonged, by virtue of their having built and improved their communities.

Sometimes the narrative was covert; the construction of racial categories is imbedded in it nonetheless. Daniel Drake's 1833 address on "literary and social accord" in the region of the Mississippi watershed, discussed in the Chapter 3, with its message of the need to create a uniform, harmonious culture of "similar institutions," continually reiterated a threat of "disunion" due to differences in the population without ever specifying why "differences" would make so much difference.[138] In his final paragraphs he summed up his social vision and plan for the west as the "savior of the nation":

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[138] Daniel Drake, *Remarks on the Importance of Promoting Literary and Social Concert, in the Valley of the Mississippi, as a Means of Elevating Its Character, and Perpetuating the Union.* (Louisville, 1833); repr, in Henry D. Shapiro and Zane L. Miller, eds., *Physician to the West: Selected Writings of Daniel Drake on Science and Society* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 234, 237.

Thus connected by nature in the great valley, we must live in the bonds of companionship, or imbrue our hands in each other's blood…The germs of harmony must be nourished, and the roots of present contrariety or future discord torn up and cast into the fire. Measures should be taken to mould an [sic] uniform system of manners and customs, out of the diversified elements which are scattered over the West…In short, we should foster western genius, encourage western writers, patronize western publishers, augment the number of western readers, and create a western heart."[139]

Drake's rhetoric is hyperbolic: what differences could create such discord that a bloody war is assumed to be imminent? The unspoken sources of this great discord are Negroes and Indians -- the only two groups of people never included in the "western people." As this address was given in the slave state of Kentucky, the unspoken source of disunion is likely slavery and free black populations. This is improvementist writing, intending to point the way to making social conditions better. So what Drake is saying is that literature and education, and the will of the people, should be directed toward unifying the values, feelings, and manners of the "western people" -- improving themselves with the goal of "speedy amalgamation" in mind.[140] Amalgamation, in this sense, is used positively. It's not that amalgamation is wrong - it is that amalgamation that involves people of African ancestry is wrong for white Cincinnatians.

At other times, local messages were much more overt. In *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, written while she lived in Cincinnati, women's education booster and improver Catharine Beecher objected to schools for Negroes being sited near schools for white youth (in these instances, in Connecticut), where keeping tensions at bay

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[139] Drake, *Importance of Promoting Literary and Social Concert*, 238-239.

[140] Ibid., 234.

might be difficult - becoming an early advocate of racial segregation. She also

objected to Prudence Crandall's school for young Negro women in Canterbury,

Connecticut, because the local white families of their income bracket would have

considered it "ridiculous to attempt to give their daughters such a course of

education…and but few of the wealthiest families ever thought of furnishing such

accomplishments for their children." What upset her most was that "the whole affair

was conducted… [with] an entire disregard of the prejudices and the proprieties of

society."[141] In Beecher's view, the privilege of whites to decide what is proper for the

community should have prevailed, regardless of its motivations. While the discussion

of class being mapped onto race typically refers to working class mapping,[142] in

Catharine Beecher, we have a case of middle class identification being mapped onto

race. In this co-construction of race and class, Beecher was afraid that local Negroes

and mulattoes might match or trump the class markers of those whites with whom she

identified, rendering them less unique as signs of both middle class and white

identification.

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[141] Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 29-30, 30-32. One of the core issues in the controversy surrounding Crandall's school was the assumption, and fear, that educating young Negro and mulatto women would lead to their amalgamation with young white men in the community. For a full discussion of the events surrounding the terrorizing of Crandall and her students, and the subsequent demise of her school, see Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co., 1869: reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968), 39-72; and Philip S. Foner, "Prudence Crandall," in Philip S. Foner and Josephine F. Pacheco, *Three Who Dared: Prudence Crandall, Margaret Douglass, Myrtilla Miner - Champions of Antebellum Black Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 3-54.

[142] See Sherry B. Ortner's discussion of the subsuming of American class discourse within that of race and ethnicity in "Identities: The Hidden Life of Class," in *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 63-79, especially 72-74 and 78-79.

Framed within her understanding of women's "proper domestic sphere" and women's role as the teachers of morality and social appropriateness for the whole community,[143] Catharine Beecher's foray into the discourse on race brings race relations within the domain of her domestic science. Her discussion of segregating black schools from white neighborhoods should be seen as a further step into the community development and planning discourse of the period. Believing that African Americans could not think and act for themselves, nor make distinctions between right and wrong, Beecher felt they must always look to whites for proper models of behavior,[144] her rationale for establishing and maintaining the white privilege of decision making. The overlap of these ideas in Beecher's writings places the teaching and maintenance of appropriate race relations in the community within white women's role as a moral influence and as harmonizers in the development of the community. Her formulation intended to show the important roles women could, and should, play in race-making and in the development of the community.

Boosters even used the absence of another race of people to construct local white identity. Cincinnati was built directly on top of and near so-called "Indian mounds" - with burial chambers and other artifacts of previously existing Native American communities on the sites.[145] In a peculiar twist of reason, booster/improver

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[143] See, especially, Catharine Ester Beecher, *An Essay on the Education of Female Teachers, Written at the Request of the American Lyceum and Communicated at their Annual Meeting, New York, May 8th, 1835...* (New York: Van Nostrand and Dwight; Cincinnati: Corey and Fairbanks, 1835).

[144] Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 27-28, 31.

[145] While a British visitor was in Cincinnati, about 1840, an ancient mound was being cleared by workmen preparing the city for building houses. They apparently didn't understand his asking if

Daniel Drake offered the local Indians as a foil for the improvement of whites - because they were different and "removed":

> The near neighborhood, the wars, and the monuments, insignificant as the last may be, of the Indians, have exerted a similar effect on the mental improvement of our young population, because they have been led, intently, to observe and contemplate a peculiar variety of the human race, having a number of striking features, and far removed, in most of their qualities, from our own..... [These and other] means of intellectual improvement…are in some degree peculiar to the West.[146]

This is to say that only in the West does a white person have the unique opportunity to experience their identity in such a pure and crystalline manner, laid-out in bold relief against that of another! The presence of "absent" Indians in Cincinnati operates as a classifying technology of white race-making in Drake's formulation, contributing to his improvement project of creating a virtuous, uniform, harmonious, western-hearted (and white) people. This erasure of local Native peoples and their use of the space as a place allowed it to be newly marked by white Cincinnatians as a place for their own use, as well.

Local boosters and improvers exhibited robust cases of *racial amnesia*, forgetting not only Cincinnati's and Ohio's history of racially prejudiced practices, but narrating

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anything interesting had been found in the mound, which was three-hundred feet in circumference at the base and twenty feet high. They had removed bones -- so they were aware that it was a burial chamber. The excavation was "in line with Sixth Street, to the east of Maine [*sic*]." Citing an unnamed work of Daniel Drake's, he described four mounds, "removed to make room for the streets…the principal one was nearly in the centre of the city, at the intersection of Third and Main Streets" and their contents. James Buckingham, *The Eastern and Western States of America* (London: Fisher, Son and Co., 1842), 2: 397, 398, 399.

[146] Daniel Drake, *Discourse on the History, Character, and Prospects of the West....* Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1834; repr., Gainesville, FL: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1955: 12.

and participating in them while denying their existence.[147] Former New Englander,

lawyer and local booster/improver Timothy Walker insisted in 1831 that in Cincinnati

"we hold the doctrine of equality most pertinaciously. The upright man is the

gentleman, no matter his calling."[148] In a court case eleven years later, as a judge,

Walker ruled that a black Presbyterian minister could not be licensed to perform

marriages - because the court had no "constitutionally-granted power" to grant a

license to a Negro.[149] Local boosters Benjamin Drake (Daniel's brother) and E.D.

Mansfield described Ohio in 1826 as having "an unrestricted and universal elective

franchise" fully aware that African American men were prevented by the state "Black

Laws" from voting, and no women had the vote yet.[150] Charles Cist, the city's census

taker and a long-time civic booster and composer of city directories, knew that Ohio's

Black Laws were in effect and that the city had had two major race riots in the

previous twelve years when he made the following comment in 1841 about the city's

"common school" system -- from which blacks and mulattoes were excluded, though

still taxed:

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[147] The new consciousness of themselves as a "western people" without slavery, or "its pernicious effects," could have led many whites in antebellum Cincinnati to erase blacks from a part of their consciousness, and from their sense of community in the kind of "characteristic amnesia" mentioned by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 1991), 204-205. For a study of New England's experience with racial amnesia after gradual emancipation of its slave population, (with major implications for New Englanders immigrating to Cincinnati and their attitudes about blacks), see Melish, *Disowning Slavery*.

[148] Timothy Walker, "Letter from Ohio, No. I," *New England Magazine* 1, no. 1 (July 1831): 31.

[149] "Important Decision - Court of Common Pleas," *Cincinnati Post and Anti-Abolitionist*, March 26, 1842.

[150] B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield, *Cincinnati in 1826* (Cincinnati: Morgan, Lodge, and Fisher, 1827), 20.

These schools are founded not merely on the principle that all men are free and equal, but that all men's children are so likewise, and that, as it is our duty to love our neighbor as ourselves, it is our duty to provide the same benefits and blessings to his children as our own….These establishments result from the recognition of the fact, also, that we all have a common interest - moral, political and pecuniary - in the education of the whole community.[151]

This racial amnesia in the hands of boosters, like the effacement of both the memory of slavery and ultimately the concept of a local free black population that Joanne Pope Melish has excavated in her study of New England,[152] stated and re-stated the dreams and the scope and accomplishments of the community of Cincinnati without African Americans being present in the picture. Cincinnati's boosters articulated for everyone a Negro-less city -- an imaginary Cincinnati for white people to live in and enjoy.

I. Conclusion

Antebellum Cincinnati was in the middle of two overlapping socio-cultural struggles. One was between competing images of who Negroes and mulattoes were and what it meant, between a real Negro and an imaginary Negro - a "hideous Monster of the mind"[153] that existed in the mind of many white persons. The other struggle was between competing improvement projects: between the community development project of the majority of the white population to create a white city for themselves and that of the African Americans and their white allies to create a community in

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[151] Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: The Author, 1841), 257.

[152] Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery*.

[153] James McCune Smith, *Fredrick Douglass's Paper*, Jan. 1852, cited in Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 247.

which to live - whether it was a separate black community of institutions and support networks or renewed efforts to secure citizenship, suffrage, dignity, and human rights within the dominant community of the city of Cincinnati.

Different regionally-based factions within the white community (such as "New Englanders" vs. "Westerners") often competed with each other over whose vision of improvement would prevail in developing the community.[154] In regard to blacks and improvement, however, the alliances were different. Those who were not in favor of the immediate abolition of slavery were in general agreement on the free black population: they did not want free Negroes or mulattoes in Cincinnati or Ohio, believing they should be colonized in Africa -- and they were horrified at the prospects of social, cultural, and familial amalgamation between whites and blacks. They constituted a probable majority of the white population generally, and certainly the majority of local improvers and boosters, promoters and developers of various economic, civic, educational, religious, scientific, and philanthropic projects in the city and its region.

Negroes and mulattoes and their families and allies worked hard to improve the lives of local people of color through education, social and moral support, and a

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[154] One of these battles, with major consequences, was between those who supported a "Western" approach to culture and society, worked out on the spot, and who rallied behind Daniel Drake and editor and Judge James Hall, and those who favored imitating New England as a cultural center and hovered around Lyman and Catharine Beecher and their associates. Angry at criticism of her father Lyman Beecher's anti-Catholic *A Plea for the West* in Hall's *Western Monthly Magazine* (see volume 3 (1835): 320-327), Catharine attempted to have Hall removed as editor (he had started the journal himself in 1831) and to have both Hall and Drake refused invitations to fashionable homes. It partly backfired, making both Catharine and Lyman Beecher less than welcome in parts of the community. But it also resulted in a loss of subscriptions and the end of Hall's magazine in 1836. David Donald, ed., "The Autobiography of James Hall, Western Literary Pioneer," *Ohio History* 56, no. 3 (July 1947): 300-301n25.

constant counter-narrative of positive race-making and deployed practices to fight anti-black racism and prejudice. The harder they worked, the more those who wanted to maintain or escalate a racialized, prejudiced, discriminatory society based on white privilege and black disprivilege fought back. When the old racial theories, and the old rules, based on differences in skin color, began to break down in the greater presence of light-skinned persons of African ancestry with features that didn't differ significantly from those of many of their white neighbors, whites changed the rules. Paralleling the change from environmentalist to essentialist notions of character and identity, whites shifted the main index of race inside the body -- from skin color to blood, accompanied by an imaginary and indelible "black odor."[155] Mulattoes were seen as particularly treacherous because it was getting harder to detect who they were; people who appeared white could be hiding a "phantom Negro" within them, spoiling their character and their lineage, as well as their social relations with whites.

Although many local authorities continued to adjudicate legal cases that turned on "ancestry" -- something abstract, but still allowing for no mistakes -- interpretation shifted from qualitative to quantitative measures. For purposes of identifying Negroes and mulattoes: "visible admixtures" became "blood quantums" - percentages of ancestry that seemed measurable, leading to a reliance in many (but not all) communities on the "one drop rule" for those of any amount of African ancestry. This paralleled a society-wide shift into an increased *numeracy* and tendency to favor

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[155] In her study of anti-miscegenation laws, Eva Sacks points out that these laws "helped to invent and promote…the metaphor of blood," as well as a person's legal title to it as property. See Sacks, "Representing Miscegenation Law," 40-41. Also see Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property."

quantitative measures over the seemingly less "certain" qualitative ones.[156] It seemed

easier to regulate, although ultimately the meaning people ascribe to either measure

drives how they may employ it. Race was increasingly naturalized inside the body

with a parallel reading of characteristics as inherent and intrinsic to a person, and not

amenable to mediation by the social or physical environment. This insured that

imaginary Negroes would prevail in the minds of most white Cincinnatians. No

amount of evidence to the contrary from real Negroes would ever convince

colonizationists like Catharine and Lyman Beecher, Dr. Daniel Drake, Judge Jacob

Burnet, or editor James Hall, or "Workey," or the members of the Mechanics

Association that refused mechanical training to African Americans , or a lot of

average, white Cincinnatians -- that Negroes and mixed people were human beings,

improving and changing like all others, and that they were equally eligible to be

useful, peaceful members of the community in Cincinnati.

     The primary sources clearly show discourses on race, on improvement, and on

the intersection between the two in Cincinnati, as well as beyond to the state and the

nation. It was a conversation from many points of view, contested and resisted on all

sides. Arguments by colonizationists, polygenetic scientists and ethnologists, anti-

abolitionists, and apologists for slavery were often expertly taken apart by African

Americans themselves and their abolitionist and anti-racist allies - often clear and

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[156] The concept of *numeracy* is explored by Patricia Cline Cohen in *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Not just a simple analogy to literacy, numeracy indicates not only an increased human facility in the manipulation of numbers over twenty (fingers and toes), but also "how the domain of number has changed and expanded." See Cohen's "Introduction," especially pages 4-5, 9, and 11.

more humane thinkers. Sometimes they were able to make a difference on an individual basis - but scholars must still try to understand how the prejudiced, racist view of Negroes and mulattoes that many white Cincinnatians had in their heads -- what I am calling the imaginary Negro -- prevailed over understanding the real Negroes and mixed people that white Cincinnatians had in their midst. Why were imaginary Negroes so much more compelling for so many whites in antebellum Cincinnati than real Negroes?

Along with the wide discourse about race in Cincinnati there was a range of non-discursive practices whites used when relating to local African Americans. There were those like Theodore Weld , Phoebe Mathews and "The Sisters", and the Lane Seminary students, working in the African American community - eating, sleeping, living, and making friends with real Negroes; and the essayist Ida, bombarding racial prejudice for six pages - they believed in full humanity and social and political equality between whites and blacks. They also envisioned a community with blacks and whites both present and participating.

What dominated in the discourse in antebellum Cincinnati were the ideas put forward by members of the local colonization society and their supporters, many of whom were local ministers, judges, editors, Congressmen, lawyers, and businessmen; and the ideas of local boosters and improvers like Daniel Drake, Catharine Beecher, E.D. Mansfield, James Hall, Lyman Beecher, Timothy Walker, and others, many of whom were colonizationists. What prevailed in terms of local practices were the negative stating, categorizing, mixing, and spacing technologies of race making:

prejudice, discrimination, racial grotesques, Black Laws, segregation, and racial violence. As residents of Cincinnati participated in practices enacting the improvementist ethos of the city, a disjuncture began to develop between real local African Americans surviving, finding ways to get some education, building institutions, working and helping each other - improving themselves - and the image of an un-improved and un-improvable Negro. This "hideous monster of the mind"[157] inhabited the minds of large numbers of white Cincinnatians. This image provided a special lens with which they constructed the racialized world in which they lived.

The slippage between real and imaginary Negroes in the minds of many whites caused tension and disequilibrium. Building up over a period of time, the slippage increased, creating that uncomfortable liminal space, a variety of the racial grotesque. Psychic and civic stalemates in people's minds, and collectively in the community, would be resolved through a "changing of the rules" of the serious game of community development. In a supreme effort to avoid amalgamation of all kinds - real and imaginary - white Cincinnatians would shift race making strategies to a violent spacing technology that would operate at the community level.

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[157] James McCune Smith, *Fredrick Douglass's Paper*, Jan. 1852, cited in Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 247.

Chapter 5

The 1829 Cincinnati Race Riots

On Saturday, August 22, 1829, the *Western Times* in Portsmouth, Ohio, eighty-five miles east up the Ohio River from Cincinnati**,** published a report of violence against the African American community in Cincinnati the previous week, based on a letter they had received, apparently from an eye-witness:

> **Riot in Cincinnati -** We learn by a letter from that place, that on the 15th instant, a large number of the inhabitants turned out and collected together, with the determination of forcing out of the city the free negroes, who had not complied with the law of the state with reference to citizenship. The houses of the blacks were attacked and demolished, and the inmates beaten and driven through the streets till beyond the limits of the corporation. During the affray, one of the assailants, a young man of respectable character, was killed.[1]

These terse ninety-three words are the only direct account of the August 15th riots from an eye-witness that is still extant. There were no reports of the violence while it occurred in any of the local Cincinnati newspapers that have survived. No previous scholars who have studied these riots have found any other reports of the violence on August 15 in newspapers in other towns or in Cincinnati's public records.[2]

Sometime during the following week, the *Cincinnati Sentinel* published a synopsis of nearly a week of further anti-black violence and black counter-attack in the city that followed the riot on August 15. Since at least the early twentieth century,

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[1] "Riot in Cincinnati," *Western Times* [Portsmouth, OH], Aug. 22, 1829. OHS.

[2] Patrick A. Folk, "The Queen City of Mobs": Riots and Community Reactions in Cincinnati, 1788-1848," (PhD diss., University of Toledo, 1978), 53; Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 64; John M. Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest: Race Riots in the United States during the Age of Jackson, 1824-1849* (New York: Garland, 1986), 58.

the *Sentinel* article has existed only as reprinted in the Lebanon, Ohio *Western Star*, on

Saturday, August 29, 1829 - a week after the first article - and as reprinted in the

African American paper *Rights of All* nearly a month later:

> **RIOT:** Some six or eight weeks since, the trustees of the township of
> Cincinnati, gave notice, that they should enforce the law of the state, requiring
> blacks and mulattoes to give bonds of $500, or be sent to the state from
> whence they came –Such was the terror of the unfortunate wretches, who
> during the last twenty years had clustered in the suburbs of this city, that some
> three or four hundred left the city and started with their property and families
> for Canada. A great many preferred staying and running the risk of forcible
> removal. Dearly have they paid for their temerity. A considerable part of the
> blacks resided in a cluster of houses near the corner of Columbia street and
> Western Row. For four or five evenings last week, this part of the city was
> made the scene of the most disgraceful riots --Some two or three hundred of
> the lowest *canaille* of our city, animated by the prospect of high wages, which
> the sudden removal of fifteen hundred laborers from the city, might occasion,
> thinking the law not rapid enough in its movements, in getting rid of the
> blacks, during the several nights made the most violent assaults, in great
> numbers upon the blacks, who reside in Columbia street, throwing stones,
> demolishing houses, doing every other act of riotous violence. On Saturday
> evening, the blacks who had hitherto remained in their houses, despairing of
> receiving the protection of the law, fired upon the mob, killed one man, and
> severely wounded two others. This operated as a *quietus*. Several of the blacks
> were arrested and "examined before his Honor, the Mayor, but nothing
> criminal being proved against them, they were discharged. The Mayor was of
> the opinion that the guns were fired in *self defense*. Eight white men, who were
> proved to have been concerned in the attack, were tried on Monday and fined
> six of them $100, and two $50 each.[3]

The writer of the *Western Times* article seems not to want to "weigh-in" on the

justness of the law in question, or of the riots themselves, only going so far as to

identify one of those killed as of "respectable character." This places men from

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[3] "Riot" [from the Cincinnati *Sentinel*], *Western Star* [Lebanon, OH], Aug. 29, 1829; "Riot" [from the
Cincinnati Centinel] [*sic*], *Rights of All*, Sept. 18, 1829; italics are in the originals. The *Western Star*
was a local Lebanon, Ohio weekly. There are few copies of this paper extant. The version of the article
that appeared in *Rights of All* ended with this additional sentence: "It appears from these facts that our
city, hitherto so quiet, bids fair, soon to be on a par in respect to riots and publick [*sic*] disturbances
with her more highly favored sisters of the East."

"respectable" families among the rioters, in contrast to the reports reprinted from the *Cincinnati Sentinel* that describes the rioters as "two or three hundred of the lowest *canaille* of our city, animated by the prospect of higher wages, which the removal of fifteen hundred laborers from the city, might occasion." The *Cincinnati Sentinel (and Star of the West)* was one of five local weeklies and had just been founded in 1829 as the local Universalist organ by Josiah Waldo, Jonathan Kudwell, and Samuel Tizzard.[4] Both the "respectable" and the "less-than-respectable" were involved in these riots.

This chapter examines Cincinnati's anti-black riots of August 15 and 17-22, 1829, as well as the public discussions of Negro removal and the other events that led up to them. This violence, and the threats of removal that preceded it, resulted in more than 1,100 African Americans, as well as their white and Native American family members, leaving the city before, during, and immediately after the violence. Some headed for Canada and some went to other Ohio towns; many left for destinations unknown. I will also examine how news of this violence was nearly completely suppressed when it occurred, creating archival silences that require careful unpacking to interpret. The riots, the prior threats of removal, and the Negrophobic discourses surrounding the riots were part of a larger strategy by a variety of interests in the community for improving the city.

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[4] Robinson and Fairbank, *The Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829...* Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1829: 182, CHS; and Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West: 1819-1838* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 184.

A. Improvement and the Blacks Laws in 1829

In 1829, Cincinnati was deep in the processes of progress. The editors of the city directory for that year apologized for a delayed publishing date, due to the city's constant growth having made it difficult to keep up with new additions to their data. Their long list of "Religious and Benevolent Organizations" attests to an active associational community of men and women, dedicated to institutions, which by "improving the moral and intellectual, cannot fail to exert a beneficial influence on the social condition of our citizens." As authors of semi-official booster literature, Robinson and Fairbanks assigned the "causes of this remarkable growth" of the city to its "exuberant fertility…the amenity of its climate…easy egress to the ocean, and the *Americanism* of its inhabitants."[5]

One of the most popular improvement organizations for the emerging middle classes -- merchants and businessmen, lawyers, teachers, and ministers and other professionals -- was the Cincinnati Colonization Society, a branch of the American Colonization Society and the Ohio auxiliary.[6] The local branch, founded just three years earlier in 1826, shared the national organization's goal of sending all blacks and mulattoes in the United States, "voluntarily," to Africa, ostensibly to improve their

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[5] Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 4-5, 190-197,152; italics are in the original.

[6] See Chapters 3 and 4 for discussions of colonization as an improvement project and as a race making technology.

lives, as well as those of the remaining white population.[7] Like the state society, it was

notably inefficient in pursuing its agenda, due to insufficient funds and because "a

great majority of the free people of colour, manifest a very great unwillingness to

migrate to Africa."[8] But it was proudly listed in the city directory for 1829, with its

officers, in the middle of a plethora of societies, scientific and educational

organizations, imports and exports, buildings erected, and other items attesting to a

busy, growing, thriving city, barely able to keep up with itself.[9]

Improvement was a recurring theme in the papers at the beginning of 1829. A

favored internal improvement was extending the National Road from Zanesville to

Nashville, Tennessee.[10] The "hot" topic in the *Gazette* early in the year, however, was

disagreement about whether Ohio should spend state money to extend the Miami

Canal, finished from Cincinnati to Dayton, north to Maumee on the western tip of

Lake Erie. The goal was access to northern and eastern markets for Cincinnati and

other locations along the route. Local booster and editor Timothy Flint argued that the

linkage to New York and eastern markets via the Erie Canal would benefit the local

area and the whole nation.[11] By 1829 the Canal Commission was convinced the

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[7] David Smith, *The First Annual Report of the Ohio State Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Columbus: Ohio Society for Colonizing Free People of Colour, 1827), 4. CHS

[8] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 56-57; Smith, *First Annual Report of the Ohio State Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour*, 7.

[9] Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 194.

[10] "National Road," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 13, 1829.

[11] "Canals," *Western Monthly Review* I, no. 2 (June 1827): 77.

project would pay for itself and benefit commerce and transportation in the region.[12]

"D" argued in favor of the extension. Profit and "neat percent" were not the only motivations for citizen support for the project; public convenience and public good were also critical expectations. However, *Gazette* editor Charles Hammond was wary of spending any more state funds on the project without a clear sense of the expected return on the investments already made. The "common good" argument for spending state funds was no longer sufficient for him.[13] The discussion was typical of those in the papers concerning internal improvements in this period, trying to move projects forward.

By 1829, Cincinnati's community of Negroes and mulattoes, and their families, had an institutional base, founded in churches, one of them independent of any white church, and independent schools, however ephemeral. It had also developed a small group of leaders, as well as a sense of activism and their own agency in their community's development.[14] Though receiving the occasional (and often hidden) patronage of powerful whites in the community such as Nicholas Longworth, J. W. Piatt, and Charles Hammond, the vast majority of institutions in the community

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[12] "Miami Canal Report," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1829.

[13] "D" [Benjamin or Daniel Drake?], "The Miami Canal," and editorial comment, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1829.

[14] See Chapter 2; and Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 48-49.

remained severely under funded and lacked permanence.[15] This left African

Americans in all circumstances in Cincinnati in a very vulnerable situation.

The year 1829 began on an ominous note for the estimated 10,000 Negroes and

mulattoes living in the state of Ohio,[16] including 2,258 persons in Cincinnati.[17] On

February 10, the state's legislature inaugurated Ohio's common school system,

officially installing its discriminatory exclusion of all persons of African ancestry:

> A fund shall hereafter be raised in the several counties in this state…for the use
> of the common schools, for the instruction of every youth of every class and
> grade without distinction, in reading, writing, arithmetic, and other necessary
> branches of a common education: Provided, That nothing in this act contained
> shall be so construed as to permit black or mulatto persons to attend the
> schools hereby established, or compel them to pay any tax for the support of
> such schools; but all taxes assessed on their property, for school purposed, in
> the several counties in this state, shall be appropriated as the Trustees of the
> several townships may direct, for the education of said black and mulatto
> persons therein, and for no other purpose whatever.

This was reiterated two days later in another act of the General Assembly, on February

12, 1829.[18] African Americans had been officially legislated out of the common

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[15] J.W. Piatt, and a Judge Spencer, bought the land on which the community's Deer Creek Church was built; Longworth, though a colonizationist, discretely purchased the freedom of fugitive slaves, aided in funding a school and tried to raise money to help black relocation after the 1829 riots; and Hammond gave black writers space in the *Gazette* and often defended them, but always stopped short of advocating the equality of blacks and whites. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 45-46.

[16] The figures for "Free Colored and Slave Population" in Ohio for 1830, the nearest census year, were 9,568 free residents and 6 slaves. *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918; repr., New York: Arno, 1968), 57. A rounded figure of 10,000 persons is not unreasonable considering that minority populations were easily undercounted at this time.

[17] Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 155. Historian Nikki Taylor reminds us that this figure doesn't include fugitive slaves, who "would have been unwilling to allow themselves to be enumerated by either census takers or city directory compilers. Even free blacks who housed fugitive slaves would have underreported the number of people in their households…" *Frontiers of Freedom*, 51 n4.

[18] "An act to provide for the support and better regulation of common schools." Approved Feb. 10, 1829, *Laws of Ohio*; and "An act in addition to the act entitled "an act to incorporate and establish the

school system. The laws barring African American children from the common schools were finally repealed in 1849, after decades of protest and activism in the community; but a new law that year succeeded in establishing separate schools for black children.[19]

Throughout the 1820s Cincinnati's African American population increased steadily, and at a rate that was faster than the increase in white population. In 1820, the city's 433 Negroes and mulattoes were 3.9 percent of the total population. By 1829 this figure had risen to 2258, or 9.4 per cent of a total population of 24,000 plus people; the greatest increase was between 1826 and 1829, swelling from 700 to 2258 African Americans. During that decade, the city's white population had only doubled.[20] Throughout the state as a whole, authorities had been lax in enforcing the Black Laws, originally designed to keep the black and mulatto populations to a minimum, if not practically eliminate them. They had proved ineffective as a strategy

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city of Cincinnati, and repealing all laws and parts of laws enacted on that subject," passed the twenty-sixth day of January, in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-seven. Approved Feb. 12, 1829, *Laws of Ohio*, quoted in Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History*, Forward by Linda McMurry (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 34.

[19] Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 161; "An act to authorize the establishment of separate schools for the education of colored children, and for other purposes. Approved February 10, 1849, *Laws of Ohio*, quoted in Middleton, *Black Laws in the Old Northwest*, 38-40. In 1830, following the 1829 riots, a group of African American property owners from Cincinnati's First Ward petitioned the Township Trustees to get the share of the school fund for black schools for which their taxes were supposed to be earmarked. See Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 93. The trustees' response was framed within the discourse of community improvement:

> Our government rests and remains in the morality, virtue, and wisdom of our free white citizens; and that by the education of them, by means of a public fund, the government is only strengthening her own resources, and providing for her own security, honor, and elevation…the common school fund is not the offspring of charity…the principal and interest is amply repaid by the exercise of those functions which the government itself imposes upon all her free white citizens.

The quote is from E.S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America…* (London, UK: John Murray, 1835; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), II: 394. Abdy believed the group had petitioned the state legislature; township trustees were the responsible agents.

[20] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 51nn3-7.

for preventing African American emigration into the state primarily because of an apparent general unwillingness of various local authorities to enforce them.[21]

A local example illustrates some of the factors involved in authorities' reluctance to enforce the Black Laws. On August 29, 1827, a group of white residents of Cincinnati's First Ward petitioned the City Council concerning "the dangers to be apprehended from certain [indecipherable] all-board houses in that neighborhood tenanted by negroes," referring to the so-called "Bucktown" area (see the maps in Figures 2.1 and 5.1). The residents complained about specific houses, "not exceeding ten or twelve feet in height….The whole neighborhood is covered with houses of similar description built upon ground [indecipherable] for terms of from three to five years and inhabited by blacks."[22] Explaining why the petition came from this part of town, Nikki Taylor has pointed out that in 1826, 49 percent of the city's African Americans lived in this area, which was also home to many of the city's artisans and unskilled laborers. These white workers were the most afraid of competition from blacks -- real or imagined. The petition made no specific demands, only complaining about black housing -- likely a veiled request for removing the black population by removing their housing.[23]

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[21] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 34; Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005, 60-66.

[22] Cincinnati City Council Minutes, Aug. 29, 1827, 4: 72-73, quoted in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 54.

[23] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 54-55.
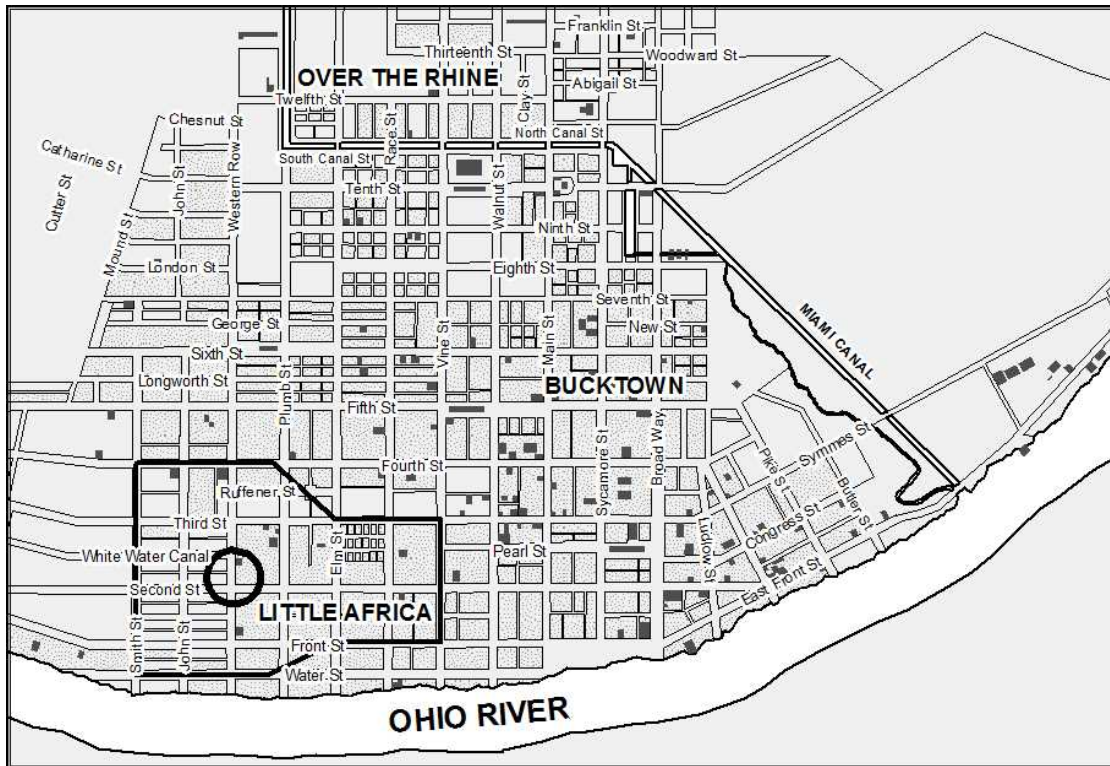
Figure 5.1 Map of African American homes centered on Columbia St. (Second St.) and Western Row, area of general attack during the Cincinnati Race Riots, 1829.

Adapted from Map 4.1, "Cincinnati in 1850," Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati" in Taylor, ed., *Race in the City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); this map was adapted from Doolittle and Munson, *Topographical Map of the City of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Doolittle and Munson, 1841).

The city council appeared to read the petition as asking for removal of the

Negro housing. They were reluctant to commit violence against the black residents,

many of whom were in extreme poverty, telling the petitioners,

> The committee think [*sic*] it highly improper to prostrate all those little
> tenements because the poverty of their tenants renders it improbable for them
> to build a more permanent dwelling….We cannot drive the black population
> from the city in the summary way of pulling down the houses over their
> heads.[24]

The City council members in 1827 were all retail and wholesale merchants, and small

business owners - as were the 1829 council members.[25] Many of the wealthiest men

sat on the council because the position paid no salary and these men could afford the

time and effort required. In fact, mercantile interests -- bankers, merchants, and

lawyers -- dominated city government.[26] The middle-class and elite-class cultures of

these men were such that they would have been reluctant to take any actions against

the black community that suggested a loss of control; they would have preferred to

achieve goals by non-violent means. They would not have wanted to be known for

having forced blacks from their homes, even if they preferred for them to leave.

In 1828 there were other local attempts to remove or reduce the African

American population in Cincinnati prior to the 1829 riots. That year the managers of

the Cincinnati Colonization Society asked the ministers of the city to collect funds on

July 4 to aid in transporting blacks to Liberia. A letter to the editor of the Cincinnati

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[24] Cincinnati City Council Minutes, Aug. 29, 1827, 4: 72-73, quoted in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 54.

[25] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 243-244n27.

[26] Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 78-79; Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West*, 87.

Gazette on July 4 in support of the effort mixed a dispassionate plea for

"transportation of blacks to Liberia" and "the practicability of removing the negroes"

with the much more emotional "Where is the American…on the birth day of his

freedom….Where is the friend of liberty, who does not wish to remove from the

annals of our country that foul and damning stain which the encouragement of slavery

has produced?"[27] In one brief note, this author has tied an impersonal shipping of

blacks to Africa to patriotism on the 4th of July and wrapped it all in the promise of

erasing the stain of the mistake of slavery from history. Slavery and its effects will not

simply be ended, but "remov[ed] from the annals of our country."[28] Later in 1828,

responding to a citizens' petition concerning the increase in black population, the

Cincinnati City Council established a committee "to take measures to prevent the

increase of the negro population within the city." Records of their decisions and

actions are not extant.[29]

The year 1829 continued to bring bad news to Ohio's Negroes and mulattoes.

Early in 1829 a group of white Ohio citizens charged that the Black Laws were

unconstitutional. The case was heard before the Ohio State Supreme Court, meeting in

Cincinnati, and in March the court decided that the Black Laws were indeed

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[27] "D," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 4, 1828.

[28] Ibid. As Joanne Pope Melish has shown, when New England achieved the end of slavery through "gradual emancipation" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the effect was to erase both slavery and the memory of it from public consciousness, also effectively erasing all sense of blacks living in their midst as a normal phenomenon. See her *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[29] Cincinnati City Council Minutes, Nov. 19, 1828; cited in Wade, *Urban Frontier*, 225; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 57.

constitutional.[30] This decision reinforced the ability of these laws to structure race-making at the local level; Negrophobic forces within Cincinnati were emboldened. The Black Laws categorized African Americans as a separate group within American society, with separate laws under a constitution that promised equality under the law. This effectively created and recreated *blackness* and *whiteness* by spacing blacks and whites apart from each other, even when occupying the same geographical area -- they are spaced apart in the law. The remedy for blacks who broke the residency law was the spacing technology of removal from the state. By not specifying the manner of this removal, impunity is given to any and all methods that might be used to achieve the goal, including force.

Negroes and mulattoes in Cincinnati were confronted with the new reality of the state Supreme Court's decision almost immediately. Following the state Supreme Court finding that the Black Laws were constitutional, white citizens in Cincinnati's Third Ward decided to make the most of a renewed impunity to enforce to the Black Laws. On March 18, 1829, at a meeting of the citizens of the Ward, they elected John H. Phillips, Bellamy Storer, and Jonah Martin as delegates to a nominating convention for candidates for city and Township officers in the upcoming election. The only mandate given to the delegates was the following resolution concerning the Black Laws:

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[30] "Colored People in Ohio" [from the *Cincinnati Emporium*], *Ohio State Journal (and Columbus Gazette)*, July 16, 1829; Wilberforce, "Removal of Black and Mulatto Persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 20, 1829; "Coloured People in Ohio," *African Repository* 5, no 6 (Aug. 1829): 185. So far, it has not been possible to determine who brought the original suit in the lower courts. Only a brief, passing notice of the Ohio State Supreme Court decision is available from contemporary sources. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 58n43.

> *Resolved,* That the delegates from the Third ward, be instructed to nominate no persons for Township Trustees, but such as will put in force the laws of the state relative to black and mulatto persons - carried unanimously.[31]

Those who pledged to uphold the Black Laws apparently carried the election of Township Trustees.[32] The rules of living in the community had changed.

A week later, on March 27th, the *Gazette* published a letter to the editor from a group of African Americans, signed "Sons of Aethiopia," clearly afraid of being exiled from the city by the new rules concerning the Black Laws. Referring to the Third Ward mandate on nominees for Township Trustee to pledge to enforce the Black Laws, the writer maintains that, up to that point, blacks and mulattoes had believed they were safe enough. But, "if that act is enforced, we, the poor sons of Aethiopia, must take shelter where we can find it…if we cannot find it in America, where we were born and have spent all our days, we must beg it elsewhere. But where, Heaven only knows." [33]

Charles Hammond began his editorial comment directly below the "Sons of Aethiopia" letter with a plea for a hearing:

> This race of people, whom we have contributed to degrade, and whom we still hold in degradation, are entitled to the sympathy of all generous minds. If the resolution referred to, contemplates only the idle and vagrant part of them, it is well enough. But if it is intended to give it a rigid application to all people of

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[31] *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 20, 1829. Bellamy Storer was the chair of this meeting and M. Brooks was the secretary.

[32] Folk states that this is the case, but gives no clear evidence; see Folk, "'Queen City of Mobs,'" 47. Nikki Taylor cites Folk. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 58, n. 42.

[33] Letter to the Editor, from "Sons of Aethiopia," *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 27, 1829.

color, no matter how correct their conduct, or how unquestionable their freedom, then it should be regarded as an high handed effort of tyranny.[34]

In a classic case of racial amnesia,[35] he next confuses the ideals of American thought about equality with the practices of actual Americans:

> In our country, a freeman is a freeman, no matter what his country or his color.…That part of our colored population who are free…honest…industrious and correct in their deportment, have nothing to fear from the enforcement of our laws.…It is only runaway slaves and idle vagrants, that have occasion for alarm.…The people of color owe it to themselves, and to their own security, to give no shelter to runaways or vagrants. Let them act upon this principle and they can be driven to "*beg*" protection out of the state of Ohio.[36]

Those who participated in the riots of 1829, or stood on the sidelines contributing the sanction of public opinion and on-the-spot impunity through their non-action or outright encouragement, never considered that there were different kinds of Negroes or mulattoes, just as there were different sorts of whites.

Several months went by without any reference to the Black Laws in the local press. Then on June 30th, the recently elected Trustees of Cincinnati Township, acting in their role as Overseers of the Poor, published an announcement in the papers giving notice, "that the duties required of them by the act…entitled an act to regulate black and mulatto persons, and the act amendatory thereto, will hereafter be rigidly enforced." All blacks and mulattoes who had not already done so had thirty days to register $500 bonds for their support from two freemen, or the law would be "rigidly enforced" -- they would be forced to leave the city and the state of Ohio. The

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[34] *Cincinnati Gazette,* March 27, 1829.

[35] For a discussion of racial amnesia, see Chapter 4.

[36] *Cincinnati Gazette,* March 27, 1829; italics are in the original.

announcement also contained a warning: any resident of Ohio who "shall employ, harbor or conceal any such negro or mulatto person aforesaid, contrary to the provisions of…this act" would be fined up to $100 for each offence, "the one half to the informer, and the other half for the use of the poor of the township in which such person may reside." This person would also "be liable for the maintenance and support of such negro or mulatto, provided he, she or they shall become unable to support themselves" -- as the original act had stated. The announcement ended with, "The co-operation of the public is expected in carrying these laws into full effect" -- an open invitation to participate in enforcement, however it may be pursued. It was signed by the Trustees of Cincinnati Township, and dated June 29, 1829.[37]

At some point after the Spring elections in early April, with their accompanying renewed interest on the part of white residents in enforcing the Black Laws, and somewhat before the ultimatum from the Overseers of the Poor at the end of June, "the colored people had a meeting, and talked about a court of appeals to test the law."[38] There is no way to know how many people were at the meeting; a letter to a local newspaper from representatives of this meeting claimed that 2,000 people attended.[39] They talked about leaving the city: "Some talked about going to Texas, - we knew not what to do: we were sore perplexed." At this meeting a colonization or

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[37] "To the Public," *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 30, 1829. The Township Trustees who signed this notice were William Mills, Benjamin Hopkins, and George Lee.

[38] "J.C. Brown," in Benjamin Drew, *A North-side View of Slavery: The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 244.

[39] "To the Honorable Trustees of this Township," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 1, 1829.

emigration scheme began to take shape, with James C. Brown, a man of mixed Negro and white ancestry, as the leader of the group: "I spoke to them of Canada, and we formed a Colonization Society, of which I was president."[40]

The letter appeared in the *Gazette* on July 1, the day after the Trustees' ultimatum about the enforcement of the Black Laws had appeared. The group asked for the Trustees to wait to act until their elected representatives returned from "some distant part of the globe" with information concerning a possible emigration. They had been given thirty days to comply with the law or leave; people had lost their jobs "in consequence of this distressing law, relating to all people of color" and the group was asking for three additional months to "wind up our business and be better prepared to leave."[41] Brown had written a letter to the government at Little York (Toronto), Canada, seeking "an asylum for ourselves, our wives, and children. Two members of the Board went with the letter to Toronto, and were well received by Sir John [Colborne]."[42]

B. Public Discourse on the Black Laws and Negro Removal before the Riots

On July 4 Charles Hammond published an editorial in the *Gazette* on "Black and Mulatto Persons" criticizing the Trustees' "determination, within a given period, [to] rigidly enforce the laws with respect to those persons." He questioned whether,

> the Trustees, and the citizens who call upon them to act, [have] well considered
> what they are about to undertake! - Negroes and mulattoes are men, and have,

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[40] "J.C. Brown," in Drew, *The Refugee*, 239; the quote is on page 244.

[41] "To the Honorable Trustees of this Township," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 1, 1829.

[42] "J.C. Brown," in Drew, *The Refugee*, 244.

at least, some of the rights of men under our laws. The proposition to drive fifteen hundred or two thousand persons from their homes, is one which ought not to be executed without carefully surveying the attempt in all its probable effects and consequences. Its practicability under the law, is one subject of serious consideration. Its policy and humanity another.

Focusing on the impracticality of the Trustee's stated intentions, he wondered, "In what manner is the removal to be effected? Are vehicles of conveyance and provisions to be provided? Or are men, women and children to be driven on foot out of the state, and to provide for their own subsistence or starve?" He admitted his argument was legalistic, not "touch[ing] the questions whether the law for removal is constitutional or just." The impracticality of Ohio's law was credited to its internal inconsistencies. A lawyer, Hammond's main concern was whether the county had the legal authority to spend the money to publish the notice of removal in the first place -- avoiding the moral issues inherent in Negro removal altogether.[43]

While the *Gazette* published a critique of the Trustees' ultimatum to the black community on July 4th , the Cincinnati *Chronicle* ran a piece that day promoting the virtues of the American Colonization Society and its colony in Liberia. A sermon was to be preached that morning in support of the ACS at a local church, followed by "a collection taken up." The paper's editor pleads,

> It must be admitted even by the opponents of this society that the evil which it proposes to correct, is one of tremendous magnitude, fraught in the coming…years, with the most awful consequences to the peace, the happiness and the duration of our republic. Shall we then supinely await the bursting of this storm of blood and carnage upon us?[44]

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[43] Editorial: "Black and Mulatto Persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 4, 1829.

[44] "Liberia," *Cincinnati Chronicle and Literary Gazette*, July 4, 1829.

Below this the paper reprinted an untitled article from the *New England Review* detailing the necessity of shipping all blacks in the U.S. to Africa, believing that once blacks outnumber whites, they will take revenge in a race war. The writer's argument pivots on the fear of the consequences of slavery in a land where it is impossible to keep "the enslaved African in a state of intellectual bondage, and shutting out from his soul every thought of Liberty!" Without the intervention of African colonization, an inevitable race-war was on the horizon:

> What is to be done?- How are we to escape the danger of finding ourselves left to the tender mercies of an infuriated slave population? There is but one way - we must remove that population from our territory, while yet the power is in our hands. In this lies the salvation of our country.[45]

It's clear that there were wide differences of opinion about the necessity of removing the black population among Cincinnati's newspapermen.

In the same July 4th issue of the *Gazette* in which Charles Hammond questioned the practicality of the Black Laws and the legality of the Trustees' notice of their intention to enforce them, he also published a piece from a portion of the black community, signed by five members of one of the churches, declaring their sentiments on the matter:

> We, the undersigned, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 200 in number, do certify that we form no part of that indefinite number that are asking a change in the laws of Ohio; all we ask, is a continuation of the smiles of the white people as we have hitherto enjoyed them.[46]

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[45] Ibid.

[46] *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 4, 1829, quoted in John Malvin, *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*, ed. Allan Peskin (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988), 43n6. I was unable to find this piece in the *Gazette*; it is possible that that the newspaper, or the date, was wrong in the original citation. It is worth noting, that of the two African American churches in the city at this time, the Methodist Episcopal was the one that was not independent of a white congregation;

They were responding, in part, to an attempt on the part of a group of "the colored men of Cincinnati" to petition the Ohio General Assembly "for the repeal of those obnoxious black laws." The petition had been signed by a number of prominent white residents, including wealthy horticulture improver, cultural booster and charitable benefactor Nicholas Longworth and booster and improver of the local fire department J. W. Piatt.[47] It is not known if any of the members of this church were involved in J.C. Brown's colonization scheme, but it is clear from this notice that the idea of asking for civil rights or challenging the *status quo* was threatening to a portion of the black community. And there was clearly not unanimity about the Black Laws or about leaving the city.

These three pieces in Cincinnati's July 4th newspapers were the opening comments in a public conversation on the practicality, legality, and morality of the Black Laws and consequent possible Negro removal in the city. The following week, the Cincinnati *Emporium* ran a pro-colonization article that cited James Brown's July 1st letter asking for three months' delay "to make arrangements for their final removal." This writer thought granting this request was "reasonable":

> We consider this class of people as a serious evil among us, but this evil has been brought upon us by the whites, with great injustice to them; the only

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they had a lot at stake in maintaining good relations with that congregation. See Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 40-43. The other church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, "was in favor of the repeal of those obnoxious laws." Malvin, *North into Freedom*, 43.

[47] Malvin, *North into Freedom*, 41-42nn4-5.

remedy afforded is, to colonize them in their mother country. Now is the time for Colonization Societies "to be up and doing."[48]

Removal of all "two thousand" reported to have met to discuss emigration is treated as a foregone conclusion. His message: colonization societies should take advantage of the legal climate created by the Supreme Court decision as well as the movement of Negroes and mulattoes themselves towards leaving the state to "be up and doing" -- to help them leave. It was a call to action.

Two weeks after the flurry of discussion of the Black Laws and the threat of expulsion by the Trustees in the July 4th papers, three weeks of additional public discourse in the *Gazette* began to take shape. There must have been a lot of discussion in the community at large for so much of it to spill into the pages of the local press. Only one newspaper, the *Gazette*, appears to have served as a platform for this discussion. Hammond's July 4th editorial had already set the framework of legal and constitutional, moral, and practical considerations of the Black Laws and the Trustee's threat of Negro removal. His arguments about the practicality and the legality of spending county funds on publishing the notice avoided moral considerations entirely.

The first person to join the public discourse was "A Friend to Humanity" writing "A Female Address on Behalf of the People of Colour." She doesn't mince words:

> I am led to deplore the sorrowful condition into which an immediate expulsion must necessarily involve them. Many of them are very honest and industrious, but have not the means to carry themselves and their little effects beyond the

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[48] "Colored People in Ohio" [from the *Cincinnati Emporium*], *Ohio State Journal (and Columbus Gazette)*, July 16, 1829. I was only able to view the reprint of this article in the *Ohio State Journal*.

limits prescribed…if hastily expelled they will be subject to hunger and cold, or be forced to beg or steal.

 Within her humanistic argument of universal siblinghood,

why then should they [people of color] not be allowed such privileges as the white people, to live in a free state, and enjoy the just right of liberty of conscience, to work, buy and sell, which would, in my view, have the tendency to make them honest: But we debar them of this privilege, and threaten those who employ them, with a heavy fine, and they are to be banished.

She is incredulous that her neighbors would really "fall upon, chastise and drive them into the wilderness, because they have a skin not coloured [*sic*] like our own," violating the "Golden Rule." In the end she still concedes that removal is a possibility, but insists that she "cannot see how any can proceed against them, til a place be prepared for them comfortably to retreat to."[49] For this author, separate laws for blacks are not necessary, or proper. But she ends up attempting to temper an inevitable violence with humanity.

Monday, July 20, three days after the essay by "A Friend to Humanity" was published in the *Gazette*, the first of four long, legalistic articles written by "Wilberforce" in favor of the Black Laws and openly advocating Negro removal appeared in the paper.[50] In "Removal of Negro and Mulatto Persons," after a tortured discussion of British Common Law and natural rights theory, he announces that the section of the Ohio Constitution that states that, "all men are born equally free and

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[49] "A Female Address on Behalf of the People of Colour," by "A Friend to Humanity" [pseud.], *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 17, 1829.

[50] That this writer called himself "Wilberforce" is a double irony. William Wilberforce, MP (1759-1833), was a well-known British abolitionist instrumental in ending both the slave trade and slavery itself in the British Isles and its possessions. "Wilberforce" was also the name of the colony in Canada that James C. Brown and other African Americans from Cincinnati and Boston founded. For more about the Wilberforce colony, see Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 62-79.

independent, and have certain natural, inherent and inalienable rights, amongst which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty" is just talk:

> Liberty and equality are sweet-sounding terms; but…they have, at most, but a partial existence on earth….Mark the difference between the talented and simple…the rich and the poor, - the black and the white….While these terms are upon our tongues, we proclaim by our acts that we recognize no such thing.[51]

Apparently, if few people observe a principle of the United States government, it can be presumed to be nullified.

Two days later, "Montesquieu" only objected to Wilberforce's style of argument: "I believe his end is laudable, but his data is erroneous."[52] On Friday, July 24, "Wilberforce" continued his defense of the constitutionality of the Black Laws by defending the pauper law. He thought it only a "slight difference" that the law says that Township officials "in the case of white emigrants, *may* require a bond of indemnity [and] in the case of blacks, they *shall* require it." His rhetorical question indicates where he believes "common sense" lays:

> Now, is it not an admitted fact, that the presumption is, that black immigrants are paupers, until the contrary appears? Is it not equally true, that in regard to the whites, the presumption is the reverse? Is it unreasonable, is it unconstitutional, to make a difference in the application of the law to these different classes of men?[53]

The test of constitutionality here is reasonableness - common sense. There are no difficult constitutional issues - just what is reasonable. But reasonableness -

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[51] Wilberforce [pseud.], "Removal of Black and Mulatto Persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 20, 1829.

[52] Montesquieu [pseud.], "For the Daily Cincinnati Gazette," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 22, 1829.

[53] "Wilberforce - No. 2," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 24, 1829; italics are in the original.

common sense - is not natural, but a cultural system,[54] and as such it is socially

constructed within unequal power relations and dominated by those with social,

political, and cultural hegemony in a community.[55] It is one of those ideas, as

sociologist Beth Roy reminds us, that is "learned, and then we forget that they were

learned…because they conform to social arrangements that so dominate our

organization of experience that they appear to be inevitable."[56]

As we saw in Chapter 4, Catherine Beecher saw nothing at all wrong with

white prejudice against Negroes and mulattoes because it was not *unreasonable*; it

made good sense, constructing white privilege wherever it was used as a race making

technology.[57] For Wilberforce, as for the Ohio Supreme Court in their recent decision,

the Black Laws, like white privilege, were common sense:

> Our constitution was framed and adopted by white people, and for their own
> benefit; and they of course had a right to say on what terms they would admit
> black emigrants to a residence here, and whether they would admit
> them….Unquestionably they were not contemplated by the framers of the

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[54] Anthropologist Clifford Geertz helped to articulate the idea that common sense "can be questioned, disputed, affirmed, developed, formalized, contemplated, even taught, and it can vary dramatically from one people to the next. It is, in short, a cultural system." See Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 76.

[55] For Antonio Gramsci, common sense, like other ideas, is constructed within hegemonic power relations in a community. He has defined common sense as "the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed." Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International, 1971), 419.

[56] Beth Roy, *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994), 146.

[57] See Chapter 4.

constitution as becoming citizens on terms of equality with the whites…we have a right to legislate for our own protection in regard to them.[58]

But in Wilberforce we also see the privileges of whiteness harnessed to create a new categorizing technology: whites may be classified as paupers or not, depending on their circumstances, but Negroes and mulattoes are automatically categorized as paupers.[59] In their case this triggers the legal remedy for the criminally vagrant -- the spacing technology of removal. Wilberforce has created a racial grotesque:[60] all people of color are guilty of vagrancy unless proven innocent. He has constructed and justified an early form of racial profiling.[61]

On the following Monday, July 27, Blackstone challenged Wilberforce and Montesquieu on both constitutional and human rights grounds. The African American population he describes differs significantly from the "idle vagabonds" portrayed by those who favor Negro removal; most had arrived in the state since the passage of the 1807 residency requirements in the Black Laws and,

> encouraged to settle here by the demand for their services, [they] remain[ed] for years, acquiring property, and raising up their families; & when they least suspect it, an old law, which was originally a disgrace to our statute book, is revived; - and no matter how quiet, unoffending, or honest they may be, *all*

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[58] "Wilberforce - No. 2," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 24, 1829.

[59] Wilberforce was writing long before the Supreme Court case which established the doctrine of the "presumption of innocence" in Americans law: Coffin, et al. v. United States, 156 U.S. 432 and 15 S. Ct. 394; decided March 4, 1895.

[60] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the racial grotesque.

[61] Racial and ethnic profiling in the United States, directed in particular at African Americans and Hispanics, and at the men in these groups, is when the person in question is assumed to be "in the wrong part of town," "up to no good," or "committing a crime," because of their perceived racial or ethnic identity - even when no crime has been committed. The person is assumed to be a vagrant and a criminal and is treated like one, regardless of their appearance, residency, occupation, class status, educational background, or behavior.

black or mulatto persons are warned to leave the country in thirty days, or give security for their good behavior.[62]

The 1807 Black Law is unconstitutional: it is not applied to both whites and blacks; it deprives a person of a constitutionally guaranteed trial by jury; and it "makes township Trustees both judicial and executive officers…they try and condemn; and execute their own sentence," blending the separate powers of government and sending it toward "despotism." The 1807 Black Law inflicts "serious injury in causing many persons to sacrifice their property and leave their homes" and it is "impossible to enforce it under any circumstances."[63] For Blackstone, the *social suffering* caused by the Black Laws, "the devastating injuries that social force inflicts on human experience…from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people,"[64] made them morally wrong, as well as unconstitutional.

Agreeing with Hammond's critique of the law's practicability and Blackstone's critique of its constitutionality, "Jefferson" concentrated on its lack of justice:

> Because we deprive them [blacks] of some unessential rights [like voting] it does not follow that we are authorized to drive them from their residence and their property, or prevent them from acquiring both, merely because they have a skin not coloured like our own.[65]

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[62] Blackstone [pseud.], "An enquiry into the constitutionality of the law regulating black and mulatto persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 27, 1829.

[63] Blackstone [pseud.], "An enquiry into the constitutionality of the law regulating black and mulatto persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 27, 1829.

[64] Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, "Introduction," to the Special Issue on Social Suffering, *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (Winter 1996): xi.

[65] Jefferson [pseud.], "To the Trustees of Cincinnati Township," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Tues. July 28, 1829.

He told the story of a black carpenter he knew who had entered into a long-term contract for property for his business and would now have to default, losing his investment: "No doubt many of a similar kind exist.…It is difficult to determine whether this principle is more repugnant to the dictates of common sense, than abhorrent to those of good conscience, whether it be a greater insult to our intelligence or morality." Why, when these laws have not been enforced since they were enacted, were the Trustees enforcing them now? He ended by asking his readers, when surrounded by their own families, to imagine black families starving, in winter weather, in a strange land, "through your instrumentality."[66]

The representatives from J. C. Brown's immigration group had been well received in Canada. The group was invited to immigrate to Canada with their families in a letter that Brown had published in the Cincinnati *Gazette*. On July 30, one month after the initial notice from the Trustees about enforcing the Black Laws, a notice appeared on page one of the *Gazette* from a portion of the black community, representing themselves as *the* black community, announcing their intention to emigrate.[67] It was reprinted on Aug. 1 and 8 on page one - ensuring that a lot of residents saw it. It began,

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[66] Jefferson [pseud.], "To the Trustees of Cincinnati Township," Cincinnati *Gazette*, Tues. July 28, 1829.

[67] Leadership in most communities assumes that it represents the *whole* community. Brown's group represented Cincinnati's black community as unanimous in its feelings; this was not the case. There were Negroes and mulattoes who were not in favor of leaving the city, not in favor of colonization in Africa, and not in favor of even changing the Black Laws. See "Colonization. Written by a Mulatto Man, a Native of Virginia," *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 30, 1829; and an article about a black church group that did not want the Black Laws changed in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, cited in Malvin, *North into Freedom*, 43n6.

THE GENEROUS PUBLIC
ARE informed, that the coloured people have obtained a place to emigrate to, by the benevolence of the Governor of Canada, who has given their agent choice of three districts of country. They have written back to their constituents informing them of their success. The country is beautiful, and amazingly fertile.

To help those who "have been denied employment, and cannot, therefore, get away" the group (of unknown name) picked five white men - S. Burrows, Daniel Gano, J. Sullivan, Morgan Neville, and William Pushon - to receive donations on their behalf. It was signed, "J.C. Brown, President of the Board. Elijah Forte, Secretary."[68]

According to Brown, after the letter's publication, he and several other leaders in the group were "sent for by the city government, next day," which made an appeal for them not to go to Canada: "The reason was, as Mr. Hotchkiss said, that I…was doing a great deal of mischief; for every one that I took off to Canada was a sword drawn against the United States." The white power structure apparently thought it could not only remove the black population from the city, but dictate where it could go, as well. They wanted them far away, in Africa, where they could not seek redress or retribution, aid a foreign power in attacking the United States, or remind whites of their responsibilities to them.[69] The group ignored the request and pressed on with their plans. Brown "sent three wagon loads out to Sandusky the next day," on their way to Canada; he and his family left, as well, a month or so later.[70]

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[68] "The Generous Public," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 30, 1829.

[69] Historian Nikki Taylor has suggested that the wealthier white men in the city might have feared the loss of low-cost laborers. The Mayor disingenuously offered to try to get the Black Laws revoked. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 65.

[70] "J.C. Brown," in Drew, *The Refugee*, 244-245; the quotes are on page 245.

The discourse in the *Gazette* was capped with the last two installments of

Wilberforce's defense of the Black Laws. Attacking Blackstone's approach to the

Negro problem, he betrayed an interesting racial construction: blacks were a job

category, or occupation. He accused Blackstone of having

> some crude, undefinable [*sic*] idea, floating on the surface of his mind, that a
> legislative body has no right to make laws, which apply exclusively to
> particular classes and conditions of men… [then] they can enact no laws,
> which give the township trustees, power and control over paupers…none,
> which shall apply only to merchants or mechanics; to the lawyer or to the
> physician.[71]

As patronizing in his attacks on Blackstone as he was in his attitude toward African

Americans, Wilberforce ended with, "I am as kindly affected towards the unfortunate

blacks as anyone; and rejoice to learn that they have the prospect of finding a pleasant

retreat in Canada."[72] By early August, when this article appeared, he could afford to be

"kindly affected" as many Negroes and mulattoes in Cincinnati appeared to be

preparing to leave.

None of the other Cincinnati papers appear to have participated in the three-

week discourse on the Black Laws before the riots. However, one county away, in

Lebanon, Ohio, A. H. Dunlavy published an editorial on August 1 in the *Western Star*

critical of the Black Laws and the renewed attempt to enforce them in Cincinnati -

while reserving the right to keep blacks out of the state. Finding a clear parallel of

purpose between the Ohio State Supreme Court's decision that the Black Laws are

constitutional and President Jackson's policy of Indian Removal, he continued:

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[71] "Wilberforce - No. 3," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1829.

[72] "Wilberforce - No. 4," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, 1829.

Remove all our black[s] and mulattoes to the places of their last legal settlement! Poor creatures, they have no place of settlement. They were first wrested by violence from their native land, and now that some of them can no longer be rendered subservient to the cause of avarice and speculation they are not permitted to remain on our continent! -- The slave states will not have them because they are *free*; and the free states will not have them because they are *black*! – Where are they to go? [73]

While claiming that "the increase of our black population is an evil in our state and particularly in our cities and larger towns," and that, "we have the right of preventing the immigration of colored people into our state. So far as this can be prevented, it should be," Dunlavy is "not willing to see them sacrificed for our benefit." Ambivalent, he advocates "voluntary emigration to Hayti [*sic*] or Africa," and if this is "impracticable," then "education and moral instruction must be extended to them as the only means to correct the vicious and idle habits which now in too many instances render them unpleasant neighbors and useless members of society."[74] This editorial exhibits many of the contradictory elements in white people's thinking about the Negro problem: they don't like the idea of violence, but they really don't like the idea of free black people. So they do what they have to do. Many of the residents of Cincinnati, rather than showing the artificially clear separation of sensibilities exhibited in the discourse in the *Gazette*, are more likely to have had mixed emotions and motives not seen in the *Gazette's* presentation.

This discourse ended abruptly with Wilberforce's final article on August 3. The notice from the black colonization group professing their intention to immigrate

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[73] "D" [A.H. Dunlavy] Editorial: "The Colored People of Ohio," *Western Star* [Lebanon, OH], Aug. 1, 1829; italics are in the original.

[74] Ibid..

to Canada was published in the *Gazette* again August 1 and 8. During the following

week Hammond published a variety of pro-Indian articles in the *Gazette* concerning

Indian-white violence, involving the Iowas and possibly groups of Sioux and

Winnebagoes in Missouri, and Creeks in Georgia.[75] His overall sense of the recent

violence in Georgia and Missouri was that it had "originat[ed] in the oppressive

avarice of the whites. The Indian is right." Whites had over-reacted to Creek "secret

councils" of "remonstrance" as though they were "war councils.' He believed it was

better to be exterminated than suffer "being marched from a cultivated home to a

desert wilderness." Hammond, unlike perhaps a majority of his white contemporaries,

saw the land that Native Peoples inhabited in America as improved – as cultivated –

and as their *home*.[76] But he shared with most of these contemporaries the inability to

recognize parallels between Indian removal and Negro removal, and to see Cincinnati

as the rightful and legal home of Negro and mulatto residents.

C. The Race Riots of 1829

On Saturday night, August 15 and Sunday morning, August 16, 1829, after

three weeks of public discussion of the Black Laws and Negro removal - followed by

a week of public silence on these issues- the only surviving account by a Cincinnatian

briefly tells us that a large mob of residents assembled, intending to "force" free

Negroes who were in violation of the residency laws out of the city. The mob

"attacked and demolished" the homes of blacks and beat and chased them "though the

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[75] See *Cincinnati Gazette* issues for Aug. 8, 10, 11, 14, and 17, 1829.

[76] "More Indian Alarms," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 11, 1829; "Georgia Indians," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 14, 1829.

streets" and out of the city. Some blacks apparently defended themselves, because a "young man of respectable character," a member of this mob, was killed by some of those he had targeted.[77] Appearing in an article in a newspaper eighty-five miles away in Portsmouth, and based on a letter to the paper from someone in Cincinnati, this was the only direct account of the August 15th anti-Negro violence in Cincinnati that I found, or that any other researcher has found.[78]

What did appear in print in Cincinnati, however, was an editorial by Charles Hammond in the *Gazette* on Monday, August 17, again critical of the 1807 Black Law concerning residency. In explaining that the recent Ohio Supreme Court decision confirming its constitutionality "was not a solemn decision of the supreme court…but that of the chief justice only, hastily made, without serious argument," Hammond reminded his readers of those in the public debate who thought the law was "unconstitutional…unjust…[and] impractical of execution." He then referred to "the late attempt to enforce it here...reflecting in the correctness of all these opinions" of the law's flaws. From this point on in the editorial, titled in bold typeface "**STRANGE MISTAKE**," Hammond referred to an "it" that had done a number of heinous things in the community: the only "it" to which he could have referred was "the late attempt to enforce it [the 1807 residency law] here." But an ambiguity remains throughout the rest of the editorial concerning whether this "it" was the larger

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[77] "Riot in Cincinnati," *Western Times* [Portsmouth, OH], Aug. 22, 1829.

[78] "Queen City of Mobs," 53 n33; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 64n74. In Taylor's treatment of the 1829 riots, she conflates the events of August 15 with those of August 17 - 22, mixing her sources. I see August 17 as an important point in the sequence of events; Hammond's editorial on that day is an important touchstone for the violent events that follow, discussed later in this chapter.

community project of wanting to more rigorously enforce the laws about black

residents, or a specific instance of attempting to enforce the laws -- such as a

collective action or riot. The first thing he accused "it" of doing is having "driven

away the sober, honest, industrious, and useful portion of the coloured population. The

vagrant is unaffected by it."[79]

Most of the rest of the editorial is a catalog of negative consequences of "it":

loosening the "moral restraint" of "respectable persons of their own colour…upon the

idle and indolent"; causing employers to be sued by "common informers' for hiring

blacks; subjecting "men of colour who held property, to great sacrifices;" and finally:

> It has demonstrated the humiliating fact, that cruelty and injustice, the rank
> oppression of a devoted people, may be consummated in the midst of us,
> without exciting either active sympathy, or operative indignation.…A dead
> apathy has prevailed, whilst the ignoble passions of a few have perpetrated an
> extensive mischief - demoralizing in its principles, and suicidal in its
> consequences, as time must make manifest.[80]

Despite a lack of reportage on any violent actions against the black community over

the weekend of August 15-16 in any other Cincinnati newspaper,[81] Hammond's

remarks indicate that some "extensive mischief" - the "it" to which he continually

refers - was committed by persons of "ignoble passions." This is clearly the August

15th riot to which the writer of the letter to the Portsmouth *Western Star* referred.

Hammond, perhaps unintentionally, punctuated his editorial opinion with the last line

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[79] Editorial: "Strange Mistake," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 17, 1829.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 53n32. Folk thoroughly surveyed the "eight surviving Cincinnati newspapers" and found that none of them had reported the initial violence on August 15.

of a report, elsewhere on the page, on the "MISSOURI INDIAN WAR," capping a week of reports on white-Indian violence. Apparently frontier settlers had made up reports that Indians had killed some of their livestock to justify their violence: "The Indians are always pursued with punishment when they are the aggressors: ought the whites to escape [?]"[82] Hammond is unwilling to write directly about the weekend's anti-black violence, but he is clearly concerned with its consequences, and implicitly, through his comments on the white-Indian violence in Missouri, with justice against the white perpetrators.

A second period of intermittent but more serious violence against Negroes and mulattoes occurred between August 17 and 22. Only one local newspaper ever reported on it, and this article exists only in reprints in two other newspapers. This article, reproduced in the opening of this chapter, refers to "some three or four hundred [blacks]" having "left the city and started with their property and families for Canada" after the June 30th notice from the Township Trustees appeared in the *Gazette*. Those who stayed and "[ran] the risk of forcible removal…paid for their temerity." The article plainly calls the violence "for four or five evenings last week…the most disgraceful riots." The writer assigns the mob to "two or three hundred of the lowest canaille of our city, animated by the prospect of high wages [and]…thinking the law not rapid enough in its movements, in getting rid of the blacks." Throughout the week mobs "made the most violent assaults, in great numbers upon the blacks...throwing stones, demolishing houses, doing every other act of

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[82] "Missouri Indian War," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 17, 1829.

riotous violence." By Saturday, August 22, blacks "despairing of receiving the protection of the law, fired upon the mob, killed one man, and severely wounded two others."[83]

Mayor Jacob Burnet was out of town during the riots, and Alderman William Greene, as the acting Mayor, had not taken any action to quell the violence. When Burnet returned, he heard the cases of those arrested: the blacks were found to have fired guns in self defense, and were freed; six of eight white men arrested were fined $100 each and two were fined $50 each. The *Cincinnati Sentinel* insisted it was the black population firing on the mob that ended the riots.[84]

There were two periods of riots in 1829: Saturday, August 15, and intermittently, from August 17-22. Black defenders killed a white attacker "of respectable character" on August 15; and on August 22 they killed another white attacker and "severely wounded two others." The papers reported no black casualties, though that doesn't mean there were none. Unlike white rioters, none of the black defenders was convicted of a crime, as the Mayor determined they were acting in self defense. One student of these riots felt that the Negroes and mulattoes of Cincinnati had won this battle.[85] If that is in any way true, then they surely lost the war. Estimates of the number of African Americans who left Cincinnati as a result of the threat to

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[83] "Riot" [from the Cincinnati *Sentinel*], *Western Star* [Lebanon, OH], Aug. 29, 1829.

[84] Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 55; "Riot" [from the *Cincinnati Sentinel*], *Western Star* [Lebanon, OH], Aug. 29, 1829.

[85] Historian Leonard Curry declared, "In this instance, at least, the black community appears to have been totally victorious." *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of a Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 105.

enforce the residency law, as a result of the riots, or who left soon after the violence had ended, have varied, with the best estimate between 1,100 and 1,500 persons.[86] The 1829 City Directory gives a figure of 2,258 for "Blacks and mulattoes."[87] If the population had continued growing after riots at its previous rate for the decade of 15 percent a year,[88] then two years later, when the next City Directory was published, the "Black and mulatto" population should have been 2,986. The 1831 directory, however, published a figure of 1,194, less than half of what was projected.[89] This lends weight to the belief that about half the African American population left Cincinnati with their families in 1829.

D. Mopping Up

Several weeks after the riots ended, a final phase of Cincinnati's 1829 Negro removal project began. The township trustees held a public meeting on September 12, chaired by Judge Jacob Burnet -- the mayor's brother and one of the two vice-presidents of the local colonization society. The trustees had decided to consider using public funds to "defray[ ] the expense of the coloured population…in their voluntary removal from the state." The group appointed a committee of ten to decide on the amount of money to offer and how to spend it. The committee, which included Joseph

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[86] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 64n77. No one who has studied Cincinnati's riots, or any other race riots in the nineteenth century, has mentioned, or attempted to account for the white and Native American family members of African Americans driven out of northern cities, who also would likely have been forced to leave the city, following their family members.

[87] Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 155.

[88] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 64n77.

[89] Robinson and Fairbank, *The Cincinnati Directory and Advertiser for 1831* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1831), 182. CHS

S. Benham, president of the Cincinnati Colonization Society, Bellamy Storer, a member of the Third Ward nominating committee for pro-Black Law candidates that spring, and *Gazette* editor Charles Hammond, was directed to report back to the group on September 19.[90]

The *Gazette* ran a notice five times over the next week from the group preparing to immigrate to Canada, indicating that they had given power of attorney to two members, Israel Lewis and Thomas Cressup, to buy land in Canada for them on which to settle. Hammond was undoubtedly attempting to calm the fears of agitated whites in the community and reassure them that the black population was leaving.[91] But on the morning of September 19, citizens read that the editor of the *Chronicle* was incensed at the idea of using public funds to aid black emigration, believing to do so would encourage blacks from other areas to come to Cincinnati to receive money to leave the country. He insisted they make individual efforts to find charity.[92] At the follow-up meeting later that day the trustees were denied the use of public funds to assist the black community.[93]

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[90] "Township Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 17, 1829; Robinson and Fairbank, *Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1829*, 194; *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 20, 1829. Storer was the chair of the meeting to pick the nominating committee for the spring elections, putting him solidly in the pro-enforcement camp. The other members of the committee were Daniel Gano, O.M. Spencer, John Sullivan, Peyton S. Symmes, Stephen Burrows, Charles Neave, and Oliver Lovell.

[91] "Colored Immigrants to Canada," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 18, 21, 23, 24, and 25, 1829.

[92] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 19, 1829, cited in John M. Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest: Race Riots in the United States during the Age of Jackson, 1824-1849* (New York: Garland, 1986), 59.

[93] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 26, 1829; cited in Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 59.

Another meeting was called for by "A Citizen" on Thursday, September 23, to finish considering how much money to spend, and how to spend it,[94] but there is no evidence that it ever took place. It isn't clear if those attending these public meetings were sympathetic and interested in helping the black community or in wrapping-up Cincinnati's Negro removal project. The participation at these meetings of the president and vice president of the colonization society, and the chair of the meeting to nominate candidates dedicated to enforcing the Black Laws suggests a strong desire on the part of the white community to finish the project they had started.

Negroes and mulattoes who had decided to leave the city would be largely dependent on their own resources - as they had been all along - with some help from Quakers, and several groups in New York and Pennsylvania.[95] Public attempts to help African Americans to relocate in the wake of the riots were half-hearted and a failure. After September 24, there are no more articles about the black community, or Negro removal. Through the rest of 1829 there are articles in the Gazette concerning Indian removal, of the Cherokees in particular.[96] Hammond is highly critical of Indian removal and the way that the federal government and the state of Georgia had been dealing with the Cherokees and other tribes, believing, "To remove the Indians by

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[94] "Town Meeting," by "A Citizen," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 23, 1829. This notice also appeared in the paper the following day, Sept. 24.

[95] Richard C. Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," *Journal of Negro History* 39, no.1 (Jan. 1954), 56. Wade asserts the claim about outside help without supplying a citation.

[96] See *Cincinnati Gazette* Oct. 22, Nov. 14, 20, and Dec. 4, 1829.

force, would be an act of violence and wrong."[97] But, as earlier in the year, he never makes any connections between Indian removal and Negro removal. The public discussions of the black population and Negro removal, and of the "Strange Mistake" the mobs made in Cincinnati, were over for the moment.[98]

As the Negro removal discourse disappeared from the papers, the discourse on public improvements that had disappeared while the Negro removal discourse took over the pages of the *Gazette* for five weeks in July and August reemerged. In October there was good news about the contentious Miami Canal project: acting Canal Commissioner M.T. Williams announced the Commission would accept "sealed proposals" for a limited period to lease surplus water power at water wheels at six points along the canal.[99] In addition, the business community established a Chamber of Commerce that fall.[100] While the great city improvement project of Negro removal was in progress, discussion of other internal improvements seemed to have been put on hold. As soon as the energies of the community were freed by the removal of the Negro problem, internal improvements and their benefits returned to the forum. The

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[97] Editorial: "Creek and Cherokee Indians," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Oct. 22, 1829. Hammond feels that changing that character of the Creeks and Cherokees from hunters to farmers will undermine their claim to deal with the U.S. government by treaty. He feels the best course is assimilation, for the Indians to "abandon their separate national character…be received as citizens of the States, and let their lands be distributed to them in fee."

[98] Examining the extant issues of the *Gazette*, I found no articles on the black population, Negro removal, or the violence in the city through 1830, though articles critical of Indian removal continued to appear.

[99] "Water Power on the Miami Canal," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Oct. 30, 1829. This notice was republished the following day, Oct. 31, 1829.

[100] "Chamber of Commerce," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Nov. 23, 1829; "Chamber of Commerce," and Editorial, C*incinnati Gazette*, Nov. 27, 1829.

range of topics in the *Gazette* looked more typical after late September, 1829: steam boat arrivals, internal improvement articles from other papers, Cherokee Indians, and town meetings about mail on Sundays and "the late fire." Things seemed to have returned to their normal state.

News of the riots and the number of Negroes and mulattoes that had been driven out of Cincinnati reached alarmed black communities all over the North soon after it occurred. The black newspaper *Rights of All*, published in New York, had reported in August on the decision of the Ohio state Supreme Court that the Black Laws were constitutional. The article had appeared accompanied by another from someone in Ohio encouraging Ohio's black population not to take one step out of their native land, "*rather become martyrs to the injustice, you have but once to die*." One month later, they reprinted the article from the August 20th *Cincinnati Sentinel* that reported the riots, alerting African Americans all over the United States about the events.[101] Rev. Peter Williams made the violence against Cincinnati's black community and the need to financially support their refuge settlement in Canada the focal point of his July 4th sermon on "Slavery and Colonization" in 1830. His fears mirrored those of African Americans all over the country who had heard about the riots: "Should the anxiety to get rid of us increase, have we not reason to fear that some such courses may be pursued in other places." The constitution of the group that founded the National Negro convention movement in Philadelphia in 1831, the American Society of Free Persons of Color, mentioned that half of Cincinnati's black

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[101] *Rights of All*, Aug. 14, 1829, cited in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 71, italics are in the original; *Rights of All*, Sept. 18, 1829, microfilm.

population had been driven out of the city in 1829 and pledged their support for the Canadian settlement.[102] The news prodded African Americans to meet and discuss their options in many communities.

E. What Really Happened

As stated in Chapter 3, all sectors of the white and African American sub-communities in Cincinnati were caught up in an ethos of improvementism by 1829 -- on behalf of themselves and the parts of the community in which their social and cultural ties were established and maintained. Whites and African Americans in Cincinnati, in general, had different views of what would improve and help to develop the community and of white and black persons as agents and beneficiaries of improvements in the city. There are a number of theoretical perspectives that help to articulate aspects of the violence of the riots, the public discourses of race, Negro removal, and improvement that surrounded them, as well as the silences of contemporaries and their newspapers concerning the 1829 riots in Cincinnati. When combined with the perspective that particular practices operate as race making technologies, discussed in Chapter 4, it is possible to view these riots as part of a community-wide strategy of race making and subsequent Negro removal for the purposes of community development.

Rioting is a form of *collective violence*,[103] which, during the three decades before the Civil War, was "integrated into the political and social processes

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[102] Peter Williams, "Slavery and Colonization," in Carter G. Woodson, ed., *Negro Orators and Their Orations* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1925), 83; Howard Holman Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions*, 1830-1864 (New York: Arno, 1969), 9, 10-11.

of…society" to a great degree. It was a readily available and often used strategy for

challenging competitors, as well as local government policies. The mobs in Cincinnati,

like those elsewhere, used collective violence to establish, or reinforce, the conditions

of the settlement of their social conflicts.[104] Whites who participated in the riots were

in conflict with the presence of a black community. They were upset that the city and

township governments had not enforced the Black Laws effectively and that there *was*

a black community in the city; as a barrier to black settlement in Ohio, the Black Laws

were a sieve. Different sectors of the white community had their own reasons for

wanting to reduce or remove Cincinnati's Negro and mulatto population, as discussed

previously.[105] And, after pro-Black Law candidates won a majority of positions in the

township elections in spring of 1829, and the State Supreme Court had supplied

sufficient immunity by declaring the laws constitutional, many in the community

apparently decided that there were good reasons to reinforce the mandate with a

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[103] Historical sociologist Charles Tilly defines collective violence as "episodic social interaction that immediately inflicts physical damage on persons and/or objects ("damage" includes forcible seizure of persons or objects over restraint or resistance); involves at least two perpetrators of damage; and results at least in part from coordination among persons who perform the damaging acts." Charles Tilly, *Collective Violence*: *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. This definition is enhanced by the addition of "inflicts psychological or physical damage on persons and/or physical damage on objects." The effects of terror, for instance, on victims of collective violence, should not be discounted, because, "Explosions of communal violence, mobilized for political purposes…are built up out of structural violence, and in extending from one unfolding event to another, deepen it. They leave in their wake deep existential fractures for the survivors." Arthur Kleinman, "The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence," in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphele Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 227.

[104] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*: *Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 126, 128.

[105] See Chapter 4.

demonstration of the Negro *removal* clause of the laws - showing both the government and blacks they were serious about the mandate.

In historian Michael Feldberg's typology, race riots in the first half of the nineteenth century were *preservatist* rioting, "attempts by groups that held some degree of economic, social, or political power to maintain their privileged position over groups below them on the social ladder."[106] Racially prejudiced whites of all classes in Cincinnati had something to gain from the removal of the black population, in terms of maintaining the privileges -- the real and social wages -- of whiteness. Black existence and black improvement were threatening to the white working classes and the middle classes of Cincinnati, as discussed in Chapter 4. Blacks had to be reminded of their inferior position - or they might improve themselves into a serious challenge. In desiring to preserve the *status quo* of a racial hierarchy, the participants in the riots and in the pro-Negro removal discourse were attempting to preserve the social, cultural, and economic relationships in the community. That is, they were attempting to preserve the way that development was proceeding in the city -- with whites in the privileged position of receiving jobs, an education in the common schools, and all of the other benefits due citizens of the United States, of Ohio and Cincinnati.

Jacksonian collective violence and rioting often served more than one function. First, it could have an *expressive* quality to it, aiding in communicating the values of a

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[106] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 34.

group and strengthening its sense of unity.[107] The 1829 Cincinnati riots were expressive of the value of a community without free blacks, or at the very least, one in which whites were in control and the development of the community was for their benefit. By working together as white people toward the common goal of improving their community by ridding it of the "evil" and "alien" element of free blacks, the rioters could experience themselves as part of a homogenous social *corporatism* - a remnant of the eighteenth-century view of society as a "single organic entity."[108] Second, collective violence can also achieve real, and not just symbolic, results.[109] If the short-term goal of the 1829 riots was to reduce, or remove, the black population, then the efforts of the mobs were a success: more than half of the black population left just before, during, or just after the riots. The African American population, nearly ten per cent of Cincinnati's total just before the riots, dropped to 4.4 percent in1830 according to the U.S. Census; except for a brief rise in 1835, it remained below 5 percent of the city's total population until after 1900 (see Tables 2.2 and 4.1).

As we have seen, both the preservatist and the expressive corporatist aspects of Cincinnati's 1829 race riots bring community development issues into the picture. A third perspective on this collective violence that can further help to articulate ways in which community development issues were an essential impetus for these riots is *vigilantism*. Simply defined as, "the practice of quasi-organized crowds taking the law

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[107] Ibid., 81.

[108] Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1966), 21. Corporatism is the idea that "everyone within a given society shared the same essential interest." Ibid.

[109] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 37.

into their own hands," vigilantism occurred in urban as well as rural areas. It depended on an interpretation of popular sovereignty that "the people had a right and a duty to join together outside the normal bounds of law to protect the interests of the community."[110] Vigilantes are extralegal, but act to enforce the law when the technologies of law enforcement are absent or inefficient, such as in new towns like Cincinnati in the 1820s. Participants in vigilante groups, who are often but not always community leaders, "saw themselves as guardians of civic order, the law, and public morality."[111] The proper development of the community is at the heart of vigilante ideology. Those that demanded enforcement of the Black Laws, as well as those who participated in the riots, felt the established processes of government weren't acting efficiently, or quickly, enough in enforcing the law - that is, in removing the black population which they saw variously as inferior, immoral, unimproved, and alien to their interests. Not waiting for the extensions given to the black community by the township trustees to expire, they took matters into their own hands.

The larger, community-wide project in Cincinnati in this period, as we examined in Chapter 3, was the project of improvement of the city and of the persons in it. The desires and intentions of the citizens of the community, as actors and participants in this improvement project, were critical components of what Sherry Ortner calls the *agency of intentions* or *projects* - that is, the way humans organize their lives in "culturally constituted projects…that infuse life with meaning and

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[110] Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 80, 81.

[111] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 73.

purpose…emerg[ing] from structurally defined differences of social categories and differentials of power."[112] The majority of whites in the city favored a city with few or no Negroes and mulattoes. They had categorized them as inferior and the Black Laws had structured this prejudice into state law. When whites wanted them to leave or be removed, the laws could be invoked for renewed enforcement.

Because much of the black population wanted to remain and continue their own improvement effort, there were dueling improvement projects in Cincinnati. The two sub-communities of whites and blacks had lived with officials unable, or unwilling, to enforce the residency laws since they were put into the state constitution in 1807. The 1829 state Supreme Court decision about the constitutionality of the Black Laws gave them new life. So a group of citizens in Cincinnati's Third Ward decided to change the rules of local race relations: they issued a mandate to enforce the laws to candidates in the spring township elections. The landslide election of pro-Black Laws candidates city-wide showed there was wide support among whites for the new "rules."

When a dominant group in a society changes the "rules" under which they interact with groups lower in the social hierarchy, *a serious game* is being played.[113]

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[112] Sherry B Ortner, "Specifying Agency: The Comaroffs and Their Critics," *Interventions* 3, no. 1, 2001): 79, 80.

[113] Sherry Ortner's *serious games* perspective allows practice theorists to address "relations of power" in social lives that are viewed as "actively played, oriented toward culturally constituted goals and projects, and involving both routine practices and intentionalized action." Sherry B. Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 129. She further states that, "it is the strong role of active (though not necessarily fully "conscious") intentionality in agency that…differentiates agency from routine practices." There is no hard boundary between them. Ibid, 136.

Changing the rules is an indication that the dominant group is deploying what Ortner calls "the agency of power," which I believe is an indicator that a "serious game" is in progress.[114] The shift to deploying power requires a new project to thwart the threat to the primary project. In Cincinnati, for many whites, the primary project of community development was threatened by the presence of blacks; improving blacks were even more of a threat because they were more likely to remain in the city, availing themselves of its opportunities. The old rules -- poorly enforced Black Laws -- had not reduced the threat, so new rules -- renewed intentions to enforce the Black Laws -- were issued. A new strategy was discussed in the newspaper discourse -- forced removal. Wilberforce's theory of the Black Laws was that they establish treating all whites who enter the state of Ohio as innocent of vagrancy, and all those assumed to be of African ancestry as criminally vagrant and subject to removal. The Black Laws mandated what we now call racial profiling, making all those believed to be Negroes or mulattoes subject to removal. The riots from August 15 to 22 were the practices that enacted Wilberforce's theory.

The new project was renewed Negro removal, responding to the threat of more Negroes and mulattoes in the city than many whites wanted. Not waiting for blacks to leave on their own, and perhaps wanting to reinforce their determination to have the

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[114] Ortner, "Specifying Agency": 79. Elsewhere, Ortner has stated that the agency of power and that of projects never exist in isolation from one another. The agency of projects (that which is involved in pursuing significant cultural ends) "almost always, and almost necessarily, involves *internal* relationships of power.…The agency of projects intrinsically hinges on the agency of power." Ortner, "Power and Projects," 147-148. Although Ortner left the relationship between the *agency of intentions* and the *agency of power* only partially theorized, I'm proposing that the agency of power is triggered in the dominant group when one of its main projects is sufficiently threatened by a competing project from one of the groups over whom it assumes superiority.

laws enforced to public officials, two to three hundred white residents of the city started rioting against the black community on August 15. Charles Hammond's editorial on March 27, following the letter to the *Gazette* from the "Sons of Aethiopia" who were fearful of the enforcement of the Black Laws, naively suggests that "only runaway slaves and idle vagrants…have occasion for alarm."[115] In his August 17 editorial "Strange Mistake," published after the violence of August 15, he used the distancing strategy of assigning the agency of the violence to the Black Laws themselves, rather than the rioters, having "driven away the sober, honest, industrious and useful portion of the coloured population. The vagrant is unaffected by it."[116] In this editorial, Hammond both erases the riots, by nearly removing their human agents from the picture, and gives Negrophobic residents a blue-print for further action, whether he intended to or not: the wrong colored people left the city and there is still work to be done.

Modeling good problem-solving method, Hammond acted as the analyst for the riots as a Negro Removal project. The editorial "Strange Mistake" functioned as a mid-project outcomes assessment, indicating the weaknesses in prior methods and practices - something recognizable by planners and managers of all kinds. The second stage of the 1829 riots, from August 17-22, began the evening of the day this editorial appeared; Hammond had, in effect, redirected the energies of the mob toward those who were not the "sober, honest, industrious and useful portion of the coloured

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[115] Editorial comment, *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 27, 1829.

[116] Editorial, "Strange Mistake," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 17, 1829.

population." Most of the African Americans who left, or were driven out of, the city, escaped during or just after the riots that began that night.

The pre-riot discourse, the riots themselves, and the post-riot mop-up -- were all part of the new project of Negro Removal and made it a cross-class affair. We know that many of the rioters were laboring men -- the two riot accounts that open this chapter suggest this. But there were middle class or elite men among the rioters as well; a "young man of respectable character" was killed on August 15.[117] And while visiting the city several years after the riots, E.S. Abdy, after talking with whites and blacks in the city about the violence, concluded that a reliable list of the casualties "was never published, for, as several person engaged in this disgraceful proceeding belonged to respectable families, their fate was concealed by their relatives."[118] Middle-class and elite men also participated in other aspects of this Negro removal project: They were the editors and citizens who participated in pro-removal discourses. They filled the membership of the local colonization society that provided an ideological rationalization for Negro removal. Voting with the laboring classes, they put pro-Black Law candidates in office. They served as trustees of the township, and as officers in city government, yet they took no actions to protect the black community while Mayor Isaac Burnet was out of town. Their decision not to spend public money to aid those Negroes and mulattoes who wanted to leave threw the black community back, again, on its own resources.

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[117] "Riot in Cincinnati," *Western Times* [Portsmouth, OH], Aug. 22, 1829.

[118] Abdy, *Journal*, 2: 383.

The absence of reports of the 1829 riots in the local media also points to a community development aspect to the violence. The lack of local reports of the riots has caused interpretive problems for at least one historian.[119] But this gap in the record could indicate a great deal more coordination and solidarity in the white community than has been suggested before, supporting the corporatist view of riots in this period.[120] All of the major newspapers in town were edited by men who were part of the civic leadership and group of boosters who supported civic and internal improvement projects. They were used to thinking and behaving in corporatist ways, and were used to working together on projects. The only local newspaper that reported the riots of which there are still extant copies to examine was that of the *Cincinnati Sentinel*, a Universalist paper. As a small, non-orthodox Christian sect with a high working class membership, Universalists were not part of the city power structure, and the Sentinel's editor would have been "out of the loop." This may explain why they managed to publish a report when no other local paper appears to have done so: they were not party to the group that may have deliberately suppressed information about the violence in the local papers to protect the city's image abroad.

Charles Hammond's *Gazette* was really the only one of eight local newspapers involved in the public debate about Negro removal and the Black Laws before the

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[119] Historian Richard Wade interpreted the lack of a local report as indicating there was no riot, just sporadic violence. Despite citing the August 29 reprint of the Cincinnati *Sentinel* article from Lebanon, Ohio, *Western Star*, which indicated several days of rioting prior to August 22, he didn't seem to think that this constituted a riot because there had been no "mob rule." See Wade, "Negro in Cincinnati": 50, 51. By the time he published *Urban Frontier*, he appears to have backed away from this view. See *Urban Frontier*, 223-229.

[120] Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 21.

riots. How did that happen? Was the *Gazette* picked due to Hammond's reputation for airing more than one side of an issue in the paper?[121] E.S. Abdy acknowledged that "respectable families" had managed to hide the fact that their families had suffered casualties among the rioters. He also acknowledged that blacks, "entrenched…in their houses," shot at the rioters, who fled: "The whites gave up the contest, after two or three had been killed, and several wounded…their fate was concealed by relatives, and it was agreed, on all hands, to throw over the circumstances of the defeat that veil, which could not be found for those of the attack."[122] Abdy's reference to "throwing a veil" is highly suggestive of planning and collusion among those in power and in control of the press.

During the anti-black and anti-abolition riots of 1836 and 1841 there was clear evidence of coordination of elements of the mob, as well as collusion among those calling meetings, publishing riot accounts, and creating and implementing public policies (see Chapters 6 and 7). In the smaller city of the 1820s, with already interlocking directorates of improvers, board members, newspaper editors, boosters,

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[121] Hammond was known for his personal and journalistic independence and his willingness to publish unpopular opinions, even in the middle of a controversy. Personally anti-slavery, though pro-colonization, during the mid-1830s he published letters and articles supporting immediate abolition. Abolitionists were being threatened with lynching, but he openly and consistently promoted freedom of the press. See William Birney, *James G. Birney and His Times…* (New York: Appleton, 1890), 205-206; Edward Deering Mansfield, *Personal Memories, Personal, Political and Literary...1803-1843* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1879; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970), 179-180; James Birney to Gerrit Smith, Cincinnati, Nov. 11, 1835, and James Birney to Gerrit Smith, Cincinnati, Nov. 25, 1835, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857*, ed. Dwight Dumond (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966), I: 274, 258. He was also willing to publish the letters of African Americans and the reports of their organizations. See this chapter, as well as chapters 6 and 7.

[122] Abdy, *Journal*, II: 383.

colonizationists, ministers, etc.,[123] it would have been easy to coordinate a "veil" over

the proceedings. There were also sound community development reasons for

obscuring the whole affair once the public debate had ceased: the city leaders would

not have wanted the city to be known for its mobs. Removing or reducing the black

population would have benefits to many segments of the white population, enhancing

the normal "wages of whiteness." Cincinnatians didn't mind having it known that

blacks were leaving - Hammond readily reported on that. After a month or more of

public discussion in the *Gazette* of the moral and legal issues involved, the city leaders

would not have wanted it known that they had actually used violence, and not just the

threat of enforcing existing laws, to drive half of their black population out of the city.

The 1829 Cincinnati race riots were also an important and powerful technology

for race making. Race, like other categorizations of humans, is constructed to

accomplishing something else. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the discourses on

race and on improvement had become linked in Cincinnati, as elsewhere in the North.

Many of those who identified themselves as white had come to believe that those they

labeled black, Negro, or mulatto, if they could improve, could do so only in Africa or

out of the U.S. As they also generally believed that self-improvement was the basis of

all improvement, including that of society, the state, and the nation, many of them held

the view that blacks had not contributed to, and could not contribute to, the

development of their communities, or the nation as a whole. One of the major reasons

that Cincinnatians of European ancestries created races, with their essential and

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[123] See Chapters 2 and 3.

immutable characteristics, in the antebellum period was as a strategy to aid community development. Many white Cincinnatians carried in their heads a racial grotesque of an evil, depraved, amoral, alien, and criminally vagrant imaginary Negro. This operated as a filter, interfering with their ability to see the full range of African Americans in the community, as well as the similarity in the economic situations of the poor regardless of skin color.

The violence of the riots marked African Americans as able to be abused; they were treated as strangers, not neighbors. The rioters destroyed their homes, hurt their bodies, ruined their belongings, and shattered their safe sense of community. In this way they were categorized as being outside of the community as a whole. As a spacing technology, the riots and their surrounding discourses removed half the black population from the city, effective technologies for both marking the black population as well as place making. The riots allowed the white rioters to have the experience of working together on their own behalf, identifying in a common cause, regardless of class or occupation. This would have strengthened their sense of being members of the community working together on a vigilante action for the whole city, as well as strengthening their sense of being white people united in an action against black people. This had the effect of linking their sense of community corporatism to their sense of themselves as white, reinforcing the idea of Cincinnati as a white city.

The categorizing and spacing aspects of these riots served the larger project of community development through meeting the goal of the smaller power project of Negro removal. They achieved their goal - a reduction in the population of Negroes

and mulattoes in the city. It was a gross technology, removing the "good" with the "bad," but an effective one, as many people left the city without being directly attacked. Both the categorizing and spacing aspects of these riots helped to link race making to place making through "dramatization. Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life."[124] Cincinnati would continue to grow and prosper in the 1830s and 1840s, drawing new residents. The race making and place making technology of collective violence would be used by whites in Cincinnati several more times in the following twelve years, until the goal of the community's development strategy was reached. By enabling many white residents to act against the imaginary Negroes in their heads by abusing and removing the real Negroes and mulattoes in their midst, the rioting in 1829 had made the imaginary community in many white residents' heads dramatically and materially real -- Cincinnati was a whiter city.

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[124] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 178.

Chapter 6

The Cincinnati Race Riots and Anti-Abolition Riots of 1836

Living in Cincinnati, Harriet Beecher Stowe kept a journal in 1836 while her husband Calvin, a professor at Lane Seminary, was in Europe to buy books for the school and study educational practices. She sent him the near daily entries once a month. In July of that year, she wrote to him about agitated anti-abolition meetings and mobs in Cincinnati:

> The turbulent spirits…talked of revolution and righting things without law that could not be righted by it. At the head of these were Morgan Neville, Longworth, Joseph Graham, and Judge Burke. A meeting was convoked at Lower Market Street to decide whether they would permit the publishing of an abolition paper, and to this meeting all the most respectable citizens were by name summoned.
>
> There were four classes in the city then: Those who meant to go as revolutionists and support the mob; those who meant to put down Birney, but rather hoped to do it without a mob; those who felt ashamed to go…and yet did not decidedly frown upon it; and those who sternly and decidedly reprehended it.
>
> The first class was headed by Neville, Longworth, Graham, etc.; the second class, though of some numbers, was less conspicuous; of the third, Judge Burnet, Dr. Fore, and N. Wright were specimens; and in the last such men as Hammond, Mansfield, S.P. Chase, and Chester were prominent. The meeting in so many words voted a mob.[1]

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In January 1837, five months after the Cincinnati riots of 1836 were over, local physician and science improver Dr. James Lakey, weak but recovering from a fourte-month long illness, wrote to his brother Thomas:

> I will mention <u>one</u> incident concerning the mobs of July last. A free coloured woman supported herself & six children by washing & had laid up in her

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[1] Charles Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Compiled from Her Letters and Journals* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1889), 84-85.

bureau 30 silver dollars. On the night of the 3rd or 4th day [Aug. 1 or 2] the mob entered her house - threw the furniture into the street and <u>stole</u> the money - besides a large amount of clothing belonging to her customers, such as linen shirts &c. &c., valued at $50 [or] more!! And yet the police of our buserk [*sic*] city looked tamely on.…Several buildings were outraged - one was fired very near my office. None of the rioters have been indicted & no efforts have yet been made to punish them.[2]

A. Cincinnati at the Start of 1836

In 1836, white Cincinnatians had more or less forgotten about the race riots of 1829, seven years earlier. The city had weathered numerous fires and floods, and a cholera epidemic, as well as the economic uncertainties of Jackson's meddling with the banks. With its diversified economy of commerce and agriculture as well as a manufacturing sector that had been "silently but gradually" growing through the early years of the decade, in 1836 the city was again in an economic upswing.[3] Cincinnati's population was approximately 31,000-32,000 and it was beginning to experience the problems typical of dense, urban areas.[4] In 1836, as the city's "population and improvements increase[d]," Cincinnati's control over its water supply became an

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[2] James Lakey to Thomas Lakey, Cincinnati, Jan. 12, 1837, James Lakey Papers, Mss# fL192 RM: Letters diaries, documents of James Lakey, M.D., 1 Box, CHS; emphasis is in the original. James Lakey was part of an attempt to revive the waning Western Academy of Natural Science in Cincinnati in December of that year, along with Robert Buchanan, Joseph Clark, J.G. Anthony, George Graham, and Dr. William Wood. This organization had been started by Dr. Daniel Drake in 1835. See Walter B. Hendrickson, "The Western Academy of Sciences in Cincinnati," *Isis* 37, no. 3/4 (July 1947), 141, 138.

[3] Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West: 1819-1838* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 42-47; B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835," *Western Monthly Magazine* 5, no. 1 (Jan.1836): 27; Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: Charles Cist, 1841), 236.

[4] A figure of 31,000 is given by both B.D., "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835": 28, and Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 19, table 1 (see figure for 1835). Inter-census population figures are difficult to determine; the number may be a bit more than 31,000.

issue, and the City Council sought to purchase the privately-owned waterworks for the city.[5] Booster Benjamin Drake called for more ornamental, less utilitarian improvements to the city, now that its level of prosperity was so high: a City Hall, a Grand Hotel to match the strength of city commerce and increase the city's capacity for seasonal tourism, and a rural cemetery for both practical and aesthetic reasons.[6] But there were two major strains in the community's thinking and feeling that year, one positive, and one quite negative. They would come together in the minds of Cincinnati's white citizens in such a way that violence and talk of violence held the city securely from January through August in 1836.

On the positive side, citizens in the city were deeply interested and involved in a group of internal improvement projects that promised faster travel and communications between Cincinnati and seaboard cities as well as the South. Among ten "works of internal improvement that are already begun or projected…[and] all practicable," the most important were: the Little Miami Railroad, connecting to the Mad River and Sandusky Railroad and Lake Erie; the Whitewater Canal between Indiana and Ohio with a branch to Cincinnati; and the projected railroad between Charleston, S.C. and Cincinnati which would connect with "railroads running from Cincinnati to Indianapolis…[and] to Sandusky and Cleveland on the lake, and also

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[5] Publius [pseud.], "Waterworks," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 22, 1836.

[6] B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati. A City Hotel - A City Hall - A Rural Cemetery," *Western Messenger* (March, 1836): 152-157.

with the Miami Canal."[7] In early January Dr. Daniel Drake, Robert Lytle, and Jonathan Williams were appointed by Governor Robert Lucas at "an unusually large and respectable meeting of citizens from all parts of Ohio" as delegates to a regional convention on internal improvements called for July 4, 1836, in Knoxville Tennessee.[8] Later in the month, at a meeting about the White Water Canal, forty-one business and civic leaders signed a petition urging the Ohio State legislature to give Indiana the right to put part of the proposed canal in Ohio. In May a further delegation to the Knoxville Convention in July was appointed from Cincinnati, and Covington and Newport, KY.[9] Later in the year, many of these petition-signers and delegates would play important roles in the public meetings surrounding the riots, and as members of the mobs themselves.

For cautious but hopeful African Americans in Cincinnati, the mid-1830s was a period of active community building. A majority of the improvements within the black community, as discussed in Chapter 3, occurred in this period, including the development of schools (with the help of Lane Seminary students), independent churches, and mutual aid and improvement societies.[10] But the social suffering caused by the discriminatory state-wide Black Laws was a too-large part of the lives of Negroes and mulattoes and their families in Cincinnati. The more the black

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[7] B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835": 29, 30.

[8] "Internal Improvement Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 19, 1836.

[9] "Public Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1836; "Charleston Railroad," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 26, 1836.

[10] See Chapter 3.

community was able to provide opportunities for improvement to its residents, the more open the prejudice and discrimination of Cincinnati's white population became: in the mid-1830s white journeymen walked off jobs when blacks were hired, and the Ohio Mechanics' Institute "tried" its president for teaching a trade to a Negro.[11] Confined to low-paying, low-status, and unskilled labor for the most part, twelve per cent of black heads of households in Cincinnati in 1836 were barbers, a profession leading to more upward mobility for black men than any other in this period. With fewer opportunities and even less mobility than men, black women were confined to washing and ironing clothes, like the woman in the opening vignette; in 1836, eighty-six per cent of working black women washed clothes.[12]

On the negative side, there were signs of impending trouble, even before the year began. In 1835 abolitionists associated with the immediatist branch of the movement began a campaign of mass mailings and lectures, techniques they borrowed from evangelical Christianity and partisan politics. Their opponents charged them with being revolutionary, unchristian, and un-American, threatening the American union, and causing real and imagined slave revolts. The effectiveness of the campaign is beside the point. Coming on the heels of the Nat Turner slave rebellion of 1831, the new vigor with which the abolitionists pursued their cause scared many anti-abolitionists, North and South. Civic and business leaders in many cities in the North

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[11] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Report on the Condition of the People of Color in the State of Ohio…* (Putnam, OH: Beaumont and Wallace, 1835). Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/ (accessed March 14, 2007), 3.

[12] Nikki Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 102-103.

became involved in promoting or participating in violence against the persons and property of abolitionists.[13]

During the 1830s anti-abolitionist riots were the most common, though the least deadly, form of collective violence in the northern United States. They were clustered between 1834 and 1838, peaking from summer 1835 to 1837.[14] It was a new kind of riot, most of which were planned ahead of time, involving community leaders and their sons, as well as the artisans and mechanics often associated with violent mobs. But it was an old kind of violence, involving both preservatist impulses to "maintain [a] privileged position over groups below [the perpetrators] on the social ladder" and racist ones to warn Negroes and mulattoes in the community that support from white allies was vulnerable, at best. The elites involved in this violence tended to favor colonization schemes for handling the local "Negro problem" and resented any successes of the abolitionists in using new mass printing and mailing techniques to get their messages (which often favored racial equality) into their communities. In many ways, they were fighting with abolitionists over control of public opinion. As Michael Feldberg has put it, "there was more at stake in northern anti-abolitionist violence than the freedom of southern slaves."[15]

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[13] Despite his tendency to over-interpret, the best introduction to the phenomenon of antebellum abolition riots in the northern United States is still Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

[14] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43; David Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), x; Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing,"* 15, see the graph.

[15] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 43-46.

Many anti-abolition riots in the early 1830s followed a ritualized display of screaming, chanting, blowing horns and beating drums, and throwing rocks and eggs; these practices would have been particularly effective at lectures and meetings. But rioters became more violent in mid-decade, hurting their human targets, burning buildings and abolitionist presses, and escalating to attacking African Americans, as well. Anti-abolition riots also had aspects of vigilantism to them. Anti-abolitionists wanted to "purge their society of individuals who challenged fundamental notions of property and race."[16] Vigilante actions typically involved community leaders who "saw themselves as guardians of civic order, the law, and public morality," operating as a "supplement to the official processes of law enforcement." Taking the law into their own hands, their initial goal was usually the restoration of a particular view of civic order. Because vigilante actions strengthened community unity, expressed feelings of righteous justice, and heightened morality,[17] they were an effective technique for linking the conscious social identity that was at stake for the actors (such as "southern sympathizer" or "white American") with the place and the community on behalf of whose "common good" they acted.

Cincinnati's first real exposure to abolitionism in its immediatist form had come in 1834 with the "Debates on Abolition and Colonization" held at nearby Lane Seminary. This was followed by most of the seminary students resigning rather than

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[16] Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 82, 81.

[17] Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 73, 75.

give up their work teaching and offering other support in the local black community.[18]

The interest in abolition that was generated by the debates and the students' activities in the black community resulted in the founding of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society the following year. However, in the mid 1830s, despite its ineffectiveness, the colonization of free blacks and freed slaves, preferably in Africa, remained the favored approach among whites in Cincinnati to what many perceived as a "Negro problem." Many of the city's civic, political, and cultural leaders were members of, or supported, colonization societies.

After the local discussion of the Lane Seminary Debates and their aftermath died down, Cincinnatians had not paid much attention to abolition until newspapers began to report on the mass mailing campaign of 1835. Then in August of that year, just as local boosters of the southern railroad project from Charleston to Cincinnati were seeking public support, the *Gazette* published an article on the mass mailing campaign of eastern abolitionists, backed by the deep pockets of industrialist Arthur Tappan. Charleston's response on receiving large quantities of abolition literature at their post office was to collect it and burn it. Hammond's response, as it had been in an editorial several months before, was to suggest ignoring it. Cincinnati's post office, in a recent situation, had stored similar documents and waited for the addressee to pay the postage that was due. At this point, the abolitionists' threat was abstract, and Hammond, a Whig, preferred to minimize it; they were only "mischievous agitators" and "misguided enthusiasts." The *Advertiser*, a Democratic paper, granted the

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[18] For a discussion of the Lane Seminary debates in 1834, see Chapter 4.

abolitionists more power than the *Gazette*; the editor, a catastrophist, was convinced these "fanatics" were responsible for slave uprising plots discovered in Mississippi.[19]

At that same moment, in late summer 1835, the threat of abolitionism was about to seem significantly more substantial to many citizens of Cincinnati. James Birney, gifted abolitionist speaker, writer, and agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, was planning to move his abolitionist newspaper, the *Philanthropist*, from Danville, Kentucky, to Cincinnati. Birney was a southerner who had emancipated his own slaves and had spent some time as a colonizationist before being converted to immediate abolition by closely following the Lane Seminary debates in 1834. The *Philanthropist* was an official organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and would soon become the paper of the Ohio branch of the organization. He and his newspaper had been threatened by mob violence preceded by a large, public anti-abolition meeting in Danville, and he had long viewed Cincinnati as a likely site for the paper. During his preliminary visit to Cincinnati in August, 1835, the *Whig*, *Republican*, and *Post* newspapers all attacked him. The *Post* called for sending back all "incendiary publications" and "lynching" their editors.[20] On November 1, soon after he moved his family to the city, he was visited by Mayor Davies, the City Marshall, and the Sheriff, bringing Charles Hammond along to provide introductions. They warned him of the city's hostility to the paper. A few days later the Mayor came to see him again, this

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[19] "Needless Pother," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 30, 1835; "Abolitionists," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Apr. 23, 1835; "Negro Insurrection," *Cincinnati Advertiser*, July 22, 1835; "Horrible Conspiracy," *Cincinnati Advertiser*, July 29, 1835.

[20] William Birney, *James G. Birney and His Times* (New York: D. Appleton, 1890), 131-142, 180-185, 205.

time claiming that local authorities could not (or would not) protect him or his paper

from mob violence. But Birney continued to believe that the people of Cincinnati

would be convinced that he was not a threat if they just read a few issues of the paper.

To be safe, however, he did decide to move the paper to New Richmond, Ohio, twenty

miles outside of Cincinnati.[21]

A little distance from the city didn't help matters. Civic leaders in Cincinnati

saw this suddenly vigorous local abolitionism as a new threat to their greater view of

development in the community, and local newspaper editors continued their attacks.

Having read a notice that Birney was moving the paper to New Richmond, James

Conover, editor of the *Whig*, used the language of disease and pestilence, calling

Birney "fanatical…and so close to Cincinnati, the pestiferous breath of his paper [will]

spread contagion among our citizens." Birney's paper was not only "an insult to our

slaveholding neighbors" but "an attempt to browbeat public opinion in this quarter."[22]

Framed in this way, public opinion was singular, a set and unchanging thing, easily

threatened by its discursive alternatives.

By November of 1835, there were signs that southern opinion was starting to

matter about an abolition paper in Cincinnati, a primary trading partner, and

southerners began to exert pressure on the city to repress it. In that same month the

Gazette published a semi-sarcastic letter from pro-slavery South Carolina senator John

C. Calhoun, a major booster of the great southern railroad project Cincinnati boosters

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[21] Birney, *Birney*, 207-208; Birney to Gerrit Smith, Nov. 25, 1835, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dwight Dumond (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1996), 1: 273.

[22] "Abolition Paper," *Cincinnati Whig*, Dec. 21, 1835.

promoted. He hoped that the cause of excitement in the South concerning "interference…with our domestic institutions" would "be removed," leaving the southern "public mind [with] sufficient calm" to think clearly about "the great object in view."[23] City boosters had always argued that it was Cincinnati's centrality in a vast transportation system of rivers, with made-made canals connecting to northern lakes, that gave it a natural advantage in the region. But, as historian Sally Griffith has pointed out, railroads had changed forever the meaning of the concept "natural advantages." A "strategic geographic location" was no longer sufficient to ensure trade advantages over less well-sited cities: "With the railroad it became possible to *manufacture* centrality - and lose it to rival towns."[24] Local boosters of the Charleston railroad project were nervous.

The first issue of the *Philanthropist* was published on January 1, 1836. It certainly wasn't an inflamed attack; slavery was denounced in well-reasoned arguments, but slaveholders themselves were spared. Birney made moral, economic, and constitutional arguments against slavery, but avoided the emotional and personal approach of Garrison. He even offered the paper's columns to his opponents, always believing that a free and open discussion of slavery was the only route to ending it. After the second issue, the *Republican* immediately attacked. Birney's willingness to bring the paper to Cincinnati "in the teeth" of vocal and hostile "public sentiment"

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[23] John C. Calhoun, letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Nov. 4, 1835.

[24] Sally F. Griffith, ""A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": The Booster Ethos and Resistance to Abolitionism in Jacksonian Cincinnati," in *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*, ed. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 221-222; italics are in the original.

brought an accusation of trying to bring down the United States government. Editor

Charles Ramsay conveniently forgot the economic interconnectedness of the North

and the South and reached for an extreme localism in insisting that northern

"interference" in southern slavery is "*unjust, unpatriotic, unchristian*, and

revolutionary in its tendency."[25]

Only four days later, forgetting his insistence on the separateness of the North

and the South, Ramsay virtually admitted the southern-ness of Cincinnati in sounding

the alarm about the certain perils to peace and government from an abolition paper

published near the city:

> The Southern feeling is too strong in this city; the interests of her merchants,
> her capitalists, and her tradesmen, are too deeply interwoven with the Southern
> country; commercial and state intercourse between her citizens and the citizens
> of the South Western States are too intimate, to admit of the successful
> operations of a Society, tending to separate the ties which connect the city with
> those States, and withdraw from her their confidence and trade.

Here Ramsay articulated a sentiment that would become a hallmark of the anti-

abolitionist meetings and rationalizations for mob violence in the public discourse

later in the year - that "public sentiment" can trump the Constitution, and therefore,

the law. He commented further, "We do not believe it would be safe for them…to

agitate the public mind upon the subject."[26] The public here is singular, there can only

be one point of view; and if one acts against it, violence could erupt. This is a not-so-

veiled threat: an open invitation with offered immunity, linked to a powerful statement

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[25] "The 'Philanthropist' Abolition Journal," *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 14, 1836; italics are in the
original.

[26] "Abolition Society in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 18, 1836.

about Cincinnati's place identity and interconnected-ness with the southern economy and southern point of view.

B. Anti-Abolition Meeting at the Court House in January

In mid-January, someone upset about the presence of "James G. Birney and his deluded followers," and attempting to link this presence to a threat to local citizens' property, wrote to the *Whig* suggesting "a meeting of our citizens" to consider the matter. *Gazette* editor Hammond was prophetically concerned that such a meeting was intended by the writer to support "a lawless attack upon the property of the anti-slavery men."[27] A week later the political and business leadership in the community finally made a decision to act on their fears. On January 21 and 22 local newspapers published a call for a "PUBLIC MEETING. A meeting of the citizens of Cincinnati, opposed to the course now pursuing, by those individuals composing Abolition and Anti-Slavery Societies, is respectfully requested on Friday evening next, at 7 o'clock, at the Court House, in this City." [28] Fifty-eight men in the community had signed the notice, including Charles Ramsay, James Conover and W.R. Thomas, the editors of the *Republican*, *Whig*, and *Post* newspapers, respectively; Jacob Burnet, former United States Senator, Ohio Supreme Court Justice, and vice-president of the local colonization society; former U.S. Congressman John C. Wright; William Burke, the local Postmaster; both candidates for Sheriff, E. Hulse and Richard Fosdick; the Whig

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[27] "X.Y.Q.," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, Jan. 16, 1836, quoted in "Anti Slavery Society," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 18, 1836.

[28] *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 21, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, January 21, 22, 1836; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 22, 1836.

Congressional candidate J.S. Benham; Robert Lytle, Ex-Congressman and Surveyor of the Land Office; Morgan Neville, Receiver of the Federal Land Office; and the majority of the important business and civic leadership in Cincinnati.[29]

Charles Hammond, editor of the *Gazette* was conflicted. He was "opposed to the movements of these [abolition] societies" as "violations of the domestic rights of the owners of slaves - as offensive intrusions into the household sanctuary of their fellow citizens." But he wasn't willing that "a muzzle should be placed upon any free man, in respect to discussions of what must be admitted to involve a question of human rights - for we firmly believe it is yet admitted that the Blacks are part of the human family."[30] So he published the call for a meeting, and his reservations, as well. Placards went up all around town announcing the meeting that evening. Birney's son William, seventeen years old at the time, later remembered, "During the day runners were sent through the foundries, *machine* shops, and manufactories to secure the attendance of working men at the meeting. The towns of Newport and Covington, on the Kentucky side of the river, were beaten up for recruits."[31]

A group of Cincinnati's business and political leaders prepared for the evening by meeting at an ex-Congressman's office early in the day to compose resolutions and select three speakers to address the crowd: ex-Democratic Congressmen John C. Wright and Robert Lytle, and Whig politician Nat Pendleton. Some abolitionists

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[29] Birney, *Birney*, 211-212.

[30] "Public Meeting" and editor's comments, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 22, 1836.

[31] Birney, *Birney*, 212; italics are in the original.

prepared for the meeting by mixing with sympathizers of the meeting and of a

growing mob sentiment, "to learn [ ] their programme [*sic*] for the violence of the

evening." Several local abolitionists, wary of animosity towards their English birth,

fled to the countryside. Birney and several others appealed to the mayor, city marshal,

and the sheriff for protection, but to no avail; city officials "refused to take any

precautions whatever. A night of horror was anticipated." Many Negroes and

mulattoes, assuming that violence against abolitionists would not leave them

untouched, left the city if they could; "others concealed themselves, and a few

barricaded the doors and window of their houses." White residents and visitors

intending to participate in mobs met "in a store in Front street," dividing into squads

with specific duties.[32]

That evening, January 22, "At an unusally [*sic*] large and respectable Town-

Meeting at the Court House in Cincinnati," (see Figure 6.1) the Mayor Samuel Davies

was appointed President, Judge Jacob Burnet, Morgan Neville, Esq., Judge Burke, and

Rev. O.M. Spencer were appointed Vice Presidents; and Robert Buchanan, Archibald

Irwin, and Allison Owen were made Secretaries.[33] The chairman appointed a

committee of sixteen men to propose and present a Preamble and Resolutions to the

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[32] Ibid., 212-213.

[33] "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting in Cincinnati," *Catholic Telegraph*, Jan. 28, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, Jan. 22, 1836; [from the *Cincinnati Whig*], *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 26, 1836; "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting," *Cincinnati Post*, Jan. 23, 1836; and "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting" [from the *Post* of Sat. [Jan. 23], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1836. William Garrison also republished this article in the *Liberator*, Feb. 13, 1836. He reprinted from the copy in the *Journal*, which he characterized as "a Colonization paper."

meeting.[34] The members of this committee, like many other white northerners,

believed that the Constitution left "to the slave states, the full discretion of settling the

momentous question of slavery in their own way, and in their own good time." Their

fears, however, betrayed their awareness of the interconnectedness of the North and

the South. Their overarching belief, within which they framed all other arguments

concerning abolition, was that it was a threat to improvement:

> The imprudence, the immorality, the wickedness of this course, are already affecting our social relations, jeopardizing our internal commerce and throwing obstacles in the way of those great contemplated schemes of improvement, by which the enlightened men of the different States, are struggling to draw closer the bonds of brotherly feeling, and social intercommunication.[35]

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[34] This committee included Robert T. Lytle, Levi James, David Gwynne, Joseph Pierce, Robert Punshon, William Greene, N.G. Pendleton, Geo. W. Neff, Nath'l Wright, Jos. S. Benham, William Tift, John C. Wright, N. Longworth, J.A. Grosebeck, Samuel R. Miller, [and] Josiah Lawrence." Ibid.

[35] Ibid.
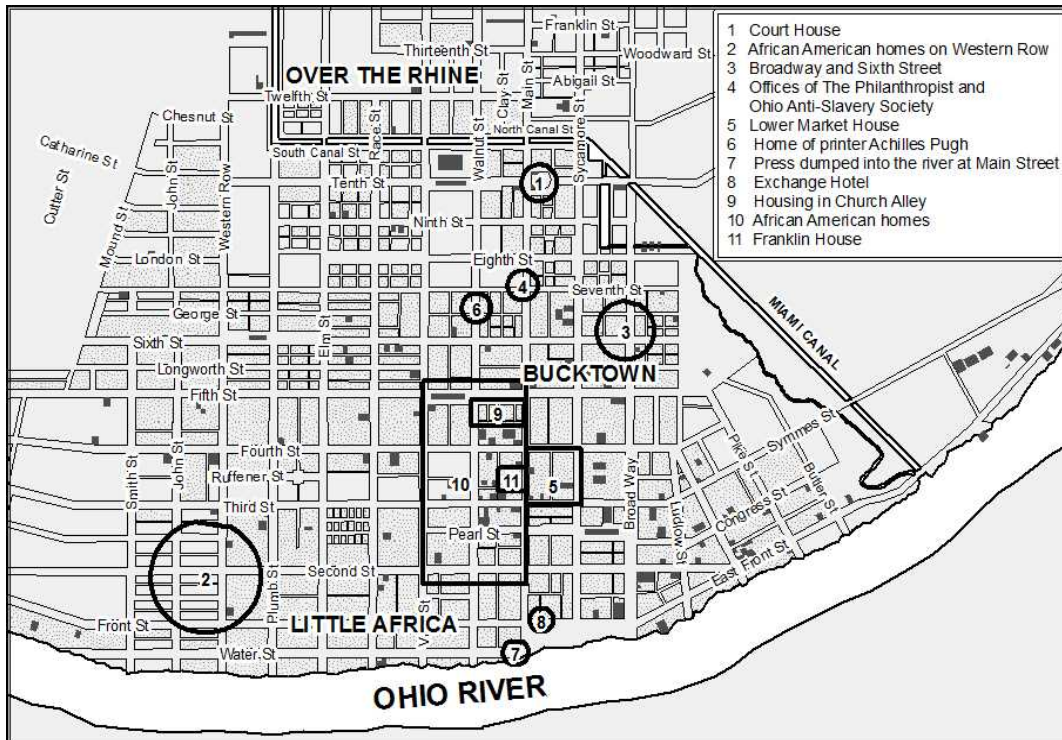
Figure 6.1 Map of identifiable locations of the Cincinnati Race and Anti-Abolition Riots, 1836.

Adapted from Map 4.1, "Cincinnati in 1850," Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati" in Taylor, ed., *Race in the City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); this map was adapted from Doolittle and Munson, *Topographical Map of the City of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Doolittle and Munson, 1841); Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841* (Cincinnati: Cist, 1841).

It was a large meeting, but both sides exaggerated their claims of its size: the

Ohio Anti-Slavery Society minimized it, claiming that "more than fifty persons" were

there; anti-abolitionist Charles Ramsay of the *Republican*, present at the meeting,

believed there were fifteen hundred people or more.[36] Ramsay represented the meeting

back to the community as broadly-attended,

> based on a call from men of all parties, classes, distinctions, and callings. The
> most distinguished and influential men of the city were there and took active
> part in its proceedings. There were Judges, Merchants, Lawyers, Divines,
> Physicians, and the most respectable tradesmen and artizans [sic] of every
> class….Jackson men, and Harrison men…all assembled for the same purpose,
> and intent on accomplishing the same object - the expression of their
> abhorrence of the diabolical designs of the abolitionists, their fraternal and
> patriotic feeling towards the South and to manifest their desire to preserve
> unimpaired the bonds of the Union of the States.[37]

Among the resolutions proposed and passed was that abolition "is daily,

weakening the ties by which the States are united, and must, if persisted in, terminate

in a dissolution of the Union.." They also pledged, "That this meeting will exert every

lawful effort to suppress the publication of any abolition paper in this city or

neighborhood… advis[ing], in a spirit of frankness, such as may be concerned in a

project of this description, to abandon the attempt."[38] In view of the mob that was

forming outside the meeting, it was a transparent threat.

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[36] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings against the Liberty of the Press, in Cincinnati. With Remarks and Historical Notices Relating to Emancipation* (Cincinnati: Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, 1836), 11. CHS; Editorial comments: "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 25, 1836.

[37] Editorial comments: "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 25, 1836.

[38] "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting in Cincinnati," *Catholic Telegraph*, Jan. 28, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, Jan. 22, 1836; [from the *Cincinnati Whig*], *Cincinnati Republican*, Jan. 26, 1836; "Great Anti-Abolition

Although he hadn't been invited, Birney attended the meeting, and after the resolutions were passed, Robert Lytle moved that he be allowed to speak for the abolitionist side. He was interrupted and heckled, and after forty-five minutes of attempting an economic critique of slavery, Birney was nearly shouted down and forced to stop talking. Lytle, known locally as "Orator Bob," rose to speak as Birney sat down. His words were surprisingly incendiary considering how many times during the evening he had calmed the jeering, raucous crowd. The only account of Lytle's speech that is extant is that of Birney himself. Lytle believed,

> that it is very clear from the Bible, that the *black man was made for* slavery; and insist[ed]…that slavery is the best and happiest condition to which he can aspire. He rebuked, with glowing intensity of language, the efforts of the abolitionists to educate and improve the colored people of this city - because it was only making them more capable of mischief, as well as fighting against their destiny of degradation. The real African - the *black - remaining such -* never could be elevated….There was but one process by which it could be done - that was by expelling the *black* blood from the race. And this plan could be carried out in no other way than by performing on the *black males* a surgical operation, which…I will not describe here in the language used by Mr. L.…[This along] with a corresponding one on the black *females*, would ensure…the accomplishment of southern wishes, and the security of our southern friends.[39]

Having crudely advocated the ultimate race making spacing technology of sterilizing the whole black population -- to palliate southern feelings -- Lytle went back to his seat "amidst a thundergust of applause." Judge Wright, apparently afraid that "mobocratic elements…in the assembly" had been unduly stimulated by the tenor of Lytle's speech, quickly rose and reminded the crowd that, while it was

Meeting," *Cincinnati Post*, Jan. 23, 1836; "Great Anti-Abolition Meeting" [from the *Post* of January 23], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1836. All italics are in the originals.

[39] "Public Meeting," *Philanthropist*, Jan. 29, 1836; italics are in the original.

"commendable [to] care for the rights of our southern friends, it ought to be remembered that the rights of our immediate neighbors were not less worthy to be preserved and respected."[40] No paper other than the *Philanthropist* mentioned the contents of this speech, only that Lytle, Judge Wright, and several others spoke.[41] But here Birney is describing it. He could not have made it up. If Lytle had not actually given that speech, he would have let people know in a letter to the papers. There was no letter, no mention by anyone else, but also no disclaimer by Lytle or his supporters. It was as though everyone but Lytle just wanted it all to "go away."

The crowd calmed down from Lytle's speech enough after Judge Wright and Mayor Davies spoke that when Birney left the Court House, "The crowd made way respectfully for him, and he was neither followed nor molested on his way home." After arriving back at their home, the Birneys did spend the night on alert; William remembers his father setting him up "at a front window upstairs on the lookout."[42] The mob never materialized that night and the tone of the city concerning abolition generally remained quiet for the next several months.

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[40] "Public Meeting," *Philanthropist*, Jan. 29, 1836.

[41] Lytle apparently wrote the notes for this speech on a scrap of paper; they have been mentioned by a number of earlier historians of these riots. See Patrick Folk, "'Queen City of Mobs': Riots and Community Reactions in Cincinnati, 1788-1848" (PhD diss., University of Toledo, 1978), 79n60 and David Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 59n79. They are cited as being in the Lytle Papers, Box 44, File 4, at the Cincinnati Historical Society. When I was there in January, 2006, and October and November, 2007 to do research in their archives for this study, the notes were missing from the box, and with the assistance of the archivist, they have not been located.

[42] Birney, *Birney*, 217.

C. April Race Riot

Despite threats of violence to Birney and the *Philanthropist* if he moved the paper to Cincinnati and threats to abolitionists in general, the first communal violence of the year was directed at the African American community. In the area around Western Row, "Two boys, one black and the other white, became involved in a quarrel from some trivial cause," and the black boy won the fight. White spectators backed-up the white boy, black spectators came to the black boy's defense, and soon they were involved in a riot. The violence began at the corner of Broadway and Sixth streets (see Figure 6.1). On Saturday night, April 9, all day Sunday, April 10 - "in broad daylight" - and Monday night, April 11, white mobs, "determined to burn out the blacks in that quarter, many of whom are very depraved characters," attacked and set fire to the homes and shops of African Americans, and beat and chased them through the streets.[43] On Monday, April 11, the Mayor issued a proclamation "calling on all good citizens to hold themselves in readiness to aid in keeping the peace;" that seemed to end the violence.[44] Blacks who were chased out of town "took refuge in the swamps and forest" at the west end of town.[45]

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[43] S. B. Nelson, *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County* (Cincinnati: S.B. Nelson, 1894), 364-365, 365; Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing, 1926; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 49; Editorial, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Apr. 14, 1836; "Fire," *Cincinnati Post*, Apr. 13, 1836. The information about the precipitating incident is contained in the secondary sources; the contemporary press never mentioned what started the riots. Nelson also mentions that the Governor of Ohio called out a militia and stationed himself in the city, but the primary sources provide no evidence that the Governor intervened.

[44] "In consequence of the late riots…," *Cincinnati Post*, Apr. 13, 1836.

[45] Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens*, 49.

Local newspapers failed to mention the violence until three or four days after it began. They all qualified the victims as Negroes of "vicious," "very depraved," and "the lowest and most abandoned" character; the neighborhood where the riots took place was "long…notorious as a place of resort for rogues, thieves, and prostitutes - black and white." The victims were presented as undesirable to the (white) community at large. But the papers generally deplored the violence. The *Gazette* described the violence as "discreditable riot[s] in our city"; the *Post* and the *Republican* both referred to it as "lynching" and called for an end to it.[46] But the most severe censure was reserved for the "large concourse of our citizens, who looked on without attempting to avert the flames….What is the police about, that these things are permitted with impunity." The *Gazette* described a scene of "broad daylight, and none can identify the aggressors!!" Both the *Republican* and the *Gazette* condemned the failure of both the police and the spectators to act, Charles Hammond reminding Cincinnatians that, "It is not lawful for anyone to be present at a riot, unless active to suppress it. There can be no mere spectators."[47]

What was most important in this discourse was not the hurt to the victims of this violence, but rather the effect that it could have on how others viewed the city. There was an incredible effort not to identify the victims beyond describing them as

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[46] "Riots," *Cincinnati Gazette*, , Apr. 14, 1836; "Fire," *Cincinnati Post*, Apr. 12, 1836; and "Lynch Law in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 13, 1836.

[47] "Lynch Law in Cincinnati," Cincinnati *Republican*, Apr. 13, 1836; Editorial: "Riots," Cincinnati *Gazette*, Apr. 14, 1836. Charles Hammond had come to the same conclusion about bystanders witnessing personal violence that historian Raul Hilberg did concerning those who passively stood by while the machinery of the Nazi regime destroyed the Jewish populations of Europe during World War II: that there can be no bystanders -- bystanders are perpetrators. See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992).

"vicious" and "depraved. The main concern was the lack of willingness to restore

order on the part of both police and citizenry, a harbinger of events to come. Several

factors were involved in this concern. First, the day before the riot Charles Hammond

had just reprinted Benjamin Drake's booster piece "Cincinnati at the Close of 1835"

which describes Cincinnati's residents as law-abiding and peaceful; the riots

threatened the image of Cincinnati boosters wanted to project.[48] There might have

been a little guilt that the city's white residents had attacked the Negro and mulatto

residents - again. And lastly, the editors might not have wanted to create any sympathy

for the victims, because they were thought of as a "criminal element" in the

community. The violence of these riots was more of a concern to these men than the

victims.

D. The July Anti-Abolition Riot

Between the January Court House meeting and July, there were no direct

discussions of Birney or the *Philanthropist* in the local papers. The biggest local news

stories during this period other than internal improvements concerned the organization

of labor unions and a butcher's strike over control of the stalls in the public market.[49]

By early March Birney was preparing to move the paper to Cincinnati. By this time

the paper had 1,200 subscribers, with more being added every day. He wrote to fellow

abolitionist Lewis Tappan that he thought it would be hard to be mobbed, but he was

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[48] B.D. [Benjamin Drake], "Cincinnati at the Close of 1836[sic]" [from the *Western Monthly Magazine*, Jan. 1836], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Apr. 11, 1836.

[49] "Trades' Union Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 30, 1836; "General Trades' Union," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Feb. 20, 1836.

resigned to it, as it would likely create "throughout the State, *five* abolitionists to one

that we now have."[50] The offices of the Philanthropist were finally located in the

"upper stories" of a building at Seventh and Main Streets, in the center of the city. The

press was moved there "by daylight and without concealment. It excited little

interest." An eighteen-foot long sign with the words "Anti-Slavery Office" hung on

the Main Street side of the office. People saw him walking out in the street, and didn't

harass him.[51]

Birney was lulled into a false sense of hopefulness because the immediate

uproar over the presence of the *Philanthropist* in "the neighborhood" had died down.

Some of the issues that came up in the January Court House meeting and subsequence

discussions were obliquely addressed in the months following. In May, Charles

Hammond reprinted in the *Gazette* a piece from the *National Gazette* on freedom of

the press, likely in reference to attempts to stifle discussion of slavery and abolition in

many communities, and in Congress:

> Scarce an idea is broached by an editor in regard to any interesting topic of the
> day, but he is forthwith favored with sundry 'stop my papers,' as well as
> insinuations and imputations…as to his motives…not an earthly reason…can
> be assigned for the suspicions and charges….What is the use of the press if it is
> thus to be virtually muzzled? How can the readers of a paper expect to
> discover the truth if they will permit only their prejudices and prepossessions
> to be consulted [?]

Hammond was "under the ban" on several news topics because he had "been

examining whether there might not be two sides to each of these affairs, and

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[50] "Our Press," *Philanthropist*, March 4, 1836; Birney to Lewis Tappan, Cincinnati, March 17, 1836, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dumond, 1: 312, 311.

[51] Birney, *Birney*, 240-241.

expressing some doubts of the merits of the popular views on both."[52] When the discourse against abolition and dissent from the majority opinion became more violent later in the summer, he would find his own paper in jeopardy.

In June the *Western Christian Advocate* featured colonization in many of its articles. While the discussions of abolition and the *Philanthropist*, as well as the violence against the black community, were going on from January to April, the *Advocate* ignored them. Then in June, making his position in the debate clear, the editor T.A. Morris began to feature articles on colonization, publishing a series of five pieces in support of the scheme largely from a Christian perspective.[53]

In early July there were more small signs of trouble. The local black community, like free black communities in cities all over the North, typically celebrated American Independence on July 5 instead of July 4. This was partly the result of local white residents not allowing them to participate in the annual celebrations of the community at large, and partly to symbolically mark their inability to share in the promise of the liberty of this country. The local celebrants had just finished their dinner on July 5 and *Philanthropist* editor James Birney was about to address them. Clarissa Gest heard about what had happened and wrote to her brother Erasmus, that when Birney attempted to give his speech, it created quite a "fuss" among whites who witnessed it, and "the mayor was obliged to interfere." Mayor

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[52] "Liberty of the Press - Toleration," *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 14, 1836.

[53] "New Colony in Liberia," *Western Christian Advocate*, June 17, 1836. Also see June 24, July 1, 8, 15, and 29, 1836.

Davies was so afraid of mob violence that he would not let the group march unless they promised "to let no white man harangue them."[54]

As they were finally preparing to start their march, another writer reported,

one of our white citizens of "standing" approached a knot of four or five of them conversing together in the street, and commenced abusing the colored people, as a class…opposing their walking in procession - charging them with subsisting by pilfering and plundering - and with enticing away the slaves of southern visitors....[T]here was one whose spirit had not been subdued into full submission to insult. He retorted with a firmness and fierceness of tone and language - inspired somewhat, perhaps, by the enthusiasm of the day - altogether unexpected by the assailant. The latter retired from the spot, galled…at the insult to which his imprudence has exposed him.[55]

The opponents of abolitionism often charged that the movement's doctrines of racial equality made free blacks think that they were equal to whites and caused them to be more impudent to whites, upsetting racialized deference protocols. In Robert Lytle's speech at the Court House meeting on January 22, impudence was ascribed to educating blacks. In addition, the April anti-black race riot in the city had been precipitated by a black boy getting the better of a white boy in a fight. Whites had been humiliated several times recently by Negroes who did not seem to "know their place." With all the recent abstract discussions of abolition and free speech, there was also clearly tension among whites in the city about Negroes exercising concrete free speech, free assembly, and freedom of association.

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[54] Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, July 14, 1836, Vol. I: Letters to and from Family Members, Erasmus Gest Papers, MSS#35, OHS.

[55] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 13. This writer of this pamphlet wondered if this incident could have helped to precipitate the anti-press violence of the following week on July 12.

A week later, on July 12, all of these tensions finally came together in an attack on the *Philanthropist*. At midnight, between thirty and fifty men, "including those who stood as sentries at different points on the street," climbed a high wall enclosing the lot of Achilles Pugh's printing shop (see Figure 6.1), used a ladder and plank to gain access to the roof, and entered the shop through a window. They physically threatened a boy sleeping there to keep him quiet, covering him with blankets to hide their identities; they "tore up" the late edition and the current edition of the paper still in the shop, and "gathered them up and piled them up in front of [Christian or William] Donaldson's door"; and they "destroyed the ink - dismantled the press, and carried away many of its principle parts." Posted guards kept Pugh from calling for help. Despite the mob creating quite a bit of noise during the two-hour attack and the shop being on a major street, "mysteriously" no neighbors or night watch came to Pugh's aid; the watch had been sent on a false errand to another part of the city at the very moment of the attack.[56]

The next day, the damages to the press and types were repaired, and "the business of the office went on as usual." Some of the leaders of the attack were clearly "persons of wealth and reputed respectability, who would never before this, have been

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[56] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 12; Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, July 14, 1836. Christian and William Donaldson were brothers and local abolitionists active in the Cincinnati Anti-Slavery Society; William was the treasurer and Christian was on the Board of Managers. They were also prominent Unitarians; Christian resigned from the local church in February, 1836 in protest of the very public support members of the church had given the January 22 Court House Meeting. An apparently "contrite" William Greene succeeded in convincing him to reconsider. See "The Cincinnati Anti-Slavery Society," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1836 and Walter P. Herz, "Such a Glaring Inconsistency: The Unitarian Laity and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum Cincinnati," 7, First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati, Let Freedom Ring Racial Reconciliation Project, http://www.firstuu.com/LetFreedomRing/essay2.pdf (accessed Jan. 5, 2006).

suspected of having been engaged in such a transaction." Slave owners in town to escape the summer southern heat were assumed to have taken part, as well as at least three Kentuckians. A letter writer to the *Philanthropist*, sympathetic to abolitionism, warned Birney to stay out of Kentucky. He claimed there was to be a meeting to appoint three men to "catch the head ones of you" and that a group had been put together to "tar and feather" him.[57]

E. Public Discourse after the July Riot

Joseph Graham, owner of a large lumber mill and a prominent member of the anti-press mob, and a Mr. Wood, wrote an inflammatory placard, had it printed in Covington, and put it up all over town the next day:[58]

ABOLITIONISTS BEWARE.

The citizens of Cincinnati, embracing every class, interested in the prosperity of the City, satisfied that the business of the place is receiving a vital stab from the wicked and misguided operations of the abolitionists are resolved to arrest their course. The destruction of their Press on the night of the 12th instant, may be taken as a warning. As there are some worthy citizens engaged in the unhold [*sic*] cause of annoying our southern neighbors, they are appealed to, to pause before they bring things to a crisis. If an attempt is made to re-establish their press, it will be viewed as an act of defiance to an already outraged community, and on their own hands be the results that follow.

Every kind of expostulation and remonstrance has been resorted to in vain - longer patience would be criminal. The plan is matured to eradicate an evil which every citizen feels is undermining his business and property.[59]

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[57] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 13, 12. The writer of this report still naively believes that "the *work* was done…by their dependents and hirelings." Also see Birney, *Birney*, 241; and Alpha to Birney (Letter to the Editor), Covington, KY, July, 1836, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dumond, 1: 342.

[58] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 14 ; Birney, *Birney*, 241-242.

[59] Handbill, "Abolitionists Beware," *Cincinnati Post*, July 14, 1836. It was also published as "The Dog Days are Coming! Abolitionists Beware!" in the article "Midnight Outrage on the Press," *Philanthropist*, July 15, 1836; this was republished in the *Liberator*, July 30, 1836.

Though the people behind this document remained anonymous (except for Graham and Wood), it was intended as a document of vigilance; instead of a vigilance *committee*, it was framed as coming from every citizen of the city. It is an open, anonymous threat of further violence to the press that prints the *Philanthropist*, and its unnamed owner, using the stand-by of "We will not be responsible for our actions." It assumed more immunity than the attacks on the black community in 1829 because it was committed more openly. No one claimed responsibility for the destruction of the press, papers, and ink -- they were hiding behind an assumed public opinion in their favor. The notice for the January 22 Court House meeting, with fifty-eight "signers," and the events of the meeting itself, give the impression of a great deal of immunity through wide and deep support.

The local papers first acknowledged the violence on Thurs., July 14 -- two days later. A letter to the editor of the *Whig* and the editor's response opened several weeks of public conversation about abolition, the freedoms of speech and of the press, the nature of constitutionality, and the legitimacy of mobs. Someone writing as "Cincinnati" feared "the mad efforts of the abolitionists among us" could destroy "the character of our city, and…the eminence to which she has attained." He insisted, "In our country the majority must rule. Are not the majority of our citizens opposed to these fanatics? Let's see to it, while there is yet time."[60]

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[60] Letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 14, 1836, quoted in Patrick Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 93, 94.

The editor of the *Whig*, James Conover, shocked at the tone of this letter, painted a frightening picture of the consequences he expected from the application of his correspondent's ideas:

> There is no class of fanatics upon whom we look with more contempt than the abolitionists, but are we therefore to treat them as though they were brutes and not men?...Are we to have an Inquisition in these our days…? Should we pull down the houses of all those who differ from us in sentiment, and destroy their goods? If it be right to do so in one case, it is also right to do so in all. Each one who differs from his neighbors in politics or religion should set fire to that neighbors [*sic*] house, and even take his life if it be necessary, to compel him to forego the error of his ways.…It is the picture…of an uncontrolled mobocracy. We are fast approaching it.

Conover's solution to the conflict was not aimed at society, or at the mobs themselves; it was that the abolitionists must "flee from our coasts, and give up attempting to do that which not only is wrong in itself, but which…has brought down upon them a species of punishment the extent of which they cannot possibly foresee."[61] That evening, the *Post* editorial openly admitted that a project was in the works in the community, to bring Conover's fears to life: "there is something like a systematized plan on foot to prevent the publication of their journal in this city." This plan would ultimately be bad for the city and agent-less: if the police are not strong enough, "some act disgraceful to our city will be performed, if they attempt the re-establishment of their press." [62] They are expressing what many believe, that it is the abolitionists' actions that cause the "disgraceful" acts in which mobs engage.

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[61] Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 14, 1836, quoted in Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 93, 94.

[62] "Abolitionism," *Cincinnati Post*, July 14, 1836.

Friday, July 15, Mayor Davies published an official notice of a $100 reward, given to him for the purpose, for the capture and conviction of those responsible for the attack on Pugh printing office. Residents were warned of further such acts and the police were reminded to be "active and vigilant, in their endeavors to maintain the good order and peace of the city." He ended by asking those whose actions "alleged[ly] have prompted the commission of the riot complained of" to stop, because their activities "have a tendency to inflame the public mind, and lead to acts of violence and disorder, in contempt of the laws and disgraceful to the city."[63] While condemning the riots as "disgraceful to the city," Davies assigned the agency of the rioters to their victims. The mob is not expected to be able to control itself when confronted by a legal activity that they feel should be illegal. Those engaged in an unpopular, but legal, activity, have to stop or the authorities can't be responsible for the public's actions. The Mayor's official notice of a reward also seems *pro forma*; he and other city officials already knew who was responsible.

On Saturday, a letter to the *Whig* finally challenged the right of mobs to control public discourse. "S" asked who will be next if abolitionists are sacrificed to mobocracy; in many large cities in the East, anti-abolition mobs have increased sympathetic pro-abolition sentiment. For slavery "to be understood and appreciated it must be examined and discussed." No abolitionist, "S" would rather abolition be successful than that mobs should destroy the rights at the heart of the United States.[64]

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[63] "Mayor's Office, Cincinnati, July 15, 1836," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 16, 1836.

[64] "S," letter to the editor, "Abolition and Mobism," *Cincinnati Whig*, July 16, 1836.

The tension in the city, and the threat of violence, continued to escalate. Joseph Graham created another handbill - a poster offering a reward for Birney, signed "Old Kentucky" for its southern sympathies. Sunday morning, July 17, it was put up all over the city:

<div align="center">

A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE:
$100 REWARD

The above sum will be paid for the delivery of
the body of one JAMES G. BIRNEY, a fugitive
from justice, now abiding in the city of
Cincinnati. Said <u>Birney</u>, in all his associa-
tions and feeling is <u>black</u>; although his ex-
ternal appearance is white. The reward will
be paid, and no questions asked by
OLD KENTUCKY[65]

</div>

What makes this poster effective is the understanding, on a wide level, that race is *not* something that is essential and all-of-a-piece in a person, that its so-called characteristics are *transferable*. Like the "Black Brothers" incident involving Whig candidates Tom Corwin and Nate Pendleton from Chapter 4, this poster assumes public awareness of African Americans with white skin.[66] Calling Birney *black* is not simple name-calling. In calling him a "race-traitor," the boundaries of white identity are being patrolled for everyone. But its use here is predicated on some belief, however slim, and some fear, that his being a (phantom) Negro is actually possible.[67]

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[65] Birney, *Birney*, 242; the text of the handbill was reprinted in Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 100.

[66] See Chapter 4.

[67] The term "race traitor" is borrowed from Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds., *Race Traitor* (New York: Routeledge, 1996).

During the following week various writers opposed to the discussion of abolition increasingly invoked public sentiment to insist that public opinion was in their corner. An "indisputable authority" had informed James Conover, the *Whig*'s editor, that "a large number of boarders" left the Franklin House upon hearing that abolitionist James Birney was a boarder there. The proprietor insisted that the number who left "was not *so large* as might be presumed." Only twelve men out of fifty-four left when Birney sat at the table; and he was only a two-day day boarder while his family was out of town.[68] But Conover had titled the piece "Public Sentiment" and positioned it directly under the page-two masthead, contributing to creating "public sentiment." In truth, it was divided, but anti-abolitionists consistently portrayed public opinion as unilaterally in their camp.

On Tues, July 19, a writer using the name "Public Sentiment," insisted that, "In a country such as ours, the public good is, and must be, paramount to all else." This writer felt that the imminent threat to society from abolitionist ideas warranted a suspension of law. In Cincinnati, "public sentiment will not be satisfied by anything short of submission to its just demands." The rationality and civility that the letter writer "S" insisted upon was apparently insufficient to handle the peril that these ideas bring to society. The early July mobs against Birney's paper and Pugh's press were,

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[68] "Public Sentiment," *Cincinnati Whig*, July 18, 1836; William Johnson, Proprietor of the Franklin House, letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 20, 1836.

then, "the just vengeance of an injured people."[69] Abolitionist ideas are special: they require, or allow, a resort to violence.

Amid the escalating threat of violence behind the public rhetoric of the opposition, the Executive Committee of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society attempted a new strategy, redirecting the discussion away from slavery itself to the more widely accessible issues of freedom of speech and of the press. On Wednesday July 20, they published an "Address to the People of Cincinnati" with their version of the "secret confederacy…to put down the liberty of the press and the freedom of speech" in the city:

> Threats of personal violence have been made against several of the undersigned for believing that slavery is an evil and that the Declaration of Independence meant what it said - *"that all men are created equal - entitled to their liberty and to the pursuit of happiness*."

This piece consistently frames the discussion within the constitutions of the United States and Ohio: "The Press shall be open and free to every citizen…[and] every citizen has an indisputable right to speak, write, or print upon any subject as he thinks proper, being liable for the abuse of that liberty." The group was determined "to maintain unimpaired the freedom of speech and the liberty of the press - the PALADIUM OF OUR RIGHTS."[70]

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[69] "Public Sentiment," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 19, 1836; italics are in the original.

[70] "Address to the People of Cincinnati," Cincinnati *Gazette*, July 20, 1836; italics are in the original.

F. Lower Market House Meeting, July 23

1. Call for the Meeting

An anonymous notice appeared in the city papers on Thursday., July 21, and was repeated for the next two days, for a meeting of citizens on Saturday evening at 6 o'clock at the Lower Market House, "to decide whether they will permit the publication and distribution of Abolition papers in this city." It included a list of forty-two names of prominent men in the community to form a committee to draft resolutions. As the *Gazette* noted, "It was anticipated that most of the gentlemen named, would commit themselves to the object of the meeting, by remaining silent, either from real apprehension, or from repugnance to controversy." The weight of these names was intended to intimidate the abolitionists, or failing that, to "intimidate the citizens from [interfering with] the ultimate design, to employ violent means if necessary, to effect the object." The writer of the notice insists "there is a settled determination existing in an overwhelming majority of the citizens to put down the alleged evil by force if admonitions are found insufficient. The peace of our city requires that the voice of the community be known."[71] The accustomed space for public meetings, the Court House, was thought too small for the expected crowd, so

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[71] "Public Meeting," *Cincinnati Post*, July 21, 22, 1836; *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 21, 1836; *Cincinnati Republican* [from the *Gazette*], July 23, 1836; "Destruction of Property," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug.2, 1836. The *Gazette* noted that the writer of this notice was Henry Tatem, on Aug. 2, 1836. The names included in the newspaper notices were: Nicholas Longworth, Jacob Burnet, Morgan Neville, David Loring, John C. Wright, John P. Foote, Charles Tatem, Anthony Harkness, David T. Disney, Charles Ross, David Griffin, A.L. Vorhees, Wm. Phillips, Hamilton Lyon, Thomas W. Bakewell, Archibald Irwin, John S. Grosbeck, Josiah Lawrence, Robert Buchanan, Jabez Reynolds, Sanders Hartshorn, Geo. W. Neff, Wm. Burke, Benjamin Urner, Wm. Greene**,** Samuel Perry, George P .Torrence, Joseph Gest, Wright Smith, Lewis Shovoley, Joseph Talbot, Dr. Whitman, Allen Wilson, Archibald Gordon, John Leatherburg, John Wicks, James Goodloe, Willis Tatem, Jacob Strader, Samuel Talbot, Jacob Reasor, and R.F. L'Hommedieu.

the Lower Market House (see Figure 6.1), which had never been used for a public

meeting before, was engaged, in the part of town where most of the factories in the

city were located. By having the meeting on Saturday at 6 o'clock, at the Lower

Market, the organizers could take advantage of workers getting off work for the week

in the neighborhood as the meeting was adjourning for finding potential mob

members, if needed.[72]

The publication of the notice for the meeting at the Lower Market was

accompanied by a flurry of public comment in the papers. "Hamilton" took issue with

the idea that there were occasions when law may be suspended. Abolition can be

opposed morally and successfully only "by the force of moral weapons." This writer

was shocked that the authorities had allowed another public meeting that could

support extra-legal measures. James Conover, editor of the *Whig*, was hesitant to

publish "Hamilton," fearing the writer's evenhandedness would be interpreted as the

paper's support for abolitionism; his friendship with the man prevailed. Conover

argued that self-defense is an allowable violation of normative law; violence is

allowed when the stakes are high enough: "If, then, the Abolitionists place themselves

in the position of the assassin, what can they expect?"[73]

Charles Hammond at the *Gazette* had not said very much since the July 12

attack on Pugh's press and the *Philanthropist*. This call for another meeting got his

attention. Not sure which was worse, abolitionism or mobocracy, he insisted that the

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[72] Birney, *Birney*, 243.

[73]"Hamilton," letter to the editor, "Mobism Again," and Editorial: "Mob Law," *Cincinnati Whig*, July 21, 1836.

Anti-Slavery Society's "Address to the People of Cincinnati" was "indiscreet" and the meeting called for on July 23 "unnecessary." He believed the mob against the press on July 12 was a simple "burglary" that the abolitionists blew out of proportion, and that some people wanted another meeting was redundant and odd in light of the variety of opinion in the community about destroying the press and circulating threatening handbills:

> If free discussion be *denied*, where the law permits it, upon *one subject*…who shall say that it may not be forbidden upon *any subject* at a future day?...The protection is intended for the FEW against the MANY. And now the sentiment is alleged to be prevalent, that the MANY will prostrate the FEW, with open and high-handed violence! [74]

The morning of the meeting, after commenting that he was certain that Hammond was involved in organizing it, Charles Ramsay's editorial in the *Republican* was a paean to the city's identity and its loyalty to the South: "Cincinnati is intimately identified with the Slaves States, in business and social intercourse. There is no class of individuals in our community whose interests are not more or less affected by…these misguided men." In Ramsay's imagination, Cincinnati possessed a singular, unified, and apparently non-violent local public sentiment that mirrored perfectly the interests of the South.[75] Hammond, on the other hand, warned Cincinnatians about tying the city's development and prosperity to violent enforcement of its sentiments,[76]

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[74] Editorial: "Abolitionism - Mobocracy," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 22, 1836 (says July 23 on page 2); italics are in the original.

[75] Editorial comments*, Cincinnati Republican*, July 23, 1836.

[76] Editorial: "The Meeting This Afternoon," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 23, 1836.

agreeing with the letter from "A Citizen" that if the meeting doesn't repress more

violence, a "public disgrace" awaits the city:

> Will the citizens of Cincinnati offer up their Constitution and their laws upon the altar of interest? They should look to it, whether trade and traffic can be controlled, for any time, by peculiar excitements.…The Abolitionists and their newspapers, left…undisturbed and unnoticed, would not have occasioned, in years, one tythe [*sic*] of the injury to the city, that the mobocratic doings…has inflicted upon us within a few days. [77]

In the *Whig*, a writer signing himself "Public Sentiment" believed that public

opinion already had the answer to Cincinnati's abolition problem, issuing a "not-so-

veiled" threat only hours before the meeting: "In other days, when America was in

danger, our fathers did not thus *reason* or *practice*. *Public sentiment* then spoke a

different language. It does so now." Ignoring the violence towards the press earlier in

the month, this writer insisted that,

> "Thus far, the peaceful and law abiding citizens of Cincinnati have refrained from violence towards you…they have argued…that your interference with them was…injurious to the reputation of her merchants and traders in the South.…Once more then hear the warning voice of one who will be obeyed - *desist*- or else there will be a *beginning*, and when that beginning comes the *ending* is also at hand. Remember."[78]

There was a prevalent belief that public sentiment or public opinion is the equivalent

of law.

2. Public Meetings, Improvement, and Public Opinion

Large public meetings such as the one planned for July 23, 1836, were a

technology for establishing a plan to carry out a public improvement project, or to

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[77] "A Citizen," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 23, 1836.

[78] "Public Sentiment," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 23, 1836; italics are in the original.

support some other type of public concern. They had become a "civic ritual" by the 1830s, organized by local elites who were boosters and supporters of the particular project that was the meeting's focus. The project's goals were accomplished by committees constructed at the meeting, though much of these committees' value may have been symbolic, as many important decisions were made by the organizers ahead of time. Often, the promoters were seeking a public "stamp of approval" in these meetings.[79]

Voluntary organizations, the primary public technology with which community members planned and carried out various kinds of community development in this period, as Walter Glazer has pointed out, may be formal and permanent, or informal and "ephemeral." Community meetings are a type of ephemeral voluntary association, their officers and agendas structured like other voluntary associations, but set up on a temporary basis to achieve a short-range goal.[80] Glazer has also noted that voluntary associations in Cincinnati in this period had "interlocking directorates" of officers, especially of men who were involved in many economically strategic projects, his "maximum activists." The names of many of many members of bank boards, library, school, seminary, and hospital boards, and canal and railroad committee members that Glazer assessed are to be found on the calls for public meetings about abolition, or

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[79] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": 224.

[80] Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: A Community Profile* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 128, 130-131.

these men served as officers or speakers at these meetings, in 1836.[81] The citizens of

Cincinnati in general were involved in a vast network of interlocking associations

when we consider not just the officers, but the memberships of local voluntary

associations, as well.

Public meetings, along with the use of newspapers, were an important

technology in this period for both constructing and reinforcing public opinion.[82]

Determining public opinion was an essential first step in a big public improvement

project. The general support of the public was needed for a project that was expected

to cost money, disrupt much of the community, or have substantial costs in other

ways. The public meeting was held in ritually public space, such as a City Hall or an

outdoor market - a site for performing its practices that was representative of a

democratic republic. Editors attempting to make a point about the breadth or depth of

a particular public opinion or sentiment typically describe a variegated audience being

present at the meeting, from every class, occupation, political party, and Christian

denomination. They may specifically state that the purpose of the meeting is to

"ascertain public opinion, or sentiment," on a particular matter.

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[81] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 141-142. As an example, the list of ten "maximum activists" among the eighteen men that served on the executive committee of the Semi-Centennial Celebration includes six men whose names were on the notices for public meetings, or who served on a committee or were part of the mobs responding to abolitionism in the city in 1836: John P. Foote, Joseph Graham, William Greene, Edward D. Mansfield, N.C. Read, and J.J. Wright. Ibid., 139.

[82] The public meeting in the antebellum period has not been thoroughly researched. See Amy S. Greenberg, "Pirates, Patriots, and Public Meetings: Antebellum Expansionism and Urban Culture," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 5 (July 2005), 636n8. Student of the American public meeting Mary Ryan does not address the subject of the construction of public opinion. See Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), 94-131. My present study would have benefited from a prior study of how public meetings in the antebellum period constructed and managed public opinion.

Public opinion, like common sense, from which it is derived, is constructed within the power relations of the community.[83] Jürgen Habermas referred to it as "an institutionalized fiction."[84] Those who called these meetings carefully set agendas and nominated officers, wrote resolutions ahead of time, and selected speakers to feature their points of view - they were not "open" forums. Public opinion was formed through rehearsals of parliamentary procedure combined with shouting, stomping of feet, cheering, jeering, and booing. A community meeting in this period was often a liminal space between politics "indoors" and "out of doors" where emotions were not easy to control. The public opinions formed in these meetings were backed by large numbers of attendees, intense emotions, and a continuation of the discussion in the editorials and letters to local papers.

3. The Lower Market House Meeting

In response to a public call, there was "a very large and respectable meeting of the citizens of Cincinnati convened at the Lower Market House" at 6 o'clock in the evening on July 23, 1836: "William Burke was elected president; Morgan Neville Vice President, and Timothy Walker Secretary."[85] For the organizers of this civic

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[83] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of common sense.

[84] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger with the assistance of Fredrick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 237.

[85] Anti-Abolition Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 25, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, July 25, 1836; *Cincinnati Republican*, July 26, 27, 1836; *Cincinnati Advertiser*, July 27, 1836. It was published without a title in the *Cincinnati Journal*, July 28, 1836. Conover, at the *Whig*, believed there were three thousand people present.

ritual, making money was the index of morality, unequivocally trumping all other

considerations concerning slavery:

> Although we deprecate the existence of slavery as a great evil, yet we hold it to be one for which the present generation is not responsible; and disclaiming all right to interfere with the regulations of our sister States on this subject, calculated to excite unfriendly dispositions on their part, and thus to affect injuriously our own business and prosperity.

> The leadership of the community had tired of the impasse in which they were

engaged with Birney and the local Anti-Slavery Society; they had to stop that paper.

Three of the resolutions adopted by those present were critical in determining the next

step in the project. Admitting the mandate of free speech and a free press in the United

States Constitution, nonetheless, they

> Resolved, that the spirit exhibited by the immediate supporters of the abolition press in the city, is entirely at varience [*sic*] with the feelings and opinions of our population, is an unjust to our sister States, as it is prejudicial to our own quiet and prosperity.

> Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, nothing short of absolute discontinuance of the said paper in this city, can prevent a resort to violence, which may be as disastrous to its publisher and supporters, as it must be to the good order and far fame of our city.

> Resolved, That we will use all lawful means to discountenance & suppress every publication in this city, which advocates the modern doctrine of abolitionism.

The Democrat chair of the meeting appointed a committee of twelve men, nine of

them Whigs, to talk to Birney again to try to convince him to stop publishing the

Philanthropist. William Birney felt that the "unexpected" issuing of this committee

list, "was designed, no doubt, to force prominent Whigs to come to the front and take their part of the responsibility."[86]

The last resolution passed at the meeting hailed the "noble and fearless" participants in the "Boston Tea Party" as worthy of imitation: "for which illegal act they were entitled to, and did receive, the warmest thanks and gratitude of every lover of good order and well-wisher of his country." By further stating, when an "evil" threatens the "best interests" of the country, but "the usual practice of our laws" prevents a solution, it "leave[s] us but one channel through which we can rid our fair land from its withering influence," they left the door wide open for community violence to back-up public opinion.[87] The official report in the papers was signed by William Burke, Pres., Morgan Neville, Vice Pres., and Timothy Walker, Sec.

Ramsay at the *Republican* portrayed the crowd at the July 23 meeting as calm - and portrayed the abolitionists as having spent several days before attempting to stifle public sentiment by talking about how the meeting was the prelude to a certain riot. In this version of the story, the abolitionists wanted a riot to occur, so they stirred one up.

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[86] Birney, *Birney*, 244. The committee list, published in the newspaper reports, consisted of Jacob Burnet, Josiah Lawrence, Robert Buchanan, Nicholas Longworth, John C. Wright, Oliver M. Spencer, David Loring, David T. Disney, Thos. W. Bakewell, Stephen Burrows, John P. Foote, and Wm. Greene. On a motion, the officers of the meeting were added: William Burke, Morgan Neville, and Timothy Walker.

[87] A letter to the editor of the Cincinnati *Journal* was critical of the use of this allusion to the Boston Tea party in justifying destroying the *Philanthropist* and the press that prints it: "Revolutionary precident [sic] [is] cited…that the people, in violation of all law, may proceed to punish an individual - the object is not to secure a right unjustly infringed, but to take from another a right acknowledged to be sacred to him by the laws of the land." Letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Journal*, July 28, 1836. The argument this writer refutes is the standard rationalization for vigilante action. The meeting on July 23 did use vigilante justifications for violent action.

Any mob that might form had no agency in its own actions.[88] Conover at the *Whig* went a step farther, accusing Birney himself of being a "mobocrat" if he and his associates persisted in publishing after Saturday's meeting's clear signal of disapproval. He called for the police to arrest them as "disturbers of the peace": "They can't expect to be permitted to turn the people of Cincinnati and their neighbors out of their houses, destroy their trade, pull down the law and Union which protect them, and then call themselves *peaceable* citizens."[89]

Conover saw any violence that might occur as caused by Birney and other abolitionists' presence, drawing "the people of Cincinnati and their neighbors" into the streets against them. Abolitionists talked about what the community didn't want to talk about, and their practices mixed whites and blacks instead of working to minimize contact between the two groups, as local prejudices dictated. Abolitionism represented a view of the city and strategies for its development which included Negroes and mulattoes rather than spacing them out of them community, as colonization did. Bringing this point of view into Cincinnati threatened to fragment the sense of corporatism and community harmony that wide support for boosters' favorite improvement projects, trade with the South, the health of the Nation, and good social order all relied upon.

By Thursday, July 28, disclaimers were being issued from all sides. One of the resolutions from the July 23 meeting addressed Birney's continued publishing as a

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[88] Editorial comments, *Cincinnati Republican*, July 26, 1836; italics are in the original.

[89] Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 26, 1836.

"violation of the solemn pledge, heretofore given by its conductor, at a public meeting in this place." Birney insisted that he had given no pledge to stop publishing the *Philanthropist*. An attempt to correct an erroneous understanding between himself and the Mayor at the Lower Market House meeting had not been successful and people had believed what they wanted to believe.[90] Birney had also heard from several men personally whose names had been attached to the notice for the Lower Market House meeting without their consent.[91] Local improver William Greene, Judge Jacob Burnet, and lawyer and improver Timothy Walker all wrote the local papers claiming that they had been listed among the organizers of the meeting without their permission. Walker and Burnet said they had only served on the committee to talk to Birney because they couldn't (gracefully) refuse, and Greene and Walker claimed that they had not agreed with the last resolution that had capitulated to violence - yet it had passed unanimously.[92] Greene made his claims before the late July riots; Burnet and Walker made theirs in hindsight after public support for the meeting and subsequent riots had begun to wane. Regardless of the late disclaimers, the men whose names appeared on the meeting notices and the visitation committee were an important component of the construction of public opinion by adding the weight of their reputations and authority in the community to the proceedings.

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[90] James Birney, letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 28, 1836; see also the *Cincinnati Republican*, July 29, 1836.

[91] "Another Public Meeting to Crush the Freedom of Speech and of the Press," *Philanthropist*, July 29, 1836.

[92] W.M. Greene, letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 28, 1836; J. Burnet, "A Card," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, 1836; T. Walker, letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, July 27, 1836; [from the *Whig*], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1836.

4. The Committee to Speak to Birney

A committee was selected at the Lower Market House Meeting on July 23 to talk to Birney about ceasing publication of the *Philanthropist*, with Jacob Burnet as chair and Timothy Walker as secretary. They met on July 25 and wrote a note to Birney asking to meet with him. Through a series of notes, twelve of them were able to arrange a meeting with Birney and members of the Executive Committee of the O.A.S.S. at the home of Dr. Isaac Colby. Judge Burnet described "the high degree of excitement which pervaded…nineteen twentieths…of the inhabitants of the city." Several on the committee had talked to workingmen "*ready to help*" put down the paper. It was the "*business of the city*" that framed the discussion. O.A.S.S. members asked Market House Committee members if rents and wages weren't high and "commercial business brisk for the season…? All this was admitted." But if abolitionism had prevented even more orders from coming to Cincinnati, then, "it had injured the city, - because these very orders would be the means of introducing …more artisans from others places" that could have done the work.[93]

When he was asked how he was specifically injured by abolitionists, Burnet explained how southern visitors were afraid to come to the city in the summer with their "servants" since the abolitionists had appeared, because "the people of color had become so bold in enticing away the servants…[and were] much more impudent to the *whites* than formerly," often refusing to give way on the sidewalk. When asked if there were anything about the "manner or spirit" of running the *Philanthropist* that bothered

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[93] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 27-33; italics are in the original.

them, the committee admitted that they had not read it, and it was not the manner, but simply "the *discussion of slavery here*, that was thought to be injuring the business of the city." The *Philanthropist* "was believed to be a prominent instrument in carrying on this discussion" and "its *absolute discontinuance* was called for - that the public sentiment would be satisfied with nothing short of this, and that it was in such a condition that it could not be reasoned with."[94] Like Congress's use of a "gag rule" from 1836 to 1850 to attempt to prevent Congressmen from presenting petitions from residents in their districts calling for an end to slavery, Burnet's reading of local sentiment as united was a miscalculation. Both the Congressional gag rule and Cincinnati's civic leaders' attempts to silence discussion of slavery succeeded in generating sympathy for white abolitionists deprived of their constitutionally protected rights of speech and petitioning the government. Additionally, the controversy generated more discussion of the issues than abolitionists would likely have generated on their own, ultimately benefiting the abolitionist position.[95]

Birney and "his associates" declined to stop publication, unwilling to surrender "Freedom of the Press - the Right to Discuss." They felt that a topic that "occup[ies] the mind of the whole nation" is not one to forbid people from discussing. This "is virtually the demand of slaveholders…[S]hould any disturbance of the peace occur

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[94] Ibid., 33-35; italics are in the original.

[95] Congressman John Quincy Adams, no abolitionist, doggedly refused to be "gagged," keeping both the emancipation of slavery and the unconstitutionality of censoring white citizens on the table and in the press, helping to increase sympathy for abolitionism. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: the Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 512-515: Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005). 465, 471-473.

…you, gentlemen, must be deeply, if not almost entirely, responsible for it, before the

bar of sober and enlightened public opinion." On July 29, the committee representing

the city accepted their declination and expressed "their utmost abhorrence of every

thing like violence…and earnestly…implore their fellow citizens to abstain

therefrom." With the exception of the *Gazette*, the daily papers published a detailed

report of the efforts of the Market House Committee to get the abolitionists to stop

publishing and their refusal on Saturday, July 30. Hammond, not wanting to contribute

to inflaming a mob to commit violence on Saturday, refused to publish the report until

Monday.[96]

5. A Meeting of the Mob

According to the official report of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, a

> *preparatory* meeting was held at the Exchange [Hotel], at which Joseph Graham
> presided, and J.A. Burrows acted as Secretary - where it was resolved, 1. That the
> Press should be destroyed, and the types thrown into the street; and 2. That Mr.
> Birney be notified to leave the city in 24 hours. This meeting [was] composed
> mostly of well-dressed, young men, having the appearance of clerks, store-boys,
> &c.[97]

The meeting of a group intending to form a mob, with officers, was confirmed by the

Gazette, including their intention to tar and feather Birney and other members of the

"Abolitionist Committee."[98] Even the mobs, in their organization, strategies, and

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[96] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 36-39; "The committee appointed at the meeting in the Lower Market…," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1836. Committee member John C Wright "has been absent during all its proceedings and Stephen Burrows, another member, declined acting."
[97] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 39; italics are in the original.

[98] Cincinnati *Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836. The same day this report was published, Joseph Graham and J.A.D. Burrows shot a note to Hammond denying that Birney was marked for "tar and feathering" and that abolitionists' homes were marked for attack. Hammond stood by his story, quoting the *Whig* of Mon., Aug. 1: "At this juncture…the names of Birney, Donaldson, Colby, etc., (all leading abolitionists) were

overlapping memberships with public meeting lists, functioned as ephemeral

voluntary organizations directed at a local improvement project with short term

goals.[99] The improvement in this case, as articulated by businessmen and their allies,

and targeted by the mobs, would be to remove certain impediments to the city's over-

all prosperity - such as abolitionists and their newspaper that are compromising the

city's relationship with southerners and the money they bring into Cincinnati. Though

typically framed in terms of economic and mercantile trade relationships with the

South, the social and cultural ties with the South were just as important to

development. According to the committee with met with the O.A.A.S. in late July,

Cincinnati was thriving, business was booming, and yet businessmen still complained

that abolitionism interfered in trade (i.e. "a relationship") with the South. This

combination of trade relationships and cultural ties suggests that it was the *style* of

development that was important. White Cincinnatians wanted to trade goods and

culture with the South, reinforcing the southern feelings already strong in the local

area.

G. The Anti-Abolition and Race Riots of Late July

On Saturday, July 30, "Throughout the day…indications of an approaching

tumult" were heard all over the city. "The Mutterings of the populace, in the early part

of the day, gave warning that something fearful was impending." But the authorities

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shouted by numerous voices, and immediately three or four hundred of the mob rushed to Birney's dwelling. THE MOB WERE WELL PROVIDED WITH TAR AND FEATHERS." The *Whig*'s story had not, so far, been contradicted. See *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, 1836; emphasis is in the original.

[99] For ephemeral voluntary associations in antebellum Cincinnati, see Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 130-132.

were nowhere to be seen. A crowd of several thousand began gathering about nine in

the evening at Seventh and Main streets, near the offices of the Anti-Slavery Society

(see Figure 6.1). After conferring with each other, they attacked the printing office

"scattered the type in the streets, tore down the presses, and completely dismantled the

office." Although no women were reported to be in the mob, it is clear that they were

close to the action while it occurred, and much affected by it even when not

themselves targeted. A local woman wrote to relatives in the Boston area on August

31, "I was near the scene of action when the press was destroyed by the mob, and

could distinctly hear their shouts and yells.…It seemed to me nothing short of an

explosion from the infernal regions." The *Gazette* noted that Mayor Davies stood "as a

silent spectator of the destruction of the printing office."[100]

   After destroying the press, the rioters headed for the homes of known

abolitionists. At the printer Pugh's home on Walnut Street (see Figure 6.1), they found

nothing worth destroying, and left without trouble. Three or four hundred rioters, led

by lumber mill owner Joseph Graham, and apparently supplied with tar and feathers,

searched for other abolitionists to assault. At William Donaldson's home on Eighth

Street they found only several women at home, Donaldson himself having escaped out

the back door and through his neighbors' backyards to safety. At Birney's home, only

seventeen year-old William was there, his parents both being out of town. At Isaac

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[100] Great Riot - Abolition Rebuked," *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836; "Destruction of Property,"
Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 2, 1836; "Mr. Birney," *Liberator*, Sept. 17, 1836.

Colby's home, his wife, who was the only person at home, became frightened enough to flee to her brother Salmon P. Chase's house.[101]

Irritated at not finding any abolitionists to punish, the mob returned to the printing office and began to pile up parts of the press for a bonfire. No doubt sensing that activities were about to get out of control, Joseph Graham climbed the growing pile and warned the crowd against burning it for fear of setting nearby buildings on fire. They contented themselves with singing and yelling, pulling a section of the press down Main street, breaking it up, and "drowning" it in the river. The rioters then "retired" to the Exchange Hotel for "refreshments" (see Figure 6.1)[102]

Soon another crowd congregated on Main Street, looking for people and buildings to attack. A group of them thought the *Gazette* office "should be demolished, but [were] overruled." According to the *Whig*, the frustrated mob, consisting mostly of "boys and quite young men," turned its destructive energy on the homes and businesses of Negroes and mulattoes living in Church Alley (see Figure 6.1). The residents apparently fired two guns at the mob, which "recoiled" in shock. When the crowd collected itself to make another attack on black homes, they found them empty, the inhabitants having fled: "their interior contents were destroyed." The *Republican* described the mob as "demolish[ing] the furniture of some two or three negro houses of ill fame," including "a grog shop kept by a negro man, in the lower

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[101] "Great Riot - Abolition Rebuked," *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836; "Destruction of Property," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836; Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, Aug. 2, 1836, in Erasmus Gest Papers, Vol I: Letters to and from Family Members, OHS. Gest confirms that the rioters had tar and feathers when they went to find Birney.

[102] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836; Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, Aug. 2, 1836.

part of town." Clarissa Gest felt the building was targeted because of amalgamation -

it was "that dreadful house on Church alley where blacks and whites had been living

together." The *Whig* added that "everything in the shop was destroyed and the house

was much mutilated."[103]

After the second attack on black homes, in which "colored people were

attacked by the mob, and driven from their homes in the dead of night," at about

midnight, the Mayor finally spoke to the crowd in Main Street. A letter to a New York

newspaper from a Cincinnati resident dated Aug. 2, 1836 and reprinted in Garrison's

Liberator, captured Davies' speech to the mob:

> Gentlemen, it is now late at night, by continuing longer you will disturb the
> citizens and rob yourselves of rest! Besides, there is danger of *punishing* the
> innocent with the guilty, which I am convinced that none in Cincinnati would
> wish to do. *We have done enough for one night* (three cheers for the Mayor).
> The abolitionists must be convinced by this time what public sentiment is, and
> that it will not do to disregard it. (Three cheers). I *advise* you to go home."[104]

Some of the mob did go home, but "various other disturbances took place through the

night" with "seven or eight more houses belonging to the colored people, in another

part of the city," being broken into and the occupants' "bedding, clothing, and

furniture" destroyed.[105] It was likely during this night's violence that the unnamed

mother of six children mentioned in the opening to this chapter lost her belongings and

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[103] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836; "More Mob Spirit," *Cincinnati Whig,* Aug. 2, 1836; *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836; Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, Aug. 2, 1836.

[104] Letter to the editor, "The Cincinnati Riot" [from the N.Y. *Sun*], *Liberator*, Aug. 27, 1836; italics are in the original. There is another version of this speech in Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 40.

[105] Letter to the editor: "The Cincinnati Riot" [from the N.Y. Sun], *Liberator*, Aug. 27, 1836; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1826.

those of her clients, her hard-earned money, perhaps even her job, and certainly her safety and that of her children in their home.

On Sunday, July 31, the riot's second day, a mob went to the Franklin House (see Figure 6.1), where Birney was supposed to be staying while his family was out of town, and demanded that he come out. Lawyer Salmon P. Chase, a colonizationist but agitated over the possibility of bloodshed, rushed to the hotel when he heard that a crowd was trying to force their way into the building. He set his tall, big-boned body in the doorway, barring any entrance and effectively deflecting attempts to challenge his right to do so.[106] A search group sent in by the Mayor finally assured the crowd Birney was not there and the Mayor asked the crowd to leave. The *Whig* assured its readers that the mob went home when asked to, and that, "The town has been orderly ever since."[107] The official report of the abolitionists claims "the residence[s] of the blacks were again disturbed, but no actual violence perpetrated."[108] The terror of having one's residence "disturbed" was enough violence to affect its victims.

The mob slipped out of the control of its leaders at times, and aimed at targets not intended in the "official" anti-abolition project. People were happy to participate in

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[106] Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase*: *A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), 28, 30; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 45, 48; Chase was equivocal about abolition and colonization in much the same way as Lyman and Catharine Beecher were; his solutions were expedient rather than moral, and preserved white privileges. After his experiences with the rioters during the 1836 riots, he defended several fugitive slaves in landmark local cases. See Blue, *Salmon P. Chase*, 31-36; Niven, *Salmon P. Chase*, 50-54, 62-63; and Stephen Middleton, *Ohio and the Antislavery Activities of Attorney Salmon Portland Chase, 1830-1849* (New York: Garland, 1990), 92-102, 104-106.

[107] "More Mob Spirit, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 2, 1836.

[108] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 40.

the riots until their own property was under siege. A woman in Cincinnati wrote to a

relative in Boston that on Monday night, August 1, the third day of the riots,

> a detachment from the mob assembled…and repaired to the water works of the
> city, for the purpose of destroying *them* also; at which people became alarmed,
> and about one hundred men assembled in arms, dispersed the mob, and thus
> prevented further destruction of property. Now these water works are a
> monopoly, in which the leaders of the mob are owners.[109]

The Mayor often seemed to mysteriously appear whenever moneyed interests were

threatened during the riots. On July 30, as the mob was about to attack a building with

two "*city Banks*" - assuming that Birney was in the building - Mayor Davies spoke to

the mob and stopped that attack.[110]

On Monday, August 1, Mayor Davies finally issued a proclamation asking for

citizens to cooperate in helping to restore order. Several volunteer groups of men

patrolled the streets, sworn in by the Mayor; Birney's son William claims that Davies'

action was forced by public opinion.[111] These volunteer patrols were able to stop

several further instances of intended violence by mobs, including a group of two

hundred people who marched down Elm Street toward a black church and housing.

Fifteen men prevented them from attacking until a "force of two hundred" arrived and

forced the mob to "disperse."[112] It is clear, as William Birney has pointed out, that the

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[109] "Mr. Birney," *Liberator*, Sept. 17, 1836; italics are in the original.

[110] "B," "Mob in Cincinnati" *Liberator*, Aug. 13, 1836; italics are in the original. The author of this article could be James Birney.

[111] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 40-41; Birney, *Birney*, 248.

[112] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 41. This incident was actually a stand-off between the militia, led by Mayor Davies, and the mob. For a full account of this last attempted attack on the black community in these riots, see Folk, "Queen City of Mobs," 145-146.

city authorities could have gotten control over these riots if they had wanted to do so.[113] There were times when they did seem to have control over the rioters, turning them away from "innocent targets," such as white-owned property, or even Negroes at times. They seemed to have allowed the violence to go on just long enough and no longer.

August 1 was the last day of mob violence in the city. The next morning, right on cue, the *Republican* greeted the city with a rather amazing booster piece, considering Cincinnati had been rocked by anti-black and anti-abolition riots for the previous three days:

> OUR CITY. - The prospects of Cincinnati were never, probably, more promising, than at the present moment. It is true, we don't hear of extraordinary sales of real estate, or witness vast and extensive improvements; but we see a steady, enterprising and industrious population, advancing in wealth, intelligence and refinement. We see also solid and substantial improvements going on in various parts of the city. We see property gradually but intrinsically increasing in value. We see old and unsightly buildings disappear one by one and comfortable and elegant ones rise in their place....[W]e can boast an increase of population beyond the increase of accommodations. We do not believe there is a city in the Union where the difficulty of procuring dwellings is so great. Our hotels and boarding houses are always crowded, and hundreds of southern families, who contemplated a sojournment of some weeks in the queen city of the West, have been compelled to relinquish their intentions, for want of accommodations.[114]

Ramsay seems to "pick up where the city left off" before the riots, perhaps aiming the piece at southern tourists who might be hesitant to come to Cincinnati: the city is *full* of people who wanted to be there.

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[113] Birney, *Birney*, 250-251.

[114] "Our City" [from the *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 2, 1836], repr. in Ohio Ant-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 48, Appendix C. CHS

This was followed a week later with another piece in the same vein. After detailing specific improvements around the city, "which indicate most clearly that the march of this city is still *onward*," Ramsay gave his pitch:

> No city in the United States is placed upon a surer basis for continued prosperity and growing importance than Cincinnati. Already the principal point of attraction and interest in the great valley, ranking as the sixth city in the Union, and withal one of the most beautiful in location and plan, in the midst of one of the most fertile regions in the world, with facilities of access already great and constantly increasing, she may well challenge competition with any other town in the West.[115]

Before the ashes had cooled, ever the booster, he had already moved on, hoping to take his readers with him, beyond the temporary project of ridding the city of abolitionists and onward to the greater project of the development of the city.

But successful community development called for damage control. The commercial papers that supported the Lower Market House meeting minimized the violence of the mobs, no doubt thinking of attracting trade and tourism. Charles Ramsay of the *Republican* found the mob of July 30 to be "the most systematic, orderly and well behaved mob, we ever witnessed, and at the same time the most determined."[116] James Conover of the *Whig* insisted the mob that attacked Church Alley was restrained, and only injured "one or two well behaved black families" by accident; the race riot was not "within the design of the mob." That Cincinnatians "have strong and universal opposition to Mobs of all kinds" and "regret…that one

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[115] "Our City Improvements" [from the *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 9, 1836], repr. in Ohio Ant-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, inside the front cardboard cover. CHS

[116] *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836.

should have occurred among us," at the same time that "very few seem to feel

dissatisfied with the result, [or] have the slightest sympathy for the sufferers"

presented no contradictions for him.[117]

Observers noted the make-up of the mob almost immediately. A local resident,

writing to the N.Y. *Sun* on August 2, described those in control:

> The last three days have been a reign of uninterrupted anarchy and terror. All
> law is prostrate, and all constitutional right trampled in the dust - not by the
> ignorant multitude, but by our men of wealth - of learning - our legislators and
> our Judges. Leagued with them in action are our city authorities, with the
> Mayor at the head.[118]

James Birney felt that foreigners, who made up nearly half of the city's population,

did not participate in the mobs - not the Germans (about 30 percent of the population)

and not the typically scape-goated Irish; "Let the whole dishonor, then, fall where it is

justly due, on *Americans* - on OURSELVES." [119] There was no one else to blame.

James Lakey, writing to his brother about the attacks on the black community

mentioned that "the *three* leading rioters were from the *free*

states…Connecticut…Pennsylvania…& one from N. York." Clearly he didn't feel that

this riot was led by southerners, despite the "southern feeling" rife in the

community.[120] They were mobs of local, northern-born, respectable American citizens.

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[117] "More Mob Spirit," *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 2, 1836.

[118] Letter to the editor, "The Cincinnati Riot" [from the N.Y. *Sun*], *Liberator*, Aug. 27, 1836.

[119] "Reign of Terror," *Philanthropist*, Sept. 23, 1836; emphases are in the original.

[120] James Lakey to Thomas Lakey, Cincinnati, Jan. 12, 1837, James Lakey Papers, MSS fL192 RM:
Letters, diaries, documents of James Lakey, M.D. 1 Box, CHS. Italics are in the original.

Contemporary commentators on these riots also noted their commercial and community development aspects. Garrison's *Liberator* reprinted an extract of a second letter from Cincinnati with a clear sense of the commercial angle of the riots and their surrounding discourses:

> The avowed object of the movers, in the recent violence, was to put down that which was supposed injuriously to affect the *business* of the city. It was a *business measure*, standing distinct from the great principles of political freedom and individual security. It had nothing to do with law, or morals, or religion. Hence the *business press* only was affected by it.[121]

This writer suggests that civic leaders and businessmen interested in keeping southern trade channels open were able to shut-out any moral or political concerns that surfaced in the riots. So, as a strategy for economic development in Cincinnati, the riots were a calculated risk for the community.

H. After the Riots, Blame to Go Around: Serious Games

On August 2, Charles Hammond published a long piece in the *Gazette* giving a synopsis of the violence earlier in July and attempting an even-handed account of the riots of the previous several days. He placed some of the responsibility for the violence both on the public meetings and their leadership, and on the abolitionists, as well. At the end of the piece he republished the list of men appointed by the chair of the Lower Market House meeting to serve on the committee to talk to Birney, with notes about their property holdings, occupations, public offices, and other positions in the community. He felt the "standing" of the men on the committee was important to understanding what had happened in the city, because "it is very plain that the work

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[121] "The Cincinnati Riot," *Liberator*, Aug. 27, 1836; italics are in the original.

was not the contrivance of that class of men, with whom mobs are usually associated." But he wasn't ready to give a clear opinion yet: "We are too much in the midst of the actors."[122] Except for Hammond's dissident position on the issues, he was one of them. He may have wanted to put "the facts of the case" before the public; they had all had their names published before. But it was also true the *Gazette*'s offices only narrowly escaped sacking and burning in the riots, through the direct appeal of Joseph Graham, one of mob's leaders. Hammond was motivated.

The violence against African Americans and their homes and businesses was a race making technology,[123] intended to make it clear that blacks should not get overly comfortable in Cincinnati, just because there were sympathetic abolitionists in town. It was a reminder, given the provisions of the state's Black Laws and the prejudices of the white population, that they could be pushed out of their safety, and out of their homes, at any time. Neither set of race riots that year, on April 12 and as part of the late July anti-abolition riots, had been reported in any detail in the press; the few details that are known are largely found in the letters and other writings of private citizens.[124]

With the exception of the racist outbursts of speakers during the January 22 Court House Meeting, overt discussions of race and race making were also absent

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[122] "Destruction of Property," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836.

[123] For race making technologies, see Chapter 4 and Thomas Biolsi, "Race Technologies," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, ed. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 400-417.

[124] For example, see Clarissa Gest to Erasmus Gest, Aug. 2, 1836 and James Lakey to Thomas Lakey, Cincinnati, Jan. 12, 1837, James Lakey Papers.

from recorded discourses concerning the riots of 1836, except in private conversations, until the violence had abated. Then suddenly on August 1, the *Republican* published an editorial introduction to a letter to the editor supporting the Black Laws. Disclaiming "motives of hostility to the colored population of our city," Ramsay lectured his readers on black inferiority, giving ideological support to mob violence toward blacks during the riots. He claimed that the law requiring removal for "colored persons…who cannot give security for their good behavior…[is as] unnecessary as it is unjust." But he also maintained that blacks were naturally inferior and southern blacks were treated better than those in the North - because they "know their place." Blacks in the North were "impudent and presumptuous" because they didn't know that they were inferior: "A sense of inferiority, on the one side, induces a proper decorum and respect." [125] "W" 's letter complained that all the "croaking about the violation of the Constitution and laws" caused "our worthy overseers to neglect enforcing" the law mandating removal of indigent blacks: "I really wish that some of our sticklers for the *quiet* execution of the laws would see that this single one is enforced... not one in twenty of our colored population have complied."[126] Action needed to be taken.

Immediately after the violence stopped, a response from members of the black community to abolitionism was registered in the public press, with the same ethical lapses that the white organizers of the community meetings committed. The Cincinnati Union Society of Colored Persons met on August 1 "to take into consideration the

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[125] Editorial, *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836.

[126] "W," letter to the editor, "Law or No Law,"*Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 1, 1836.

situation of the colored inhabitants of this city - ” Their resolutions, “*unanimously adopted*,” declared abolitionists to be “misguided and fanatic,” to use methods that “injure the interest of the colored population of the free States by exciting the suspicion of the white inhabitants,” and to have a theory of amalgamation that this group “hold[s] in horror and contempt…as degrading both to the white and the colored man.” Their final resolution considered “further publication of abolition papers in this city as an attempt to excite against us angry feelings and the personal violence of the anti-abolitionists.” [127]

It is clear that having thirty-two men sign this notice was intended to indicate wide support in the black community for these resolutions. But Joseph Graham, author of the handbill and the “Wanted poster” hung all over town in July and member of the mobs, was behind this notice; the two officers of the organization had used the other thirty men’s names without their permission. Hammond exposed the plot and published a counter-declaration from most of the men whose names had been misused. The organization was originally an improvement society for “correcting the morals and affording aid to the distressed people of color in this city.” The twenty-eight men who signed the second notice disavowed any connection with abolition or colonization

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[127] “Cincinnati Union Society of Colored Persons*,*” *Cincinnati Post*, Aug. 2, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 4, 1836; and *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 5, 1836. Also see “Union Meeting,” *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, 1836. All italics are in the originals.

groups, "matters of a political nature…while we (blacks) stand in our present relation with this government."[128]

Although the physical violence had stopped by late on August 1, the symbolic violence in the community continued throughout the next several weeks in a number of ways. One of the first things that happened as the physical violence abated was a call for a meeting on August 2 at 3 P.M. at the Court House, issued by forty men, "The friends of Law, and the Constitution, having no connection with the anti-Slavery Society and who are opposed to the action of a Mob, under any possible circumstances." Among them were Charles Hammond of the *Gazette*, lawyer Salmon P. Chase, and Rev. Henry M. Beecher, a son of the Rev. Lyman Beecher.[129] Unfortunately Hammond's editorial that morning had argued that it was always wrong to "assert abstract rights against the interests, the feeling, and the present judgments of a decided majority of a country or community." Even if the majority is wrong, he made an argument for "the *enlightened very few*" submitting to the will and tyranny of the majority: "courtesy and good neighborship [*sic*] required it of them." [130] When the organizers of the meeting arrived, Hammond among them, they discovered another group had come early and commandeered the meeting for their own purposes. These political pirates had taken Hammond's editorial to heart, and deciding that they spoke

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[128] "People of Color," and "We the undersigned members of the Cincinnati Union of Colored Persons," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 8, 1836.

[129] "Public Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836; *Cincinnati Post*, Aug. 2, 1836.

[130] Editorial: "Abolitionism," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1836; italics are in the original.

for the majority of Cincinnatians, took over the meeting to gain control over public opinion.

The officers of the pirated meeting - Judge Burke, president; Jacob Burnet and Levi James, vice-presidents; and Joseph Graham, secretary - included prominent members of both the Lower Market House meeting and the mobs. The group selected to present resolutions included S.P. Chase from the group that had originally called the meeting, but his resolution was not brought up. They decided that they would cooperate with authorities "to preserve the public peace," that the "abolition press" was the "cause of all our recent difficulties," and "to approve the course pursued by the Colonization Society…it is the only method of getting clear of slavery." [131]

Along with a report on this meeting, Hammond published the intentions and resolutions of the group that had originally planned the meeting. They were primarily concerned with preserving the right of "free discussion," the problem of securing "southern trade" at the cost of the loss of constitutional "blood-bought rights," and in a "city known for its public order," they were ashamed of the police and their fellow citizens for failing to stop the violence once it had begun. Hammond believed that Morgan Neville and Nicholas Longworth, organizers of the Lower Market House meeting, were mostly responsible for the resolutions at this later meeting, if not for the

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[131] "Great Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, 1836; *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 3, 1836; and *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 4, 1836. It is worth noting that Jacob Burnet, the president of this hijacking, was a vice-president of the Cincinnati Colonization Society in 1834, the year closest to 1836 for which there is information. He was also a vice-president of the American Colonization Society in 1836-1837, leaving it a "handsome legacy at his death." See "Colonization Society," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1834; and American Colonization Society, *Thirty-seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington, [D.C.]: American Colonization Society, 1854), 3.

meeting itself. [132] Neville had done something like this before. In 1828, as a Jackson supporter, he had rented a hall, intending to be the speaker, but deliberately announced that someone else was going to speak. A "good house" showed up, tricked into listening to Neville. He had a history of changing the rules to suit his needs when there was a serious political game to be played.[133] The pirating of the August 2 meeting was a parry in the serious game of community development and city politics. One of the immediate prizes on the table was control over public opinion, a necessary tool for wining the game.

The discourse in the papers over the next several weeks was quite agitated, even violent. The *Whig* complained about the reportage of the riots in other cities, referring to them as "proceedings," or at best, "disturbances." He was very disturbed that Louisville papers reported that weapons were used and that the Mayor should have done more to stop the violence. Conover felt that because the majority of citizens supported the Mayor's actions, they were therefore correct.[134] The Louisville papers were used by Hammond to show that even Southerners were opposed to Cincinnati's riots. One paper stated the case clearly. Abolition was "abhorrent":

> We loathe the doctrine of freeing the blacks, and permitting them to remain in the country, and participate in our political and social privileges, rights, and

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[132] "Public Meeting," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Thurs., Aug. 4, 1836.

[133] "Extraordinary Hoax," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 29, 1828. A month after the "bait and switch" at the theatre, Hammond reported that Neville had circulated a letter spreading rumors that Jacksonian candidates had already won elections "far and wide" in Ohio. Hammond was quite critical of Neville's tactics. See "What Have We Come To?" *Cincinnati Gazette*, Oct. 29, 1828.

[134] Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 4, 1836.

enjoyments…[Y]et we can never palliate or apologise [*sic*] for those who are instrumental in collecting a MOB. We cannot justify violations of the law."[135]

The *Whig* was only able to reprint something from one southern paper that unequivocally had the "warmest admiration, and most profound respect" for those who attended the anti-abolition meeting in January, before the riots.[136] Those who supported mob violence as a reinforcement for, or in place of, public opinion, or to achieve an extralegal goal, were finding themselves increasingly criticized, even in the South whose patronage was at the center of the debate.

The *Whig* and the *Republican* were both more concerned with the stained honor of "respectable gentlemen" who had participated in the public meetings or in the mobs, as portrayed in the papers, than they were with the consequences of the decisions made in those meetings or by the mobs.[137] Both editors began an attack on Hammond. Conover was upset that Hammond had said that those who took over the August 2 meeting were of a different mind than those who had called the meeting. Conover, who was part of the "take-over," felt protocol had been followed: a call was issued (but not by them), men came, officers were elected, and resolutions were presented and unanimously passed. So what was the problem with the meeting? One cannot object simply because those present wanted to have a different agenda than those who organized the meeting! He did not think there had been a change in the

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[135] "Mobs" [from the *Louisville City Gazette,* Aug. 1], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 4, 1836; emphasis in the original.

[136] "Anti-Abolition Proceedings in Cincinnati" [from the *Vicksburg Register*, July 11], *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 27, 1836.

[137] Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 4, 1836; Editorial, *Cincinnati Republican*, Aug. 5, 1836.

rules.[138] The move was indicative that a serious game was being played, and that these men felt their project was threatened, so they changed the rules.

Hammond was concerned with the damage done to the city's image elsewhere. Part of the purpose of the Lower Market House meeting was to "preserve *the character of the city*, from the stigma of abolitionism"; without their intercession, "the city would be disgraced by a mob." He felt the comments of the editor of the *Whig* did great damage to the perceived character of the city, leading people to believe that a majority of Cincinnatians "approve of the violence perpetrated" and that the Mayor was hesitant to act:

> I should doubt, if it would not tend to discourage capitalists and men of enterprise from settling among us, no matter what opinion they might entertain of abolitionism, or of slavery…where '*an overwhelming majority of the people*' sanction Mob Law, no man, but an incendiary, would seek to make it his home.[139]

Even workingmen, often opposed to labor competition with free blacks in their communities, seemed to be critical of the riots. Hammond reprinted an article from a religious paper that had been reprinted in the *Working Man's Friend*. It described the situation as critical when, "at a public meeting, with which many of the influential names of our city are connected, a resort to illegal violence is openly encouraged." Only a few days after the violence ended, the support of many segments of the community seemed to be waning.

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[138] Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 4, 1836.

[139] Editorial: "The Character of the City," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 5, 1836; italics are in the original.

In a move reminiscent of his "Strange Mistake" editorial immediately after the

initial race riots of 1829,[140] Hammond, in hindsight, took a firmer stance concerning

the Lower Market House meeting on July 23. By August 6 he was describing it as the

"cause" of the "effects" of the mob violence in Cincinnati in late July. He implicated

other local papers, as well, pointing an editorial titled "Accountability" directly at the

editors of the *Whig* and the *Republican*: "It would be idle to reason with men whose

intellectual perceptions are obfuscated, by having been participators in the late

proceedings."[141] Backing up Hammond's analysis of the community's anti-abolition

project and the July 23 meeting's culpability in the ensuing violence, a letter from "No

Abolitionist" summed up a growing opinion several days later:

> We have indeed fallen on evil times if mobs are to be judges whether a man
> may publish his honest opinions or not.…If such then, be the nature of man,
> that the more he is persecuted for honest opinion, the more tenaciously he
> holds to them, who can doubt that the late proceedings have had a tendency to
> strengthen and increase those whom it was attempted to put down.[142]

The strategy had backfired.

"S" analyzed the relationship between improvement, freedom of speech and of

the press, and popular opinion. Individual right is the basis of the freedom of speech

and of the press, whose object is

> the advancement of the human race in science, morals, happiness. When do
> improvements or suggestions of improvement originate? - With the *individual.*
> By whom are improvements of any class first advocated?...Reformers, in the
> beginning, have ever been the few.

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[140] See Chapter 5.

[141] Editorial: "Accountability," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 6, 1836.

[142] "No Abolitionist," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 8, 1836.

If simple majoritarianism were to prevail, "it follows that nearly all the persecutions that have ever disgraced our world, have been perfectly reasonable."[143] In America, people generally believe that "the liberty of the press should be held sacred," but here we also say,

> This is an exception.… Never has a mob been got up against any alleged evil, where this has not been the plea. If the many were infallible, the plea might be valid…The history of the world tells us, that the many, in the beginning of all great improvements, have been wrong.[144]

A week after the physical violence had ceased, the rhetoric became more extreme. Conover's editorial in the *Whig* on August 9 considered those concerned with the legality of mobs to be "sickly sentimental." By August 13 he was claiming that freedom of the press was sentimental, as well.[145] This seems a transparent attempt to feminize the abolitionists' new strategy of focusing on the constitutional issues at stake for whites in the debate instead of on the issues concerning slavery and free blacks. Male abolitionists' embrace of a new ideal of masculinity that required an emotional engagement with others was an easy target for their opposition. One of the easiest ways to demonize white male abolitionists, other than referring to them as

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[143] "S." "Assailants of the Liberty of the Press," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 8, 1836.

[144] "S," "This is an Exception," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 11, 1836.

[145] Editorial, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 9, 1836; Editorial, "Abolitionism - Recent Events in Cincinnati - The Gazette and its Legal Opinion," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 13, 1836.

"black," was to describe their behavior or thinking "as womanly, and lacking in manly virtues, such as bravery."[146]

Conover also accused Hammond of being a "secret abolitionist."[147] Some citizens accused the *Whig* of encouraging the violence before or during the riots,[148] and others accused the *Gazette* because Hammond published the notice for the Lower Market House meeting without the writer's name attached.[149] To inject a little levity into a debate that was getting nasty, "S" wrote a parody of the Ohio State Constitution, rewriting key passages to create a document that would actually have legally allowed mobs to destroy the property of those they "deemed obnoxious…*with the consent of nine tenths of the people in every town, county, or city, in the State.*"[150] Possibly responding to this piece, Conover claimed that "nineteen twentieths" of the community was opposed to the publication of the *Philanthropist*. For him, sufficient opposition was enough to stop something legal from being carried out; public opinion trumped the law.[151]

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[146] Christopher Dixon, "'A True Manly Life': Abolitionism and the Masculine Ideal," *Mid-America* 77, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 227. Also see Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[147] Editorial, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 11, 1836; Editorial, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 11 (says Aug. 10), 1836.

[148] "Q," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 13, 1836.

[149] "Fairplay," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 13, 1836.

[150] "Something to Suit the Times," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 13, 1836; italics are in the original.

[151] "Abolitionism - Recent Events in Cincinnati - the Gazette and Its Legal Opinion [continued]," *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 15, 1836; also reprinted in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1836.

A war of words developed between Hammond and the editors of the *Whig* and the *Republican* over which paper had caused the recent riots. Conover at the *Whig* held Hammond responsible for the whole affair because he didn't take a clear stand against the *Philanthropist* and that most of the men on the Lower Market meeting notice committee did not know they were on it until the *Gazette* printed their names; that made Hammond responsible.[152] Because he had not tried to help the abolitionists see that they had no support, he was guilty of "lending a hand" to the violence; by not attaching the author's name, he is accused of authoring the call for the July 23 meeting himself. Hammond accuses the other two papers of promoting violence. They advocated, after the fact, that all three papers should have "combined…[to] entirely crush it [abolitionism]." Hammond described this as "the doctrine of the mobocrats."[153] Conover attacked Hammond's theory that "the committees" and "the mob" are connected and are jointly responsible for the violence in Cincinnati, claiming that the *Gazette*'s editor's refusal to combine with others to utterly destroy abolitionism means that he is an abolitionist.[154]

Conover also tried to minimize the property losses in the riots, never mentioning the violence committed against Negroes and mulattoes in late July and early August. After taking another jab at Hammond, he catalogued the losses as the destruction of one printing press, the demolition of "some negro brothels, where

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[152] "Abolitionism - Recent Events in Cincinnati - the Gazette and Its Legal Opinion [continued]," *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 15, 1836; also reprinted in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1836.

[153] Editorial: "Hard Run," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 16, 1836; Editorial comment, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 17, 1836.

[154] Editorial comment, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 17, 1836.

wretches of all colors congregated, and which had previously been presented by the Grand Jury as public nuisances. It is true one or two houses occupied by industrious negroes, were assailed by mistake." He claims anti-abolitionists "raised a sum" to cover their losses (?) the next day.[155] I was only able to find one piece of evidence that anyone attempted to financially help the African Americans who were attacked and whose property was stolen or destroyed in the race riots. Whether any money was collected is not known.[156] In fact we can know very little about the effects of these riots on Cincinnati's black community; the papers covered it only peripherally. The letter excerpted in the opening vignette to this chapter, puts a face and some life history on one of the victims of the violence.[157] She had to, as did many others in the black community, start over -- again.

By late September the discussion of the riots, the meetings, and abolitionism had quieted down in the newspapers. The first "revived" *Philanthropist* had been published, but Birney hadn't heard anything about its reception in town yet. Birney and his family were receiving nightly threats of physical violence, deportation, and death. Most of the threats were aimed at Birney personally, putting a lot of stress on

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[155] Editorial comments, *Cincinnati Whig*, Aug. 18, 1836.

[156] "There was a subscription list circulated yesterday to obtain funds to indemnify the colored persons who suffered by the late riotous proceedings. What amount was collected we know not, nor do we know whether the abolitionists gave any thing or not. We would like to be informed on both topics." Cincinnati *Post*, Aug. 2, 1836. This paper's entire coverage of the late July riots was confined to this untitled article. As in the 1829 riots, it didn't cover the violence itself as news.

[157] James Lakey to Thomas Lakey, Cincinnati, Jan. 12, 1837, James Lakey Papers.

his family.[158] He moved the paper back into Cincinnati after the riots, and published it without any opposition. The anti-abolitionists believed the South had turned against the city (as one Whig "chief mobocrat" told Birney), so they seemed to have "lost heart." Nine months after the riots, Birney found a new printer and offices in a building at Sixth and Main belonging to a member of the Lower Market House Committee who was fully aware that the *Philanthropist* was to be printed in the building. Mayor Davies steered his way through criticism of his actions during the riots and was reelected that fall.[159]

It was almost as if nothing had changed since before the riots. After years of litigation, Achilles Pugh and the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, with Salmon P. Chase as their lawyer, were able to recoup some damages from the leaders of the attacks on the printing press and books and papers in the O.A.S.S. Book Depository.[160] In 1837 voters approved subscriptions of $200,000 apiece for the Southern and Little Miami Railroads, and the White Water Canal, but the financial panic that year devoured the Charleston-Cincinnati railroad project. The southern economy had been decimated by the Civil War and Chicago was the dominant city in the West by the time Cincinnati developed a cogent railroad strategy. Cincinnati lost its supremacy in the region. And while other Ohioans steadily became more pro-abolition and less violent to its

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[158] Birney to Lewis Tappan, Cincinnati, Sept. 26, 1836, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dumont, 1: 358; Birney to Ezekial Webb, Thomas Chandler, and Darius C. Jackson, Cincinnati, Oct. 6, 1836, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dumont, 1: 363.

[159] Birney to Ezekial Webb, Thomas Chandler, and Darius C. Jackson, Cincinnati, Oct. 6, 1836; Birney to Lewis Tappan, Cincinnati, Dec. 7, 1836, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, ed. Dumont, 1: 371-373; Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": 245.

[160] Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 71-72n83.

message through the rest of the decade, the white residents of Cincinnati would remain resolutely focused on strengthening the city's economic and cultural ties to the South while nursing a simmering hostility to the tenacious and improving population of free blacks in their midst.[161]

In her study of boosterism and Cincinnati's 1836 anti-abolition violence, Sally Griffith reminds us that business and trade are a cultural system, with their own ways of seeing the world and defining reality, and their own cultural practices. She argues that the existence of towns in nineteenth-century America was so closely tied to economic activity that business culture and its share of the booster ethos became the dominant or "official culture" of nineteenth-century urban America.[162] The majority of the men who were involved in organizing, leading, and even participating in the anti-abolition meetings and riots, were also boosters and promoters of the several railroad and canal projects from which the city, and individual investors such as Morgan Neville and Nicholas Longworth, stood to gain. They were habituated to "*local* forms of mobilization, particularly the ritualized public meeting." Their localism and stress on local autonomy made it easier for them to see slavery as not their problem, but a

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[161] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": 245; Folk, "The Queen City of Mobs": 202-204.

[162] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": 214-215. Among other works that treat boosterism and business more as cultural systems, see David Hamer, *New Towns in the New World: Images and Perceptions of the Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) and William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

local and southern one; the expediency of continued trade with the South reinforced their localist approach.[163]

Working against this self-sufficient, localist strain in the thinking of Cincinnati businessmen and boosters of the period was the contradiction of a strong sense of ties to the South - a near dependency on trade with the region. Cincinnati *Republican* editor and booster Charles Ramsay did not simply refer to economic ties to the South in his editorials, but to shared feelings. His arguments were not simply about financial capital, but about Cincinnati's *cultural capital* in the South - the set of shared values and meanings, the closely attuned common sense and public opinion about what to do about slavery, abolitionism, and the North's growing free Negro population. His emphasis on Cincinnati, and Covington and Newport, Kentucky as one location, so much so they should share a single name, constructs the notion of Cincinnati as a southern city, with southern sensibilities, for his readers.[164]

The problem was that not everyone was equally invested in all parts of this construction. For local abolitionists, the serious game was continuing to reach the white population with the message of the necessity of the immediate abolition of slavery. They had changed the game by reframing their argument about publishing abolition papers and discussing the subject as a free speech and free press issue, rather than one of freeing Negro slaves. The result was a fragmentation of white public

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[163] Griffith, "A Proper Spirit of Enterprise": 230; italics are in the original.

[164] Our City" [from the Cincinnati *Republican*, Aug. 2, 1836], repr., Ohio Ant-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, 48, Appendix C; "Our City Improvements" [from the Cincinnati *Republican*, Aug. 9, 1836], repr., Ohio Ant-Slavery Society, *Narrative*, inside the front cardboard cover.

opinion, as white citizens felt the issue begin to compromise their rights, as well. Carl Abbott's study of the economic thought of businessmen and boosters in antebellum Cincinnati describes a united sense of community development in the city until the 1840s and 1850s, when a growing selfishness and lack of "public spirit," the lack of coherent development strategies (especially concerning transportation routes), and internal conflict (including labor strife) kept the city from competing effectively with Chicago and St Louis.[165]

The failure of the 1836 anti-abolitionist project represents an earlier fragmentation of development thinking in Cincinnati. The first serious fracturing of development consensus in the city came with the fragmentation of public opinion concerning strategies for ridding the community of abolitionists, widely seen as a threat to the city's prosperity. This fragmentation is clearly visible in the hijacking of the second Court House meeting, originally planned by moderates opposed to mobs in the community, by part of the Lower Market meeting leadership on August 2; hijacking the meeting betrays that the hijackers felt a threatening opposition, so they changed the rules of the game. After the abolitionists changed strategies, reframing the public discussion about an abolitionists press in the community as a free speech/free press issue, it became extremely difficult for traditional elites among the businessmen and boosters to maintain their accustomed control over public opinion. During the 1829 riots and throughout the attendant discourses, only the "rights" of blacks were at stake, so in the prejudiced atmosphere of the community, it wasn't difficult to reach

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[165] Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, Chapter 6: "Cincinnati: The Abdication of the Queen City," 148-171.

enough of a consensus that news of the riots was suppressed. During the 1836 anti-abolition crisis in Cincinnati, public opinion was more fragmented from the beginning, and became more so as the weeks went on. Without a broad base of public support, there could be no long-term gains from the project. The 1841 riots would be very different, focused on the black community, as the 1829 riots had been.

Chapter 7

The Cincinnati Race Riots and Anti-Abolition Riots of 1841

In September, 1841, a week after the end of the direct violence of the worst anti-black and anti-abolition riots that Cincinnati had ever experienced, a local working man wrote a letter to the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, complaining about the high and abstract tone of the local editorial discourse about the causes of the riots. "Workey" had his own set of causes, less abstract, he thought, and more local. He claimed he was a "plain man, not versed in these abstractions of [petitions about] *Church and State,*" nor in those of "the competition of *free and slave labor*." He believed the Negroes working in the city were primarily fugitive slaves:

> How far this may interfere with the employment of industrious whites, we are unable to say, but should think that where *they are brought together*, at the same bed and board, in this hot weather, neither the competition nor the contact, would be agreeable to the lighter colored party.

Attacking the editor of the Cincinnati *Chronicle*, he feigned not understanding the charges of censorship: "What effort has been made to stifle discussion?...Who has questioned the right of petition?" He didn't see how any of this had anything to do with the late riots. He believed they had been fistfights that had gotten out of control, "an outbreak of violent men and idle boys, growing out of a lax discharge of duty" by city officials.

Workey then explained just what it was about both labor competition and petitions that was bothering him so much, showing the interweaving of economic and

cultural anxieties that characterized much of the local discourse surrounding the 1841 riots:

> The Abolitionists are to blame, for encouraging the ingress of runaway slaves, and harboring fugitives from justice - they are to blame for countenancing *idle negroes who do not work*, and many of whom steal for a living for themselves, if not for their patrons. White men, who *work hard*, pay taxes, and support the various burthens [*sic*] and duties of citizens, are naturally indignant when they see a set of idle blacks, dressed up like ladies and gentlemen, strutting about our streets, and flinging the "rights of petition and discussion" in our faces, while we know that most of them are loafing and preying on us for a living.

He ended with the admonition that the *Chronicle*'s editor (E.D. Mansfield) should "brush up his abstractions, revise his African affinities, and cool down to a region of common sense. A little more sympathy with the working class of his fellow citizens would not hurt him, and might improve his paper."[1]

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A. 1841 - A Violent Year

1. Violence Early in 1841

The violence in Cincinnati that became race riots and anti-abolition riots in September, 1841, began early in the summer with the violent arrest of confectioner and abolitionist Cornelius Burnett and his three sons at his confectioner's shop, on Fifth between Walnut and Vine streets (see the map in Figure 7.1). They were taken into custody for interfering with the police arrest of a mulatto man wanted as a fugitive slave.

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[1] "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 1841; italics are in the original.
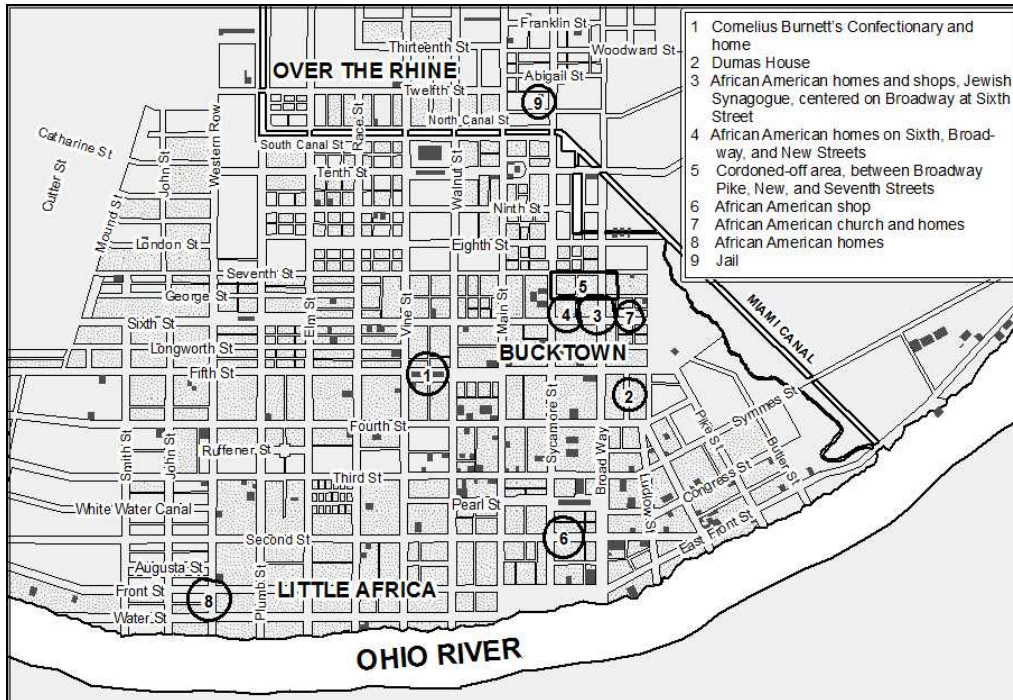
Figure 7.1 Map of Identifiable Locations of the Cincinnati Race and Anti-Abolition Riots, 1841.

Adapted from Map 4.1, "Cincinnati in 1850," Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, "The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati" in Taylor, ed., *Race in the City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); this map was adapted from Doolittle and Munson, *Topographical Map of the City of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Doolittle and Munson, 1841); Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841.*

A crowd formed during the initial confrontation, threatening nearby houses and breaking windows; a second formed when the Burnetts were taken to jail and again later that night; and yet another the next night, intending to destroy Burnett's property. The near-riots were dispersed by the sheriff and the Burnetts were convicted by a jury five days later.[2] Some abolitionists in town had gotten bolder since Judge Lane's extra-judicial comment in a fugitive slave case in May, in which he claimed that slaves willingly brought into Ohio were technically free because state law did not allow slavery.[3] On May 18, the day after the Cincinnati *Enquirer* criticized Judge Lane's right to make his extra-judicial comment, instead supporting slave owners being able to bring their slaves into Cincinnati with impunity, a handbill with an implicit threat of violence to both the judge and to Cincinnati appeared across the river in Covington, KY; the *Enquirer* reprinted it.[4] Throughout the summer there would be other incidents involving fugitive slaves, increasing tension in the city.

Anti-abolition and anti-black violence had been increasing throughout Ohio since the beginning of the year. In January, a mob in Dayton, fifty miles up the Miami Canal from Cincinnati, threatened the court house where an abolition speech by ex-Senator Thomas Morris was expected. Whites then rioted for two days, burning the houses of black residents. Two white rioters were killed and none were arrested. Only

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[2] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 26, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 26, 1841; "In the case of the State vs. Cornelius Burnett," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 31, 1841; "A Mob in Cincinnati," *Philanthropist*, June 30, 1841.

[3] "Fugitive from Labor," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 17, 1841.

[4] "The Slave Decision," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 19, 1841.

blacks "on the defensive" were arrested.[5] Anti-black violence erupted again in Dayton in February, when three houses were burned and their occupants sent into the street in the middle of the night without shoes, clothes, or belongings. The *Liberator* reported, "The blacks were threatened with death if they gave any alarm and…few persons knew of the outrage till after daylight."[6] In March amalgamation became the issue when a mob in Cleveland "made a systematic and outrageous attack" on a mulatto man, a white women "said to be his wife," and a black female friend who was present, "burning her [their friend] with live coals," and demolishing the doors and windows of their house.[7]

By spring of 1841 the violence was moving along the Ohio River. In May, fifty miles southeast of Cincinnati along the river in Ripley, Ohio, two white men beat a Negro man, breaking his skull. They were apparently jealous of the good fortune of this ex-slave in finding a job to pay back the $500 that his widowed mother-in-law had borrowed to buy his freedom.[8] Only ten days before Cincinnati's riots began in September, the *Gazette* reported on mid-August riots at abolition lectures and meetings in Steubenville, Ohio, and across the border in Pittsburgh.[9] News of this violence upstream on the heavily used Ohio River could have traveled down-river to fuel the hostilities of kindred spirits in Cincinnati in a matter of days.

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[5] "Mob at Dayton" [from the *Philanthropist*], *Liberator*, Feb. 19, 1841.

[6] "Another Outrage at Dayton," *Liberator*, Feb. 26, 1841.

[7] "Mob at Cleveland" [from the *Cincinnati Chronicle*], *Liberator*, March 19, 1841.

[8] "A Horrible Outrage," by "A Citizen of Ripley," *Liberator*, May 14, 1841.

[9] "Mobs against Abolition," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 21, 1841.

In the summer of 1841 the South was also going through one of its periodic

purgings of free blacks.[10] The Cincinnati *Gazette* republished several stories from

New Orleans newspapers calling for renewed enforcement of both oppressive anti-

Negro laws and of the local practices of racial prejudice. The New Orleans *Advertiser*

insisted, that,

> every free negroe [*sic*] now in the city and State, in contravention of law,
> [should] be driven from their borders as a pest, as a plague….Let every citizen
> assist the authorities to expel the free blacks who are obnoxious to our laws. -
> Let us not permit the least insolence of a slave or a free black towards us, but
> punish him on the spot, or bring him before the tribunals of justice.…Let us be
> always on our guard, and grant no indulgences to the negroes.[11]

White Cincinnatians had a long history of antipathy toward Negroes and mulattoes. By

reprinting this rhetoric, *Gazette* editor John Wright had offered those who agreed with

its sentiments the opportunity to get "worked-up" over it. He made it easier for white

Cincinnatians to think: If the South doesn't want their free blacks, why should we

have them? We should drive them out, "as a pest, as a plague," as well! News of these

applications of violent spacing technologies of race making in the South would likely

have added to the anxieties of local residents who felt that the South was dumping its

free Negroes into Cincinnati.

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[10] See various articles in the *Philanthropist*, Aug. 4, 11, and Sept. 22, 1841.

[11] "Free Negroes in Louisiana" [from the New Orleans *Advertiser*], *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 10, 1841;
also see "The Negro," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 19, 1841.

2. Lead-up to the Riots: Local Violence and the Black Laws

As the hot summer with little rain wore on,[12] interactions that showed rising tensions between white and black residents occurred with increasing frequency. A number of violent events occurred over a three-week period, beginning in early August, building up a sense of animosity in the community. On August 1, two African Americans, Jacob Hopkins and Zachariah Butler, went into the garden of a German named Rice on the outskirts of town to pick his blackberries. When he insisted that they leave, a fight broke out; Rice was stabbed and later died of his wounds. Hopkins and Butler were arrested for murder.[13] There was also an unsubstantiated story that "a very respectable [white] lady" had been "accosted by two negro men" on Broadway early one morning in mid-August while on her way home after sitting up all night with a sick friend. Two others "thrust themselves before her on the sidewalk," and as she tried to flee, they were scared away by the approach of a passer-by. The police hoped she would recognize them if she saw them in town.[14] It isn't really clear what happened, or how many Negro men were involved: did they touch her, assault her, just jump out at her, or were they simply sharing the sidewalk with her?

On August 10 an editorial appeared in the *Enquirer* calling for renewed enforcement of Ohio's Black Laws. The previous day this paper had published a letter,

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[12] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1841; William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed., *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 45.

[13] See *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 2, Sept. 9, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 3, Sept. 14, 1841. The outcome of this case is not known.

[14] *Cincinnati Gazette*, "The Late Mob," Sept. 14, 1841.

supposedly intercepted from a fugitive slave, naming specific local abolitionists, such as C. Burnett, as persons who would certainly aid them in Cincinnati. Using the letter as a pretext, the editors wanted the Black Laws enforced: "The city is overrun with free blacks, laboring, when they do labor, in competition with white citizens, and when they do not, subsisting by plunder…not one in fifty of the negroes among us has given bond." The editors assumed "Negro stealing" was going on because of the presence of free blacks; they claimed the 1807 residency law for blacks wasn't being enforced.[15]

In mid-summer residents were beginning to grumble again about abolition and free blacks in Cincinnati and a supposed loss of southern trade. Gamaliel Bailey, now the editor of the *Philanthropist*, an official paper of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, claimed the loss was due to southerners not paying their accounts, and that slaveholders were "not to be trusted further."[16] Charles and John Brough, at the *Enquirer*, insisted they could prove that abolition in Cincinnati had caused bad feeling in the South and affected "business." A piece published in early August on the "Effects of Abolition" by "A Citizen," detailed a supposed loss of Cincinnati's "travel trade" (tourism) from the South to St. Louis, as southerners were afraid to bring their slaves to Cincinnati for fear they would be lured away by abolitionists and free blacks. This writer claimed "on good authority" that St. Louis was filled with southerners, and that Cincinnati was losing both "reputation" and the thousands of dollars which would

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[15] Editorial, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 10, 1841; "Effects of Abolition," by "A Citizen," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 3, 6, 1841.

[16] "Southern Trade," *Philanthropist*, July 14, 1841.

have been spent by "those wealthy and liberal strangers."[17] Bailey admitted that

"Cincinnati has become a standing subject of abuse in the South," its citizens called

thieves for informing blacks of their rights. Yes, southerners were threatening to

boycott the city, but "Cincinnati gets along very well - streets thronging - population

advancing - business thriving - quay crowded with steamboats."[18] But abolition and

free blacks were again at the top of the list of what was preventing imaginary levels of

prosperity from being actualized in Cincinnati.

The escalation from individual acts of interpersonal violence to collective

violence and riot came on Tuesday, Aug. 31. In the evening, near Sixth and Broadway,

there was "a quarrel…between a party of Irishmen, and some negroes, in which blows

were exchanged, and other weapons, if not firearms, used. Some two or three of each

party were wounded."[19] The next night, Sept. 1, a small crowd of white men, some of

them involved in the previous day's fight, seeking to start the fight again, came back

to the area. Armed with clubs, they approached the Dumas House, a black-owned

boarding house on McAllister Street between Fourth and Fifth (see Figure 7.1), and

insisted that a particular person be sent outside.[20] The residents refused to let anyone

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[17] Editorial, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 10, 1841; "Effects of Abolition," by "A Citizen," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 3, 6, 1841.

[18] "Cincinnati and the South," *Philanthropist*, July 14, 1841.

[19] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841.

[20] It isn't clear from the sources which person of color the crowd was actually looking for, someone who had shot at them from one of the houses the night before, or a man reputed to have been involved in a sexual assault of a white women some time before. See John M. Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest: Race Riots in the United States during the Age of Jackson, 1824-1849* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 77.

enter, and the crowd began an attack on the building, threatening the inhabitants, as well as other residents in the neighborhood, "including a number of women and children." The residents of the Dumas House and the surrounding buildings fired guns at the crowd. The violence of both of these fights was apparently stopped by whites living in the neighborhood acting as "watchmen." The editors of the *Republican* and the *Chronicle* admitted that in both fights, "the whites were worsted."[21] No one made an official report of the violence on Tuesday or Wednesday to the police; Mayor Samuel Davies claimed he only heard about it by chance later on Thursday.[22]

News that blacks had "won" these fights, however, undoubtedly began to spread around town, as well as across the river to nearby communities in Kentucky. On Thursday night, September 2, near the Lower Market, two white boys threw some gravel at a well-dressed African American couple out for a walk; an argument and scuffle ensued, but the couple left the vicinity. The man returned with allies and a fight began as other whites in the area joined in against them. Two young white men were "stabbed severely" and one was "likely to die"; no reports of African American casualties were published. A story circulated that a white man had been knifed in the stomach by a group of blacks after he had refused to give them room on the

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[21] *Cincinnati* Gazette, Sept. 6, 1841; Editorial: "The Mob," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; "Great Riot and Bloodshed on Our Streets," *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841.

[22] Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing, 1926; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 50; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 77n101.

sidewalk.[23] The *Chronicle* reported that on Thursday night "a feeling of strong exasperation…among a certain portion of the whites" became apparent.[24] Whites began grumbling about blacks having apparently "won" the several recent fights. Friday morning's *Enquirer* informed those Cincinnatians and visitors who hadn't heard about the events of the night before: "An affray took place last evening [Thursday] at the Lower Market, between a party of whites and blacks, in which one white man was severely stabbed. We are unable to learn how it commenced, but from the flying reports, we should judge that "*Major Rum*" had the greatest part in it."[25] At this point it was partially brushed off as a drunken scuffle.

But on Friday, rumors began to spread through the usual channels that the blacks had initiated the attacks and the whites had been the victims. While city officials ignored clear signs of an impending attack on the black community, local Negroes and mulattoes, having experienced and survived four prior riots in the previous twelve years, read the tension and outright animosity around town and began to prepare for their individual and collective defense. The *Western Episcopal Observer* was the only local paper to admit that black community leaders were denied protection from "the city authorities, when they applied for it - but were directed to defend

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[23] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sep. 6, 7, 9, 14, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 9, 10, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4; and *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841. From this point on, to avoid the unwieldy repetition of titles of articles, riot reports will be identified only by newspaper and date. Individual editorials, letters to the editor, or other articles will be cited specifically.

[24] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841.

[25] "An affray took place," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 3, 1841; italics are in the original.

themselves the best that they could" from what was clearly shaping up to be another violent attack.[26]

A man named Major James Wilkerson organized the defense of the black community that was located in the vicinity of Sixth Street and Broadway (see Figure 7.1). Wilkerson, a twenty-eight year old of African, European, and Native American ancestry, had been born in slavery and purchased his own freedom, giving him a certain authority. In the only eyewitness account of these riots by an African American, John Mercer Langston recalled that the black community had "full confidence in his [Wilkerson's] ability, sincerity, courage, and devotion and were ready to follow him even to death." They spent all day Friday getting ready for an assumed attack. The men evacuated as many women and children from the neighborhood as possible. Wilkerson organized the remaining men into groups, passed out the weapons he had collected, and placed groups of men on rooftops, in alleys, behind buildings, and in other strategic locations.[27]

B. The Riots Begin

1. Friday's Violence

On Friday evening at about 8 p.m., a crowd of whites armed with clubs, stones, and sticks openly began to assemble at the Fifth Street Market, at Fifth and Vine streets in the First Ward, "with the avowed purpose of attacking the negro houses and

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[26] "Riot - Violence and Bloodshed," *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841.

[27] John Mercer Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, or The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion* (Hartford, CT: American, 1894), 64; "Riot - Violence and Bloodshed," *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841; "The Late Riot," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 9, 1841.

driving that class of people from the city."[28] This particular area had the strongest

visible African American presence in the city. About nine-hundred and fifty Negroes

and mulattoes, or about forty-two per cent of those in Cincinnati, lived in the First

Ward, with many of their social and cultural institutions nearby. The editor of the

Gazette placed the number of "resident and sojourning negroes" in the whole city at

the time of the riots at about 3,000; 2,255 of them were residents according to the

1840 U.S. Census. But this area also supported a white population of approximately

8,000 residents.[29] The crowd was estimated at 700-800 persons as it left the market,

getting larger as it moved toward its intended targets, perhaps reaching as many as

1,500 persons.[30]

The rioters entered the area around Sixth and Broadway swearing and cursing.

First they attacked a Negro-owned candy store, smashing its windows and doors with

clubs, and drawing even more people. There were "savage yells" calling for a "general

attack on the black population." At this point, the Clerk of the Courts J.W. Piatt,

followed by Mayor Samuel Davies attempted to address the mob, but they were

shouted down with a mixture of threats to themselves and calls for renewed general

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[28] *Cincinnati* Gazette, Sept. 6, 1841; the quote is from "Dreadful Riot and Loss of Life," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841.

[29] *Cincinnati* Gazette, Sept. 6, 1841; William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 36; Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 121; "The Late Mob," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1841.

[30] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841. It is impossible to determine how many people were actually in the mob; there were exaggerations from everyone, both too high and too low. The figure of 1500 persons was reported in the *Catholic Telegraph* over a week later. Editor Purcell also believed that only 200 of these 1500 persons were responsible for all of the damage. See "Mobs," *Catholic Telegraph*, Sept. 11, 1841.

attacks on Negroes and mulattoes. John Wright at the *Gazette* would later claim that the most violent men he observed, and the leaders of this mob, were "strangers to the city…connected with river navigation, and were strongly backed by [violent] boat hands."[31] It was the standard disclaimer of respectable, responsible citizens who desired to be seen by others as distanced from violence.

Regrouping, the mob began an attack on African Americans in their clusters of homes on Sixth, Broadway, and New streets. One major fight centered on a "small frame house next door to the Synagogue on Broadway" at 6th street (see Figure 7.1). The attacking mob was "urged on by those standing about with savage yells and imprecations against the negroes." The residents showered the rioters with gunfire. Unprepared for such firm defense, the mob retreated and reformed. They moved in again, and were met with another volley; retreating, they were chased by blacks shooting at them continuously. But they were able to regroup and re-attack, establishing a generalized white-black riot in the neighborhood.[32] A short, heavy rainfall at 11 p.m. forced a break in the violence, and gave the whites enough time to acquire firearms, including a six-pound cannon they brought up from the river. Rioters loaded the cannon with scrap iron and boiler punchings and sent three volleys up Sixth Street from Broadway, accompanied with gunfire, towards black housing. It had become a small war, people of color shooting out from buildings and the whites

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[31] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841.

[32] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841.

shooting at the buildings from the street. Several people were reported killed, and dozens wounded, the numbers impossible to verify.[33]

Late Friday night Mayor Davies finally called for two county militia units, the Citizen's Guards and the Cincinnati Greys. They arrived on Third Street at midnight and entered the area of the riot at 2 a.m. Instead of dealing directly with the white rioters, they treated blacks and mulattoes as perpetrators. Cordoning-off several squares in the center of black housing clusters in the neighborhood, with Broadway, Pike, New, and Seventh streets as boundaries, the military surrounded them with armed guards, and then attempted to put all Negroes and mulattoes within the area (see Figure 7.1). Beginning at about dawn, small gangs of whites roamed the streets, breaking through the fortified doors and windows of buildings where blacks were believed to be hiding. Negro and mulatto men were rounded-up all over the city and forced into the penned area in the First Ward. They would be detained until their status could be cleared by proving they were born in the state, producing "free papers," posting the required bond and providing two character witnesses, or leaving the state. In essence, the male part of the black community was being forced through a gauntlet. About five-hundred backs were rounded-up and marched to the cordoned-off area, which was surrounded by soldiers. They were all surrounded by a howling, vengeful mob.[34]

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[33] Cincinnati *Chronicle,* Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; Cincinnati *Enquirer,* Sept. 4, 9, 1841; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 80.

[34] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 80.

Blacks continued to be rounded-up all over the city and brought to the guarded enclosure throughout the night and Saturday morning, "without particular charge.…Intense excitement continued during the day, the mob and their leaders boldly occupying the streets without arrest or any effort to arrest any of them.."[35] During past riots, local papers had been hesitant to cover the violence right away. This time the *Republican* and the *Enquirer* both ran reports on Saturday morning, September 4, noting the rising tension all day on Friday and detailing what was known about the violence of the previous night.[36]

2. A White Meeting and a Black Meeting

White and black community leaders spent Saturday morning and early afternoon in separate community meetings. Mayor Davies had called for a community meeting while he belatedly tried to stop the rioters late Friday night. Early Saturday morning he sent criers all over the city to announce a 10 a.m. meeting at the Court House. Davies was made chairman. J.W. Piatt, the Clerk of the Courts, gave a speech calling for cleaning the abolitionists out of the city, before Davies appointed him head of the committee to draw up resolutions.[37] Ten anti-black and anti-abolitionist resolutions were passed, though the *Chronicle*, published Saturday evening, only reported the last four:

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[35] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841. This report, several days after the violence, was this newspaper's first one concerning these riots.

[36] "Awful Riot - Several Lives Lost," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 4, 1841; "Dreadful Riot and Loss of Life," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841. The *Cincinnati Chronicle*, an evening paper, published their account, "Great Riot and Bloodshed on Our Streets," later in the day.

[37] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1841; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 81-82.

1. That the civil authorities, headed by the Mayor and Sheriff…proceed at once to the dwellings of the Blacks and disarm them of all offensive weapons - and that vigorous search be made for any and all offenders against the laws of the State and city, and that all offenders be at once proceeded against in the manner provided by law.

2. That the city authorities be requested to establish a strong and sufficient patrol to protect the persons and property of the Blacks during the existence of the present excitement, and until they give the bonds required by the act of 1807 or leave the city.

3. That we view with abhorrence the proceedings of the abolitionists in our city, and that we repudiate their doctrines, and believe it to be the duty of every good citizen by all lawful means to discountenance every man who lends them his assistance.

4. That whereas boys in our city are permitted to take part in the excitement, and are in the way of our officers and citizens in restoring law and order, that the Mayor be requested to call by Proclamation on the parents and guardians of such boys to keep them at home.

Other resolutions, reported Monday morning in the *Enquirer*, called for observing the law, apprehending the Negroes who "committed…outrages…on the persons of two white lads," putting-up with "no mobs," enforcing "the law of 1807 requiring negroes and molattos [*sic*] to give Bonds," assuring "our Southern Brethren" that these efforts are "no idle move, but will be carried out in good faith," and capturing and returning "every negro who escapes from his master" into the area.[38]

The *Enquirer*'s report claimed unanimous adoption of all ten resolutions, but this wasn't so. A city council member and John Vaughn, editor of the *Republican*, both tried three times to substitute a single resolution for the whole group of them -- that it was the duty of the city to "maintain the law" and "preserve the common peace" -- but they were shouted down as "damned abolitionists." Bellamy Storer, listed as a member of the resolutions committee, wasn't present, didn't approve of the

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[38] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1841.

resolutions, and wrote to the *Gazette* to say he agreed with Vaughan's alternative resolution.[39] This meeting had proceeded in much the same way that the Lower Market Meeting had during the 1836 riots, with most of the city's civic, political, and social leaders in a public meeting, superficially supporting law and order, then blaming the abolitionists and local people of color for perceived community problems. But the decisions that city leaders made at this 1841 meeting would have far more violent consequences.

African American leaders also quickly organized their own emergency community meeting at Bethel AME Church Saturday morning to give the white residents of the city some sense of the black community's intentions "as peaceable inhabitants." Bethel's minister Henry Adcrissan presided and educator Owen T.B. Nickens was the secretary; they published the signed minutes in the Cincinnati *Chronicle*. Opinion within the African American community about how to handle mob violence directed at the community was far from united. This was not the group of men who had been led by Major Wilkerson the night before, defending the community with firearms. The group at Bethel passed resolutions bowing to every recent complaint of whites in the community. They pledged to conduct themselves "as orderly, industrious, and peaceable people" and to try to suppress "imprudent conduct" in the community. They condemned all "dangerous and deadly weapons" and claimed, on behalf of everyone, that they were willing to surrender all weapons to the authorities. They agreed to comply with the Black Laws, or "peaceably leave within

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[39] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1842; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1841; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 82.

the specified time." In a final face-saving appeal for protection, they thanked the "Mayor…the City Watch, officers of the city, and many other gentlemen for their noble and untiring efforts to save our property, our lives, wives and children which we are convinced has been and can be our only protection in the present excited state of community."[40]

3. Saturday's Tension: Rounding-up and Disarming the Men

At noon on Saturday, the City Council, acting more quickly than during the 1836 riots, authorized the Captain of the Watch to accept volunteers "for the purpose of guarding the city."[41] Despite this effort, groups of the mob were roaming throughout the city all day, without meeting resistance from the police, militia, or deputized citizens. The *Republican* reported,

> Various parties armed with clubs, bludgeons, &c. paraded the streets, and secured the persons of all negroes whom they met, entering their shops, dwellings, &c., and marched them off to the corner of Sixth and Broadway.

Five-hundred of them were "penned up together," surrounded by soldiers and "a large assemblage of other persons."[42] The *Western Episcopal Observer* described

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[40] "At a meeting of the colored people…," *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841.

[41] "Our City," *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841. It isn't clear if these volunteers were expected to work in the daytime or only at night. Cincinnati only had a Night Watch until 1842, when a day watch of two men elected by City Council was authorized, at $1.25 per day. The night watch was chosen that way, as well, until 1840, when the City Council passed an ordinance giving the people the power to elect night watchmen by ward. In 1853 the city reverted to the old method of selection again. G.M. Roe, ed., *Our Police: A History of the Cincinnati Police Force, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day* (Cincinnati: N.p., 1890), 32.

[42] *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841.

"negroes…from other parts of the city hunted down by the mob, caught, and placed within the…enclosure."[43]

John Mercer Langston, later elected as the first African American member of the House of Representatives from Virginia (1889-1891),[44] was an eleven year-old boy in 1841 and living in Cincinnati with the family of John Woodson, a carpenter, joiner, and man of "prominence and influence" in the "colored community." Langston's older brother Gideon, a barber in the city, had arranged for him to come from Virginia and attend a private school for black and mulatto children. Langston's account gives us a glimpse inside the terror of the African American community on Saturday. All day, while police and citizens rounded-up black men, "hundreds of them concealed themselves at home, and in other hiding places, and thus escaped arrest." He ran into town from Woodson's home above a store on 4th and Main Streets, across the Miami Canal, narrowly escaping a policeman, to his brother's barbershop in "Germany" (Over-the-Rhine). His brother Gideon and five other men were concealed in the shop. The white owner of the drugstore to which it was annexed protected them, later taking John out to procure food for the men.[45]

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[43] "Riot - Violence and Bloodshed," *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841.

[44] Langston was also the first African American elected to public office in the U.S. (as a township clerk), the first admitted to the Ohio bar (in 1854, "reluctantly" due to his light skin color), and first dean of the Howard Law School. See William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston: Principle and Politics," in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Leon Litwack and August Meier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 103-128.

[45] Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital*, 63, 65. Langston mistakenly places these events in 1840 instead of 1841.

The news began to circulate around the city that the black community had fired on a white mob, and that the blacks seem to have prevailed. An unsigned letter from an eyewitness to Friday's riot, from the *New Era*, was incredulous: "The negroes were the victors! What will be the result of this? The negroes victorious!" He referred to Friday's violence as the "negro war."[46] Local sculptor Hiram Powers, out of the city at the time, received a letter from his patron, wealthy landowner, cultural booster, and colonizationist Nicholas Longworth about the riots: "We have had a violent mob against the free negroes & abolitionists. The negroes were the best soldiers, & in the fights, kill and wound far the greater numbers."[47] White residents of Cincinnati were shocked to discover that the Negroes and mulattoes they lived among were successfully able to defend themselves and inflict casualties on their attackers.

The first order of business after the morning meeting at the Court House was to disarm the black community. At about mid-afternoon, the mayor, the sheriff, the city marshal, and several police disarmed the Negroes and mulattoes being held in the cordoned-off area. They were apparently only willing to give up their weapons after repeated promises that the women and children, and their property, would be protected in their absence.[48] The mob still so thoroughly controlled the area that several men

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[46] Letter to the editor, Cincinnati, Sept. 4, 184, "Riot at Cincinnati" [from the *New Era*], *Liberator*, Sept. 14, 1841.

[47] Nicholas Longworth to Hiram Powers, Sept. 15, 1841, Box 3, Powers Collection, CHS.

[48] John Vaughn, editor of the *Republican*, believed the black men had been given a pledge by city leaders that the women, children, and property would be protected from the rioters. He was incensed that that they had not been protected. See Editorial, "The Mob," *Cincinnati Republican*, September 7, 1841.

whose status was found to be in order were not allowed to leave the enclosure by the

crowd. So, at about 5 p.m., all black men being held in the enclosure,

> sound and maimed, were with some difficulty marched off to the jail,
> surrounded by the military, and officers; and a dense mass of men, women, and
> boys, confounding all distinction between the orderly and the disorderly,
> accompanied with deafening yells. They were safely lodged…in prison,
> separated from their families.[49]

The *Gazette* claimed the "the crowd was…dispersed" by jailing the black men. The

jail (see Figure 7.1) actually had to be put under a military guard for the night.[50]

4. Saturday's and Sunday's Riots

African Americans were treated as though they were the rioters that had

committed Friday's violence. They were left totally vulnerable in an environment

where they were being hunted down. Like any human, indeed any animal, with a

healthy "fight or flight" response, they had taken evasive and defensive action to

protect themselves when threatened. The self-defense activity in the black community

triggered a change in the rules of the game. The presence of white rioters itself had

signaled a shift from the greater project of white community development to the power

project of Negro removal. Black self-defense presented an effective threat to white

projects, whether in the form of black improvement as a threat to exclusively white

community development, or in the form of organized black armed defense as a threat

to mob-driven Negro removal. In addition, black self-defense presented both a

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[49] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept.. 6, 1841.

[50] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological, and Biographical* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing, 1926; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 53.

symbolic and very real threat to the persistence of a dull-witted, lethargic, imaginary

Negro, unable to act on his or her own behalf, who many whites carried in their minds.

With many of the African American men disarmed and jailed, squads of white

militia and "swarms of improvised police officers," many of whom may have easily

moved from mob to militia, roamed the city arresting every Negro or mulatto male

they encountered. There seems to have been no effort to round-up women or children.

Many men hid.[51] Kentuckians were allowed to enter the enclosure and the jail,

searching for fugitive slaves among those rounded up. According to reports, they were

only able to find one.[52]

The rioters then began attacking clusters of African American housing and

businesses, as well as the property of abolitionists. They destroyed the small frame

house where they had met gunfire on Friday, next to the Synagogue at Sixth Street and

Broadway. They invaded nearby homes, looting and vandalizing their contents. A

black-owned shop on Columbia Street near Sycamore was demolished. A black

church on Sixth Street was desecrated and four or five nearby homes demolished.

Black homes on Sixth Street and on Western Row, near the river (see Figure 7.1),

were "pilfered" and small, but meaningful, amounts of money were taken: $7, $13.

The *Republican* reported, that, "Trunks, drawers, &c. were broken open, furniture

destroyed, and every species of meanness perpetrated….We have heard it frequently

expressed that many of the negroes who were taken off were infinitely more

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[51] Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital*, 64, 65-66.

[52] C*incinnati Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1841.

respectable than many of those who took them away." Houses and shops were ransacked, the inhabitants, nearly all women and children after the men were "jailed for their protection," were terrorized, and some were hurt. An elderly black man, caught alone on Columbia Street, was beaten to death by rioters. Two black women were reported to have been raped.[53]

Some African Americans had left the city and fled to Lane Seminary in Walnut Hills, 20 miles NE of Cincinnati; white residents talked about going after them. The rioters targeted the seminary because many Cincinnatians still associated the school with abolitionism from vague memories of the Lane Debates of 1834.[54] The Lane students organized themselves to defend the school. Governor Thomas Corwin had arrived in city to attend to state business on Saturday night, while the riots were in progress. He quickly began to help restore order. Hearing of the Lane students' situation, he ordered that weapons and ammunition be sent to them from the state arsenal. Armed horsemen posted themselves in the passes that led into the hills to the seminary, and a troop of fifty other armed citizens rode up to the school to protect it. A mob of nearly two hundred persons decided not to pursue their plan to attack the "d----d abolition hole" after hearing that the students were well prepared to defend it.[55]

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[53] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; the quote is from *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 10, 1841. The *Chronicle* reported on "some atrocities committed shocking to humanity" on September 6. The rapes were reported in the *Chronicle*, Sept. 7, 1842; in the *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 10, 1841; and the *Philanthropist*, Sept. 29, 1841.

[54] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the Lane Seminary Debates.

[55] Ester Beecher to the Beecher family, Sept. 6, [1841], cited in Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 147-148; Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad* (Cincinnati: N.p, 1876.; repr., New York:

Throughout most of Saturday evening the police and militias in the area did not, would not, or could not stop the roving mobs or protect African American women and children in the area. According to the *Chronicle*, "civil authorities" were confused about whether or not they were authorized to "direct the military to fire." Individual members of the militias were heard making sympathetic comments to rioters. The police finally mounted an effective response to the violence when rioters threatened to set fire to the Anti-Slavery Book Depository, putting nearby white owned shops and homes in danger. The mob was dispersed, twenty to forty "ringleaders" of the rioters were arrested and jailed; others who were apprehended apparently escaped on their own or were freed by their allies. The police, the militias, and the volunteers remained on patrol all night.[56]

Late Saturday night, Cincinnatians couldn't be certain that they had gotten the violence under control, despite the continued presence of police, mounted militia, help from Governor Corwin, and volunteer patrols through the night. On Sunday Corwin issued a proclamation ordering everyone in the city to "give prompt obedience to the civil authorities," warning against "any unlawful assemblage, or any act of violence against the persons or property of the citizens." He also ordered the county militia to occupy the city, and aid in capturing, "by force of arms, all disturbers of the peace." He met with the City Council all day on Sunday in a Committee of Public Safety.

AMS, 1971), 533-534; Werner, *Reaping the Bloody Harvest*, 86n115. Others at the time believed that the guarded cliffs on the approach to the seminary were too steep for the attackers to climb! See Patrick A. Folk, "The Queen City of Mobs: Riots and Community Reactions in Cincinnati, 1788-1848" (PhD diss., University of Toledo [OH], 1978), 225n36.

[56] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer,* Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 10, 1841; *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841.

They asked the mayor to order a halt to all alcohol sales during the trouble. Citizens who wanted to help were organized into a volunteer corps of five hundred men under the Council president, Edward Woodruff. Mounted and armed, they patrolled the city in squads of twenty or thirty. The combination of Governor's authority plus mounted troops and police with clear authority from the Governor and sheriff to shoot, finally ended the riot. There was no further violence in the city on Sunday night.[57]

C. The Riots Are Over

Monday morning, September 6, was quiet. The military companies had remained posted around the city all night on Sunday and the citizens patrols had stayed until 2 a.m. There had been no violence on Sunday night. The patrols were out again on Monday night; there were "no incidents" on Monday night, either. On Tuesday the militia was dismissed.[58] The riots were completely over.

Monday's papers were full of updates on the violence. These riots received daily coverage in the local papers beginning on Friday, September 4 and continuing for another week. By Monday all four daily papers were issuing daily updates on what had *really* happened during the violence, on city council meetings, as well as editorials about the causes and repercussions of the riots. Discussion of the repercussions

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[57] *Liberator*, Sept. 24, 1841; *Philanthropist*, Sept. 8, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1841; *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 6, 7, 1841; *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841; Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation*, 67.

[58] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 8, 1841.

continued for the rest of the month.[59] The local newspapers, regardless of their

opinions about specific aspects of the violence or its reasons, had all condemned mob

violence as bad for the community, admonishing citizens to refrain from participating

in it -- a ritual they had rehearsed to no avail twice before in the previous twelve

years.[60]

1. Criticisms

As soon as the violence stopped, several critical public discourses began to

emerge, sometimes overlapping. They were concerned with disarming the black

community, what happened during the violence, and which factors that contributed to

the riots were the most detrimental to the city's development. In all of these

discourses, economic and development concerns were mixed with racialized cultural

anxieties, as they had been throughout the year.

The critique of disarming the Negro and mulatto men and leaving the remaining

black community undefended began immediately on Monday morning. John Wright at

the *Gazette*, not known for being a friend of Negroes, was incredulous at what had

happened to them:

> Think for one moment, of a band calling themselves *men*, disarming, carrying
> away and securing in prison, the male negroes, promising security and protection
> to their women and children - and while they were confidently reposing in that
> security, return with hellish shouts, to attack these helpless and unprotected

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[59] The *Enquirer* began coverage on Sept. 2 with the initial fistfights between "Irish and Negroes" that opened the violence. The *Gazette* didn't start its coverage of the riots until Monday morning, after they had already ended.

[60] C*incinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 4, 1841: *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841.

persons! The cowardly character of the attack distinctly shows the want of *manly feelings*, in the assailants.[61]

E.D. Mansfield at the *Chronicle*, a colonizationist,[62] had initially reported on Friday, September. 4, that Negro and mulatto men were being put into a cordoned-off area, and then taken to jail, to "keep them safe" and for "investigating the facts."[63] By Monday evening, September 6, he had admitted that he had been mistaken. Groups of rioters were actually

> dragging barbers and waiters, innocently engaged in their usual occupation, into confinement - and, if the mob succeeded, to probable death. This…was one of the worst features of the riot…it should have been resisted on the spot. In two or three instances it was, and the villains compelled to retire.[64]

> By Tuesday, September 7, the issue was out in the open. John Vaughn, editor

of the *Republican*, was horrified:

> To us the brutal outrages committed upon the persons and property of the blacks are the foulest of all the events that occurred. They were disarmed. The faith of the rioters was pledged to protect them. Yet while thus defenseless, when the men had been removed to the jail for safe keeping, the mob attacked their property, destroyed it, drove out the women and children from their houses, and some ruffians even went so far as to ravish the person of a young black girl! What a picture! What a tale to tell of civilized city."[65]

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[61] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841; italics are in the original.

[62] Mansfield had been a founding member of the Young Men's Colonization Society of Hamilton County, chairing their first meeting in 1834. See "Colonization," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Dec. 2, 1834; "March of Colonization Principles," *Western Christian Advocate*, Dec. 12, 1834; "Colonization Society," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Dec. 19, 1834.

[63] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841.

[64] "Further Accounts of the Riots," *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 6, 1841.

[65] Editorial: "The Mob," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841.

A letter to the *Republican* asked, "Worse [*sic*] of all, why were the colored women and children left defenseless in the face of an infuriated mob?"[66] The attacks on an undefended community were not an unintended consequence of disarming the men; there were no apologies issued to the black community or individuals by any city authority.

The first consequence of disarming the black men that came up was the rape of several black women on Friday or Saturday. Rape was not a topic that was generally covered in the Cincinnati papers. The reported attack on a white woman by several African American men a few weeks before the riots began was never clearly identified as a rape. So, the daily discussion in the local papers of whether one or more rapes occurred during these riots, lasting from September 6 - 11, was unusual.[67] The first report that black women had been raped appeared on Monday, September 6. The *Chronicle* reported that in the area of Sixth Street and Broadway on Friday, there were "some atrocities committed shocking to humanity." The next day Mansfield linked the right of the black men to shoot at the mob to the rioters' attacks on women. "A man's house is his castle, by common law," he began. He insisted, "on good authority," that "the persons of one or more negro *women were violated under circumstances of inhuman barbarity*!" Because the attack had been directed at people and not just at

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[66] "No Abolitionist," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 9, 1841.

[67] In the hundreds of issues of the more than a dozen papers that I read for this project, from 1825 to 1842, there were no other instances of the discussion of a rape in Cincinnati.

property, Mansfield felt black men were justified in shooting at the white rioters.[68]

Most observers would have assumed, given the recent history of racial violence in Cincinnati, that this mob - armed with clubs, stones, and eventually muskets and a canon - was not only interested in damaging property, but in injuring people too.

On Wednesday, September 8, the *Gazette* claimed the story of the rapes was not credible, but gave no evidence. Given that a black woman could not legally testify against a white rapist in Ohio, it isn't clear how a white man would be able to verify an attack without witnessing it, or committing it. If white residents believed that rape is primarily about sex, the tendency toward anti-amalgamation ideology might have predisposed them to believe the reports were false. On Thursday, the *Chronicle* challenged the denials: "It has been denied that *violence* was offered to a black woman. The fact is certain." The Committee on Public Safety, as well as the *Enquirer* and the *Gazette*, on the other hand, were convinced that the reports were "without foundation."[69]

But Charles Brough, negro-phobic and anti-abolitionist editor of the *Enquirer*, sank to a new low in presenting competing rape reports. He insisted that the *Republican* had "made a parade" out of the story of a black woman being raped as a tactic to "reflect discredit upon the whites." If it were true, it would be "inexcusable and shocking," but the story rested on the "*statements of negroes*" trying to gain

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[68] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 7, 1841; italics are in the original.

[69] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1841; *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 9, 1841, italics are in the original; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 11, 1841. The *Philanthropist* eventually gave their opinion on this topic later in the month: "The report of violence to a colored girl is true, and here its truth is acknowledged." *Philanthropist*, Sept. 29, 1841.

"public sympathy." He offered a worse tale, a "startling atrocity," of a "more respectable and virtuous white lady, who was assaulted by two ungainly and vile negroes, at early morning, when she was returning from the bedside of a sick neighbor." Not raped, she was "saved…from a fate worse than death" by someone responding to her cries for help. His evidence: "This matter rests upon the statement of a WHITE person." He accused the other papers of ignoring this story because it wouldn't raise sympathy for Negroes the way the other story did.[70]

John Vaughn at the *Republican* confirmed the rape of a black woman by two white men "on Saturday night, there is no doubt of the fact," by explaining that the attack had been so violent that an ill baby in the same room in which it occurred was injured and died. He clearly considered the entire matter an issue of male honor:

> It is in our power to give full details of the disgusting and hideous outrage we have briefly stated, upon the person of the negro woman. We have for borne [*sic*], because we are sensible that they were [a] recital of such an atrocious villany [*sic*], it must strike every MAN in our city with a loathing too strong for words to express. All comment is unnecessary, for no man can take but one view of the transaction.[71]

The discussion of rape during the riots was part of a larger discussion of black men's agency during the attacks on the black community. The editor of the *Enquirer* was horrified that there were any arms to remove from the black men. Invoking Muslims as an insult against the men's Christianity, he stated that, "among such as were disarmed, was found arms enough for the outfit of an Algerian pirate vessel." His head full of imaginary Negroes and white abolitionists in "blackface," he demanded, "

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[70] Editorial, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 1841; italics and emphasis are in the original.

[71] *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 10, 1841; emphasis is in the original.

How came they by them? How was it that almost every black among us, carried, concealed about them, *deadly weapons*, prepared, at any moment, to steep his hands in human blood?...We will not say that they were furnished by white persons, in point of *color* - Abolitionists - but…even negro impudence was not sufficient to have borne them out, in carrying and using them as we have seen they did, without countenance from such whites.[72]

Though this idea first appeared locally in print on September 9, it was clearly being talked about immediately after the Friday night routs of the mob. An unsigned letter written Saturday, September 4, and reprinted in William Garrison's *Liberator*, claimed that, "It is said they [the Negroes] were counseled by the abolitionists to arm themselves, and fire upon the whites, if attacked."[73]

The imaginary Negroes in the letter writer's and Brough's heads could not have acquired the weapons on their own, because they lacked agency - the ability to imagine, or act on behalf of, intention and desire. Whites would have been required to help them to strategically place themselves in defensive positions, as well as to know who and when to shoot. As anthropologist Sherry Ortner reminds us, it is the "agency of projects…that is disrupted in and disallowed to subordinates."[74] The short-term project of these African American men was the defense of themselves and their community; it was this agency that had been an immediate threat to white residents, as well as to civic leaders. It had been stopped by penning-up and jailing the men, and eventually disarming them.

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[72] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 9, 1841; italics are in the original.

[73] Letter to the editor, Cincinnati, Sept. 4, 1841, "Riot at Cincinnati" [from the *New Era*], *Liberator*, Sept. 17, 1841.

[74] Sherry Ortner, "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 144.

But persons who have agency are capable of improving their own situation and themselves, and therefore, of improving their communities. The imaginary Negroes in many white persons' heads had no agency, and could not improve themselves or their communities. It was these beliefs that rationalized the involvement of white Americans in Negro removal policies of various kinds in Cincinnati and elsewhere in the United States.[75] Improved and improvable Negroes presented a deeper threat to the larger project of community development in Cincinnati, making it a serious game. The *agency of projects* and the *agency of power* came together, showing they are faces of the same entity, in the responses of the white community to improved or improvable Negroes. For Sherry Ortner, "It is also this [agency of projects] that flourishes *as* power for the powerful, whose domination of others is rarely an end in itself but is rather in the service of enacting their own projects."[76] Negroes and mulattoes with agency, with the ability to improve their circumstances -- in this case, succeeding in defending their community from a violent attack -- stood in the way of the rationale for their removal, that they were unimprovable. By attacking them and returning them to a degraded state, the rioters helped to match real Negroes with the imaginary Negro in people's heads, making the real people easier to remove with impunity.

A notice was published for "a public meeting of the Anti-Abolitionists" for September 23 at 7 p.m., signed by thirty-two male citizens. The purpose was to investigate how involved local abolitionists had been "in instigating the Blacks to mob

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[75] See Chapters 3 and 4 for discussions of self improvement, agency, and race in American and Cincinnati thinking of this period.

[76] Ortner, "Power and Projects," 144.

and shoot the Whites on the 3rd [and]…to see whether the police has [*sic*] taken any measures to apprehend the Blacks and bring them to justice, and those that instigate them to act."[77] The *Enquirer* and letters to its editors had been claiming for several weeks that the Negroes had mobbed the 1500 white people who marched into the cluster of black housing near Sixth Street and Broadway on Friday night; the whites in the mob were the real victims.[78] The abolitionists must have put the Blacks up to it. These white citizens just could not imagine how Cincinnati's black community, in spite of facing the fourth race riot in twelve years, and having already fired at the mobs during both the 1829 and 1836 riots, could have determined on their own how to defend themselves.

Only one hundred people came to the anti-abolitionists' meeting on Sept. 23 at the American Hotel, many of whom were just curious. The *Philanthropist* labeled the call itself "inflammatory…and supposed by many to be the signal for a mob meeting."[79] Organizers cast their reasons for meeting within a framework combining racial construction with economic anxiety in an ideology of white supremacy, backed with Christian theology:

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[77] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 21, 1841.

[78] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 8, 9, 10, and 17, 1841. A letter to the editor of the *Enquirer* from "Veritas" insisted that "3[00] or 400" Negroes fired on 1500 citizens approaching the corner of Broadway and Sixth streets "immediately, and before they made an attack….It is believed by many that no attack would have been made by the citizens if the negroes had abstained from firing."

[79] "Anti-Abolition Association," *Philanthropist*, Sept. 29, 1841. Bailey wrote to a friend in New York on September 21 that the meeting was "intended, doubtless, as a preliminary to another mob." Letter from Gamaliel Bailey to a man in New York, Sept. 21, 1841, "Affairs in Cincinnati" [from the New York *Journal of Commerce*], *Liberator*, Oct. 8, 1841.

Abolitionists are practically destroying not only the peace and safety of society but endangering the means of subsistence upon which our wives and children depend…The sufferings of the white man challenge as much sympathy as the injuries of the blacks. St Paul has declared that to provide for our own household is our first duty. Experience shows that the two races cannot live together on terms of equality - and while we protect the black man from inhumanity we shall firmly and steadily endeavor to fix him in his proper place.…[W]e war against Abolitionists - *white men* - who, disregarding the misery of the whites, make a parade of their kindly feelings towards the blacks.

White abolitionists were "race traitors," guilty of "assisting the blacks in mobbing and shooting the whites" on September 3.[80]

2. Post-Riot Development Discourses

On Tuesday morning after end of the riots, three public discourses re-emerged, all concerned with the present and future prosperity of Cincinnati and its (white) residents. Like "Workey" in the vignette that opens this chapter and the organizers of the anti-abolition meeting, these discourses often mixed economic anxieties with racialized declarations about cultural conflicts, showing the overlap of race making and concerns about prosperity in the community. Frequently linking or conflating them, Cincinnatians wondered whether the presence of abolitionists, the presence of free blacks, or anti-black and anti-abolition mobs and violence was most likely to damage the city's image and future development.

In the wake of the riots, there were two major complaints about abolitionists in Cincinnati. The first was that they were encouraging slaves who accompanied southerners visiting the city to flee, either directly or by encouraging free blacks to

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[80] "Anti-Abolition Meeting," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 25, 1841; italics are in the original. The expression "race traitor" is borrowed from Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds., *Race Traitor*. New York (Routeledge, 1996).

lure them away. Southerners were threatening to take their business elsewhere. The second complaint, overlapping at times with the first one, was that abolitionists encouraged Negro "impudence," swelling their heads with ideas such as equality and freedom.

The resolutions passed at the Court House meeting on September 4 had demonized abolitionists by promising to disclaim violence towards them only to the letter of the law and calling on citizens to legally "discountenance every man who lends them his assistance."[81] The editor of the *Republican* believed that the issue that irritated whites more than any to which the riots were attributed, was people "who prowl about steam boats…chiefly foreigners," attempting to induce "slaves to leave their masters." Local citizens had backed him up in letters to the papers about "fanatics" luring slaves away from the city and free blacks to the city.[82] The possibility that their slaves would be lured away was supposedly keeping the southern "travel trade" away, and causing southerners to threaten a trade boycott. Some businesses were claiming that they had already been compromised by it.

The new editor at the *Philanthropist*, Gamaliel Bailey, had challenged this view of Cincinnati's loss of trade even before the riots,[83] and he took on the issue again in a series of articles in the months after they ended. As they had been during the 1836

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[81] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 6, 1841.

[82] Editorial: "The City," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 10, 1841; "Effects of Abolitionism," by "A Citizen," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 3, 6, 1841; "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 11, 1841.

[83] "Southern Trade," *Philanthropist*, July 14, 1841; "Cincinnati and the South," *Philanthropist*, Aug. 4, 1841.

riots, plenty of Cincinnatians were emphatic that "Cincinnati is losing her trade

through the machinations of Abolitionists." And yet, Bailey declared, the city's

population growth and trade "surpassed that of any town on the Western waters."[84]

Examining the statistics of the " supposed to be most affected by the influence of

Abolitionism," such as steamboat building, iron works, export companies, etc., he

found signs of vitality everywhere: "Our roads are thronged with wagons, our canals

alive with boats, our streets crowded with drays, and whole blocks of new and

handsome houses going up."[85]

Arguments that Louisville was getting all the boat-building business were

unfounded. Since the 1836 riots, there had been a general increase in this industry in

Cincinnati: the 1841 figures were more than four times those of 1836. By October, the

city had built more than fifty percent of all boats built at fifty sites on the Ohio River

in 1841. From 1832 to 1841, only Pittsburgh, with 98, built more than Cincinnati, with

89; Louisville built 17.[86] As a measure of Cincinnati's continued growth, Bailey noted

that the number of houses built in the city during the years when the opposition

accused abolitionism of interfering with the city's prosperity, from 1833 to 1841, had

consistently increased, with a large gain projected for 1841: 406 homes had been built

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[84] "Trade of Cincinnati," *Philanthropist*, Sept. 29, 1841.

[85] "Trade of Cincinnati," *Philanthropist*, Oct. 20, 1841.

[86] Ibid.

in 1840; 1000 were projected for 1841 and 743 were finished already by Oct. 1.[87]

Cincinnati did seem to be growing, despite the influences of abolitionism.

In 1841 Cincinnati was economically quite volatile, partly the result of the

local effects of a national depression. The country as a whole was still feeling the

effects of an economic downturn set off by a crescendo of land and capital speculation

peaking in the Panic of 1837 and the consequent devaluation of currency.[88] But

Cincinnati's economy was supported by a system of state-chartered local banks, none

of which failed, even in 1841 when their working capital was seriously depleted.[89] An

English observer noted that Cincinnati's commerce and manufacturing had been

affected by deflated currency and loss of economic confidence, but the city had

continued to grow. Its diversified economy, with strong agricultural and

manufacturing sectors, provided fewer opportunities for the merchant and bank

failures hammering eastern cities such as New York and Philadelphia.[90] Boosters of a

Western National Armory near Cincinnati believed the economy was stabilized by

wealth and real estate not being held by the few wealthy but by "a great number of

persons of moderate means." Many manufactured goods were still made in small

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[87] "Cincinnati Ruined!, *Philanthropist*, Nov. 3, 1841. The figures for these years were given as: 1833 = 321; 1839 = 394; 1840 = 406; and 1841 to Oct. 1 = 743; 1000 homes were projected for all of 1841.

[88] For Ohio's response to this crisis in banking and speculation, see James Major Sharp, *The Jacksonians versus the Banks: Politics in the States after the Panic of 1837* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 123-159; 160-189.

[89] Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 33-34.

[90] James S. Buckingham, *The Eastern and Western States of America* (London: Fisher, Son, 1842), 2: 384-385.

workshops "employing a few hands each, and not using borrowed capital."[91] Historian Walter Glazer describes a diversified and stable economy in 1840 and 1841. However, Carl Abbott points out that local trade was affected by reduced demand for exports, which rippled into local banks' reduced ability to loan money.[92] The reports of internal improvement projects that characterized the 1830s are notably absent from the newspapers in 1840 and 1841. Capital for projects of all kinds would have been harder to obtain in these years.

The historical record of the economy is very uneven, perhaps indicating uneven local effects. On one hand, in April of 1841 there were indications of a building boom in the city, with several blocks of stores being built on Columbia (Second Street), Lower Market, Broadway, Third, and Fifth streets, very near the "Bucktown" neighborhood, where many African Americans lived (see the map in Figure 7.1). The cornerstone for a "large new Catholic church for the Germans" had been recently laid.[93] All of this building meant work for local artisans and laborers and sales for suppliers. The Cincinnati papers didn't have stories of business failures in the city like the New York and Philadelphia papers apparently did. But the effects of the shaky economy were hitting different segments of society, and different sectors of the workforce, in different ways. There appeared to have been few failures in the city in 1840 and 1841, but economic depression had hit the city by then, as indicated by

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[91] *Proceedings of a Public Meeting of the Citizens of Cincinnati, on the Subject of a Western National Armory, September30, 1841* (Cincinnati: Printed at the Republican Office, 1841), 29. CHS

[92] Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 31-32; Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 18.

[93] "Building in Cincinnati" and Editorial comments, *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 2, 1841.

rising unemployment and some down-sizing and closing of businesses.[94] Many

laboring men, women, and children were severely affected in Cincinnati. Wages were

slashed to levels that would not support families; many more children were working;

and many women found themselves the main financial support of the household, often

altering the accustomed gender roles in the household economy in ways which could

create new tensions for both men and women. "Relief kitchens" and charitable

organizations became more active.[95]

Nervousness about the shaky economy was exacerbated in Cincinnati during the

summer of 1841 by several other factors. It had been a hot summer, there had been

little rain, and the Ohio River was very low. The newspapers reported black rivermen

out of work, but the low river put both black and white rivermen out of work, leaving

them visible in little groups around the city.[96] Adding to the economic stress in late

summer was news of widely failing wheat crops in the Muskingum Valley, northeast

of Cincinnati. The fields had been attacked by a fly, and hadn't recovered when

attacked by wheat rust and "again well nigh ruined." The crop's weight per bushel was

significantly lower than was usual, as well. In August the government announced a

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[94] Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 18.

[95] Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 48-49. A further sign of economic hardship is the numbers of poor (white) persons admitted to Commercial Hospital in Cincinnati as paupers, increasing from only several hundred a year before 1837 to 1,035 in 1841; by 1844 it had reached 1,309. Ibid., 49.

[96] *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1841; Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," 45; Charles Theodore Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Biographical, 1904), 752.

new tax to be levied on salt, sugar, and molasses - to be absorbed by the consumer.[97] There were a lot of reasons for Cincinnatians to be anxious about the economy.

Whereas some white workers in 1840 and 1841 were less well off economically than they had been five years before, some African American workers in Cincinnati were in better economic circumstances than they had been five years earlier. Opportunities for African Americans in "service industries" increased throughout the 1830s and 1840s as white residents increased. Work as hairdressers and barbers, washing women and ironers, maids, bootblacks, steamboat and railroad porters and stewards, and stevedores on the docks, jobs that were considered "beneath" most white Americans, often brought tips as extra income, slowly improving the economic circumstances of some local people of color beginning in the late 1830s.[98]

Economically rather than racially segregated, African Americans lived in ten residential clusters in the most densely-populated sections of the center of the city and pockets around the perimeter. One of the densest areas was the north-central part of the east side of the city, in wards 1 and 5, where many Germans were concentrated in an area called "Over-the-Rhine" and many African Americans were concentrated in "Bucktown." Altogether, about 950 Negroes and mulattoes and 8,000 whites lived in this part of the city in 1840 (see Figures 2.1 and 7.1). Comprising 10.6 per cent of the

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[97] "Muskingum Valley Wheat Crop," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 28, 1841; "Salt, Sugar and Molasses," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Aug. 20, 1841. The article does not indicate what level of government levied the tax.

[98] Cheek and Cheek, "John Mercer Langston," 33.

residents of this area, African Americans would have been a decided presence there. Housing in Over-the-Rhine, where many of the black leaders lived, was relatively comfortable compared to that in Bucktown, where blacks and whites, alike, were "herded together" amid the odors of the red-running stream that carried the runoff from the pork processing plants in the neighborhood.[99]

The other main complaint about abolitionists, appearing alongside arguments that they compromised Cincinnati's economic opportunities, was that they encouraged Negro "impudence" and put ideas of equality and freedom in their heads. Local women's education booster and colonizationist Catharine Beecher, in *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism* (1837), had referred to free blacks being taught, by reading the *Liberator*, "to feel that they were injured and abused…[and] that they ought to be treated as if they were whites."[100] But the language of complaints about impudence was often more vague, with the specific behavior that has caused offense not detailed. For instance, John Vaughn, editor of the *Republican* believed of three causes of the riots, the first was "the insolent bearing of a portion of our negro population, occasioned by the vague ideas of liberty taught them by white men."[101] It isn't clear if the offense is ignoring assumed local deference codes (not tipping one's head or hat, not giving the narrow sidewalk to whites, or too much eye contact), or the kind of verbal and physical challenges on the street of which adolescents are often accused. In

[99] Ibid., 35-36.

[100] Catharine E. Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 28.

[101] Editorial: "The City," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 10, 1841.

this discourse, abolitionists are responsible for the behavior of free blacks. "Good"

blacks are tractable and deferent to whites; when they are not, it is because some white

person has encouraged the behavior. Workey, in the opening vignette of this chapter,

wanted to blame the abolitionists for fugitive slaves, and for "countenancing *idle*

negroes who do not work, and many of whom steal for a living, for themselves, if not

for their patrons." His imaginary Negroes were organized by his imaginary

abolitionists to steal.[102]

Abolition's greatest opposition came from colonizationists. Their views on

community development were diametrically opposed to each other: colonizationists

were dedicated to a spacing technology that physically removed blacks from American

society, and immediatist abolitionists were equally dedicated to an America where

both black and white citizens co-existed, mixing, something colonizationists often

thought of as *social amalgamation*, sexualizing all social contact between blacks and

whites. The experience of the 1836 riots had left the white community somewhat

fragmented in their views on abolition's place in the affairs of the community. In the

five years since the 1836 riots, the number of both abolition and colonization groups

had grown in the city.

During the five years since 1836, there seemed to be more tolerance toward

abolitionists locally. In 1840, for instance, the Cincinnati Female Anti-Slavery Society

operated "a flourishing school for colored children," as well as "systematically"

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[102] "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 11, 1841; italics are in
the original.

distributing anti-slavery literature around the city.[103] In the years since the 1836 riots,

when there were calls for interfering with any attempt to discuss abolition in

Cincinnati, it had been shown that abolition could be discussed without rousing a

violent mob. In March, 1837, only nine months after the 1836 riots, 70 miles NE of

Cincinnati in Clark County, a large crowd in an outdoor grove listened to speeches pro

and con slavery for six hours, followed by a panel of judges pronouncing in favor of

abolition -- all without any violence. In 1839, the citizens of Cincinnati allowed a

week-long public discussion of the pros and cons of slavery and abolition, built around

a series of lectures. The pro-slavery lectures lost audience over the series and there

were no mobs or violence. Amos Blanchard, an anti-colonization abolitionist, had

many in his audience for his address "who, a few months ago, were noted for their

abhorrence of Abolition and their determination to hear nothing on the subject."[104]

In January 1841, after several days of announcements in the Cincinnati papers,

a meeting was held at the Court House to discuss slavery in the District of Columbia;

Samuel Lewis was made president. Salmon P. Chase addressed the group while a

committee wrote resolutions on the right of discussion, the right of petition, and the

power of Congress to abolish slavery in the district. They were all unanimously

adopted. No violence was reported.[105] In March 1841, slave holders at Lane Seminary

were excluded from "church communion" and their donations for missionary and

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[103] "Cincinnati Female Anti-Slavery Society," *Philanthropist*, May 12, 1840.

[104] "Free Discussion in Cincinnati," *Philanthropist*, Jan. 15, 1839.

[105] "Cincinnati Abolitionized" [from the *Xenia Free Press*], *Liberator*, Jan. 22, 1841.

benevolent purposes rejected by the majority of students. The faculty, attempting to appear progressive to the students in order to retain them, but saving themselves from attack from other Cincinnatians, "came out *full* before the students, but are mum before the community"[106] It appeared that many Cincinnatians had become more tolerant, or sincerely more abolitionist.

At the same time that there seemed to be more abolition activity and a growing tolerance of the discussion of abolition without mobbing the meetings, there was also a noticeable increase in the discussions of colonization in the newspapers as well as in the number and breadth of colonization societies. By 1841 there were five colonization societies to choose from in the Cincinnati area: the Cincinnati Colonization Society, listed right above the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in Cist's *Cincinnati in 1841*; the Hamilton County Colonization Society; a Juvenile Colonization Society for children under the age of sixteen years that was founded in 1830; the Young Men's Colonization Society of Hamilton County, founded in 1834; and the Ladies Liberia School Society, founded by Catharine Beecher, among others, in 1839.[107]

Following the 1836 riots, the year 1839 seemed to be a high point for organizing colonization in Cincinnati. The organizational meetings of both the Cincinnati

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[106] "Lane Seminary Abolitionized" [from the *Free American*], *Liberator*, Apr. 23, 1841; italics are in the original.

[107] Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: Charles Cist, 1841), 102; "Juvenile Colonization Society," *Cincinnati Journal*, Jan. 7, 1832; "Colonization," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Dec. 2, 1834; "March of Colonization Principles," *Western Christian Advocate*, Dec. 12, 1834; "Colonization Society," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Dec. 19, 1834; "Circular of the Ladies Association of Cincinnati," *African Repository* 16, no. 13 (July 1 1840): 203.

Colonization Society and the Ladies Liberia School Society were in March, 1839.[108]

However, by the late 1830s the Ohio Colonization Society was waning, and in 1839

there was an effort to revive that organization at the state and local levels. African

Americans in Cincinnati met that March to protest these renewed efforts to remove

them from the United States. Those at the meeting emphasized that colonization

"fosters and sustains that prejudice, which [supporters] now declare to be invincible,

by stigmatizing us as a worthless and inferior race…[and then] apologizes for the sin

of slavery, and thereby…tends to the perpetuity of that accursed system."[109] A

significant portion of Cincinnati's African American community made a public stand

that day, staking a claim to an American future. As Nikki Taylor has pointed out, this

strong stand indicated the development of a "collective self-respect" among local

African Americans since the riots of 1829. By the late 1830s and early1840s, alliances

with other black communities and a wider range of local abolitionist support made

possible a more effective resistance to racist policies and local sentiment.[110]

   The black community was responding to a renewed effort -- there was a lot of

colonization activity in 1839. But it isn't clear that this activity actually led to any

substantive effort at colonization. The main contribution of local colonizationists

seemed to be keeping the idea of removal in the public mind, allowing it to connect

with periodic calls for enforcing the removal of Negroes and mulattoes with the Black

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[108] "The Colonization Meeting," *Philanthropist*, March 12, 1839; "Circular of the Ladies Association of Cincinnati": 203. This March, 1839, Cincinnati Colonization Society meeting is featured in the vignette that opens Chapter 4 of this study.

[109] *Philanthropist*, March 5, 1839, quoted, in Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 116.

[110] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 115-116.

Laws. Because those associated with colonization societies were typically social, cultural, and political elites, the spacing strategy of removal that they represented received a lot of support, becoming the dominant preferred method of relating to the black community. But colonization societies weren't actually removing any Negroes from Cincinnati; their local practices, other than collecting money for the national effort, didn't match their rhetoric. Abolitionists had contributed to the national efforts of their cause and had continued to help the free black community in Cincinnati in many ways, particularly in education. But they also helped the community to move fugitive slaves through the city to freedom in Canada. Local colonizationists and their supporters were bound to be frustrated.

The second of the three community development discourses that emerged was concerned with the effect of free blacks on Cincinnati's prosperity. Two major complaints were voiced in this discourse: that blacks were unfair labor competition with white workers and that free blacks were swaggering and noisy, would not get off the sidewalks, and kept insisting on their rights; blacks didn't know their "place." It was common in this discourse for economic and cultural anxieties to be mixed together. Ultimately both complaints were about the same thing: Negroes and mulattoes were exhibiting characteristics that were threatening to white identities and the privileges that many whites assumed to be permanent markers of those identities.

The racialized discourse concerning labor competition, an important element of economic anxiety in 1841 Cincinnati, took several forms. One very common version combined a fear of competition for jobs with the discourse about blacks as pestilence:

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> Ohio is being made a depot for all the free, decrepid [*sic*], and infirm, blacks, who are likely to become paupers on the public. Such as deprive the unfortunate white from procuring a decent livelihood by being brought in competition with the baser portion of blacks. We see it stated that 21 blacks from North Carolina recently passed through Cincinnati on their way to Mercer county in this state. Some six or eight from Virginia have recently come to this place. Is Ohio to be overrun by the hoardes [*sic*] of blacks from the South?[111]

The hybridity of this discourse was a contradiction: those who are so depraved and decrepit would not be in a position to compete with healthier white workers. It was a categorization strategy to label blacks as unsuitable competition.

Another form of this discourse combined labor competition with jealousy about an imagined something that a group of blacks have, like clothing, or a job, or with anger that blacks are doing something that white workers might do, such as participate in the commonweal. In the vignette that opens this chapter, Workey was incensed at the notion of sharing his identity as a man with Negroes:

> White men, who *work hard*, pay taxes, and support various burthens [*sic*] and duties of citizens, are naturally indignant when they see a set of idle blacks, dressed up like ladies and gentlemen, strutting about our streets, and flinging the "rights of petition" and "discussion" in our faces, while we know that the most of them are fugitives, who are loafing and preying on us for a living.[112]

As African American abolitionist H.C. Wright noted concerning the 1842 race riots in Philadelphia, which targeted institutions that represented improvement in the black community,

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[111] "Fear of Competition" [from the *Ohio Sun*], *Philanthropist*, Aug. 13, 1839. The *Ohio Sun* was published in Batavia, seat of Clermont County, twenty miles northwest of Cincinnati.

[112] "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 11, 1841; italics are in the original.

> It is a crime in a colored man or woman to live in a decent house, to have decent furniture, to dress decently; a crime in them to own property; a crime to vote at the polls; a crime to be intelligent, industrious, thriving, respectable.[113]

In many white persons' minds, it was a crime for a Negro or mulatto to do anything a white person habitually does. It is through the "micropractices used by situated actors in concrete, historical situations" that race, like other social identities, is constructed and maintained.[114] These practices, as much as skin color or other physical features, become signifiers of identity. Many Cincinnatians who identified themselves as white did not want to share elements of their identities as citizens and respectable members of the community with non-whites. They believed these characteristics and practices were unique to their group alone, and could not be shared. Sharing them would cheapen their identity, making it worth less, just like a black person owning a house in a "white" neighborhood may be perceived by some whites as lessening property values in a neighborhood.

Whiteness is itself a form of *property*;[115] its components are also likely to be treated as property by the holder. For white workingmen, some of those elements, such as reading and writing, wearing nice clothes, or participating in governance, were things that many of them were just acquiring, or hadn't acquired yet. With a belief that these characteristics and practices were markers or signs of one's identity and status as a white citizen, some workingmen became resentful of shared characteristics: it made

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[113] H.C. Wright, letter to the editor, "State of Things in Philadelphia," *Liberator*, Sept. 23, 1842.

[114] Thomas Biolsi, "Race Technologies," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, ed. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 39.

[115] Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no 8 (June 1993): 1715-1745.

it harder to "tell the players without a scorecard." Despite a basic belief among many

white Americans that "races" each had essential and unique characteristics, on some

level they were not completely committed to this concept. Some white workers

weren't certain that they weren't slipping into being black, themselves, and feared this

perception of themselves on the part of others. How could they be certain that they

would be viewed, and treated, as white? Amid the rhetoric of white "wage slavery,"

there was a decided fear of economic and social slippage on the part of many white

workers, Americans, as well as new European immigrants that wanted the privileges

and wages of being seen as white.

Workey, in his construction of blackness, resorted to a technology that

promised to cut through any disguise of white signifiers, such as nice clothes, or white

skin and facial features, which a black person might exhibit. Bypassing reason of any

kind, he deployed the olfactory construction of race as a certain index of blackness as

well as the clear reason for labor segregation: "where they [blacks and whites] are

brought together, at the same bed and board, in this hot weather, neither the

competition nor the contact would be agreeable to the lighter colored party."[116]

Drawing upon a shared *common sense* among many whites about the nature of

blackness, Workey's use of the imaginary smell of Negroes and mulattoes was also

intended to degrade blacks, an olfactory corollary to the "one-drop rule."[117] White

workers, including European immigrants, concerned about possible class slippage in

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[116] "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 11, 1841; italics is in the original.

[117] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the olfactory construction of race.

larger eastern cities such as New York and Philadelphia, transferred their own fears

onto lower status blacks, often using violence to keep them "in their place" or to

remove them from the city.[118] Many white workers in Cincinnati also reached for

violence against African Americans and abolitionists as a solution to their anxieties,

pitting themselves against potential allies in the workplace.

Labor competition was a convenient scapegoat in this riot. The area where

several blocks of stores were being built in the spring and summer of 1841, on

Columbia, Lower Market, Broadway, Third, and Fifth streets, [119] was adjacent to the

area where many black housing clusters were located, in Bucktown (see Figure 7.1).

This was already an older area of the city in the First Ward, with a lot of tenements

and other older housing. If new shops were going in nearby, this was a case of early

"urban renewal." It is possible that laborers in the building trades wished to increase

the area available to put in new shops in the district by burning or demolishing

buildings associated with blacks, increasing their chances for a job. Working on

building projects in the area, they may also have had more contact with blacks from

the neighborhood, many of whom were out of work and "hanging out." With different

expressive cultures from many African Americans, white workers could easily read

black recreation as "loafing" and hostility could develop. There were a number of

reasons these laborers might have participated in the riots. Working near black

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[118] Two excellent studies of both Irish and working-class white identity formation that treat the role of race riots in the co-construction of race and class in Philadelphia and New York, respectively, are Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999).

[119] "Building in Cincinnati" and editorial comments, *Cincinnati Republican*, Apr. 2, 1841.

housing would have familiarized white workers with the neighborhood and where blacks lived within it, providing early reconnaissance for later violence. It may have been that real labor competition was imagined or minimal, but the contact between blacks and whites, as well as the white hostility, were real.

The other major complaint about free blacks in Cincinnati was that they "didn't know their place." One of the things that supposedly "excit[ed] jealousy and heart burning" in the white population, and led to the riots, was groups of "idle negroes, infesting public walks, with an offensive and swaggering air...engaging night and day in noisy sports and revelry, to the great annoyance of the white citizens who reside near their haunts… [and in] a succession of frolicks [*sic*], in which they employed noisy instruments of music in the streets at late hours of the night" -- annoying the neighborhood, but completely unnoticed by the Watch.[120] The editors of the *Enquirer* insisted, "We were overrun with negroes. They took the inside of the pavement upon all occasions - swelled and swaggered, and obtruded their miscreated [*sic*] visages, like Milton's devils, where they had no business."[121]

The low river level the summer of 1841 had put a lot of people out of work, white and black, marooning many of them in Cincinnati.[122] But in Cincinnati, only groups of Negroes and mulattoes were described as "idle," their cultural expressions as "offensive," and their freedom as "swaggering." Many white Americans were

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[120] "The Late Mob," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1841.

[121] "The Late Riots," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 9, 1841.

[122] "The Late Mob," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1841.

frightened by the self-sufficiency and independence of free African Americans, with

no slave master or other white person apparently in control of their personal agency,

and the meaning this held for them. The freedom of free blacks and mulattoes loomed

monstrously in their minds.

Negroes and mulattoes who had embraced the improvement ethos of the city and

the age, and bore little resemblance to imaginary Negroes, occupied a lot of space in

the consciousness of many whites. In a piece written for the *Liberator* concerning the

1842 race riots in Philadelphia, which targeted improvements in the black community,

the African American abolitionist H.C. Wright believed that colonizationists had

poisoned the mind of the white community, creating a climate of hostility that saw

black freedom itself as impudent, because it wasn't submissive:

> It is the spirit of colonization, that is deeply rooted in the hearts of clergy, church
> and state. There is "a wish to drive all *free* colored people out of the southern
> states, that makes it a crime in a colored man to be *free*." Blacks may be tolerated
> if they would remain *slaves*, "below the lowest of the whites. But the moment they
> begin to rise, and show a desire to improve and be freemen, then they are said to
> be "insolent," "impudent," "haughty," "impolite," "out of their place," &c., &c.[123]

The mere fact of being a free Negro or mulatto, and acting in that freedom on behalf

of oneself and others, was what many white antebellum Cincinnatians described as

idle, swelling, impudent, or out of place.

3. Discourse on the Black Laws

Along with these discourses about free blacks being impudent and competitive

with white workers, in the years between the 1836 riots and 1841 there had been both

further efforts to end the Black Laws, as well as local calls for enforcing the Black

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[123] H. C. Wright, "The Philadelphia Mob," *Liberator*, Aug. 19, 1842; italics are in the original.

Laws; and there were efforts in the state legislature to strengthen them. In 1838

Augustus Wattles and A. Hopkins, white members of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society,

wrote a memorial to the Ohio State Legislature asking for immediate repeal of the

Black Laws. Primary among their other reasons, "*These people are men…color is no*

*crime.…*It is the highest political wisdom to grant equal protection to all! … [The

laws] *are hostile to liberty* - anti-Republican, making artificial distinctions in society."

The memorial directly challenged the two most common objections to repeal: first,

that "the blacks are an idle, thievish, worthless class of people," and second, "if we

should equalize our laws, it would encourage them to settle in our state in greater

numbers." To the first objection, they pointed out that the blacks they knew lied,

cheated, and stole no more, and often less, than whites. They didn't understand how

unequal laws could make their communities more prosperous or safer. Against the

second objection, they argued,

> What if they should [settle in our communities]. So long as they are industrious
> and honest, they add so much to the wealth of the state.… [We] injure ourselves by
> keeping out an industrious and valuable class of men whilst our barriers are not
> sufficient to keep out the worthless…. [Since only 1% of Ohio's] population is
> colored, it cannot be said that we need these laws as a measure of self-defense.[124]

In 1839, the year in which Cincinnati saw an increase in colonization activity and

discourse, the rights of African Americans in Ohio were further eroded by the state

legislature. The right of African Americans to petition the government was challenged,

even when pursued through white proxies. Resistance to this was referred to by

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[124] Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, *Memorial of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society to the General Assembly of the State of Ohio* (Cincinnati: Pugh and Dodd, 1838), 3-4; italics are in the original.

Workey in the opening vignette as "flinging the rights of petition…in our faces."[125]

On January 11, Mr. Corwin presented a petition "from colored people, couched in respectful terms, praying for a redress of grievances. Mr. Flood moved that it be rejected….The petition was received. Immediately, however, it was indefinitely postponed." On January 14, a similar petition from Negroes in Cuyahoga "was presented by Leverett Johnson….Flood moved to reject it." It passed. John Brough, from Cincinnati and one of the editors of the *Enquirer*, finally stopped petitions from people of color with a resolution,

> That the blacks and mulattoes who may be residents within this state, have no constitutional right to present their petitions to the General Assembly for any purpose whatsoever; and that any reception of such petitions on the part of the General Assembly is a mere act of privilege or policy, and not imposed by any expressed or implied power of the constitution.[126]

On January 19, in the state Senate, Mr. Holmes, of Cincinnati, attempted to prevent Mr. Wade from presenting "the petition of colored persons" asking for the incorporation of a school company. He refused to "acknowledge the right of that portion of the people to petition!" The legislators voted to receive the petition, anyway.[127]

In addition to this attempt to remove the rights of black residents, there were also efforts to strengthen the state's Black Laws in the several years before the 1841 riots.

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[125] "A Workey," letter to the editor, "The Mob," Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Sept. 10, 11, 1841; italics is in the original.

[126] "Right of Petition," *Philanthropist*, July 23, 1839. On Dec. 29, 1841, only months after the Cincinnati riots, after quite a bit of posturing by the opposition, the right of African Americans to petition was restored with an amendment in the Ohio House of Representatives that passed 41 to 22. See "Triumph in the Ohio Legislature," *Liberator,* Jan. 28, 1842.

[127] "Right of Petition," *Philanthropist*, July 23, 1839.

In 1839, G.H. Flood, the same legislator that had tried to prevent petitions from

Negroes and mulattoes from being heard, presented a series of resolutions to further

restrict their ability to live and work in Ohio. The fifth one of them passed; it stated,

> That in the opinion of this General Assembly, it is unwise, impolitic and
> inexpedient, to repeal any law now in force, imposing disabilities upon black or
> mulatto persons, thus placing them upon an equality with the whites, so far as this
> legislature can do, and indirectly, inviting the black population of other states to
> emigrate to this state, to the manifest injury of the public interest.

Both houses of the Ohio State Legislature adopted this resolution, re-entrenching the

Black Laws.[128] In November of 1840 the *Philanthropist* reported that there were plans

to attempt a repeal of this particular Black Law in the next legislative season.[129] There

was an ongoing struggle over Ohio's Black Laws in this period.

In the wake of the 1841 riots, the editors of the *Enquirer* as well as the public

called for renewed enforcement of the Black Laws. "Cincinnatus" issued a call for

renewed vigor in enforcing the law of 1807 to solve the problems about which

Workey was upset, "to rid ourselves of an idle and vitiated population…the black

scum of the south, and retain among us only those negroes who can find responsible

citizens to vouch for their good behavior and honesty." The unacceptable alternative

was "a repetition of the late disgraceful scenes of violence and bloodshed."[130] Another

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[128] "Enemies to the Colored People," *Philanthropist*, July 23, 1839; "On the Condition of the Free People of Color of the United States," *The Anti-Slavery Examiner* [New York], No. 13, 1839.

[129] "The Supporters of the Black Law," *Philanthropist*, Nov. 11, 1840. During the vote for the Black Law of 1838-39, 52 House members and 26 Senate members voted for it. Only five of these had been re-elected for the next session - three in the Senate and two in the House, G.W. Holmes of Hamilton County among them. Cincinnati was a strong supporter of the Black Laws.

[130] "Cincinnatus," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 18, 1841.

letter writer to the *Enquirer* insisted that the constitution and laws of Ohio weren't meant to simply limit the number of Negroes within the state, but "in their spirit and letter endeavor to exclude negroes from her limits. It is time we understood that Ohio no more tolerates negro freedom than negro slavery.…Let the pure, strict alien law be applied to him, in this, as in other things, and it will be but carrying out the spirit of our constitution."[131]

John Wright at the *Gazette* finally made a clear statement linking race making and place making. While he didn't "favor Abolitionists," he wasn't willing to allow the law to be "trampled." Apparently a lot of local residents thought that the black residency law of 1807 provided for imprisoning violators; it did not. Legalistic in his rationale, Wright reminded his readers that non-complying blacks were to be removed to the "place [they] came from.…We are against encouraging a black population in this city - it is no place for them - they are not, and cannot be, in the nature of things, secure here - and their presence tends to disturb the peace and quiet of the city."[132]

4. Discourse on the Mobs

A discourse about the mobs themselves being injurious to the city emerged in the initial riot reports of several newspapers. The *Chronicle* issued its first reports of the violence with "mingled feelings of grief and humiliation." The *Gazette* announced that it would try to provide accurate accounts "with deep regret and acknowledged

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[131] Editorial, *Cincinnati* Enquirer, Sept. 10, 1841; "Cincinnatus," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 18, 1841; "Ohio," letter to the editor, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 27, 1841.

[132] "The City - The Mob," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 9, 1841.

humiliation."[133] John Vaughn at the *Republican* published two editorials in which he argued that real southerners would have abhorred the violence, and would have "arm[ed themselves]…to protect the honest free black from the violence." He insisted southerners would "meet…such conduct [as the riots]…with nothing but scorn or pity."[134] This suggests that he may have been concerned that bad press in the South about the riots could have adverse effects on Cincinnati. Gamaliel Bailey at the *Philanthropist* wrote to a friend in New York several weeks after the riots, "The citizens are beginning to grow heartily ashamed of the disgrace they have suffered. The 'Mob City' of the West is not half so sweet as the 'Queen City.'"[135] Local business interests were concerned about abolitionism and a loss of trade, but, he asked,

> What merchant or tradesman from the East, what enlightened and liberal man from any part of our country, would be willing [to live] in a place where the laws could not protect his rights, and where he must cherish in secret, opinions, whose utterance would be punishable by lynch law?...The late mob in Cincinnati has done more to stay its prosperity, than all the publications abolitionists have ever issued from their lately demolished press.[136]

5. Anti-Black Violence in the Region after the Riots

There were a number of instances of anti-black violence in Cincinnati's vicinity in the month or so after the riots. White rioters in Lexington, Kentucky, destroyed a church constructed for slaves to worship in, and committed other violent

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[133] "Great Riot and Bloodshed on Our Streets," *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841.

[134] Editorial: "The Mob," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 7, 1841.

[135] Letter from Gamaliel Bailey to a man in New York, "Affairs in Cincinnati," [from the New York *Journal of Commerce*], *Liberator*, Oct. 8, 1841.

[136] "Causes," *Philanthropist*, Sept. 29, 1841.

acts as well. The editors of the reporting papers felt the mob was in some way connected to the recent riots in Cincinnati.[137] The *Philanthropist* reported that there were persecutions of people of color all along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers after Cincinnati's riots - in New Orleans and Mississippi, then Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky: "At Louisville the free people of color have been warned out of the state." Blacks had been arrested in Lexington, and in Maysville they were robbed and their church burned.[138] There was anti-black violence in Evansville, Indiana.[139] And in New Albany, Indiana, whites burned a church that housed a school for Negro children. A Cincinnatian had participated in white efforts to aid improvements in that town's black community; the efforts had "inflamed the prejudice" of local whites.[140] In October there was another attempt at anti-abolition violence in Cincinnati. One-hundred men and boys, the "strength of the Anti-Abolition Association" of the city, armed with clubs, showed up at an anti-slavery lecture to be given by C.C. Burleigh. A few came into the lecture, but were intimidated by the size of the audience. They were only able to break a chandelier lamp and "escort" the speaker to Gamaliel Bailey's house, whooping and yelling. No other damage was reported.[141]

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[137] "Mob in Maysville, Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 17, 1841; "Mob in Maysville," *Western Christian Advocate*, September 24, 1841.

[138] "Persecution" [from the *Philanthropist*], *Liberator*, October 8, 1841.

[139] "Blacks Mistreated" [from the Evansville (IN) *Journal*], *Liberator*, October 8, 1841.

[140] "New Albany Disgraced," [from the *Philanthropist*], *Liberator*, October 8, 1841.

[141] "C.C. Burleigh - The Mob," *Philanthropist*, October 20, 1841.

6. The Return of Booster Discourse

At about the same time, in mid-October, booster pieces began to reappear in the local papers. E.D. Mansfield at the Chronicle, used to the bustle of the west side of Cincinnati, was pleasantly surprised to find the east side of the city was showing "vast improvements." This was near the area where the riots took place (see Figure 7.1). The Miami Canal was generating water power for "a town of factories: mills for flour, oil and lumber, printing presses.…Fine bridges were being built over Deer Creek and the Miami Canal." Congress street had been opened to Front, near the Water Works, creating a new entrance to the city. The iron rails for the first fifteen miles of a new railroad line to be built toward Columbus, the state capital, were stacked at the foot of the Canal. John Wright, editor of the *Gazette*, investigating whether reports he had heard about "increasing population and the number of buildings now erecting" were exaggerated, concluded that, "Cincinnati is rapidly growing in population, and that we are in a flourishing condition." There was no mention in either report of depressed economics, loss of trade, or the destruction caused by the recent riots in the area where the building was taking place.[142]

D. What Happened

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[142] "City Improvements"[from the Cincinnati *Chronicle*], *Western Christian Advocate*, Oct. 15, 1841; "Cincinnati - the Improvements in 1841" [from the *Cincinnati Gazette*, Oct. 18, 1841], *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, Oct. 21, 1841.

Like the 1829 and 1836 riots, the 1841 riots were *preservationist* violence.[143] What was intended to be preserved were the habits of relating to local African Americans by different groups of whites in the community. Members of the working, middle, and elite classes in the city responded to perceived threats to their social or economic privileges as white residents by participating in one or more of the practices associated with racialized violence in the community before or during the riots themselves, or by participating in the public discourses about race, abolition, and the community surrounding the riots. Each of the complaints about either blacks or abolitionists, from each sector of the white community, was really about blacks not knowing "their place" in local society. Negroes and mulattoes in Cincinnati in 1841 were not as deferent (they dressed in better clothes, some were better educated, and they had different expectations of the world) as they had been before, and certainly not as deferent as the imaginary Negroes that many whites carried in their heads. These riots were anti-improvement riots. They were about the agency exercised by African Americans in Cincinnati, to improve their lives, and to defend themselves. This makes them community development riots.

From the black community's perspective, they weren't going to take a chance that the mob of nearly 1500 people that marched into their midst on Friday, Sept. 3 meant them no malice. They took action to prepare a defense and they pursued it. And they prevailed, until the city authorities became involved. Blacks could not be allowed to show successful agency. If agency operated as an index of improvability, agency

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[143] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 34.

would indicate the ability to improve, and therefore, to improve one's community. Improvable and improving Negroes made it more difficult put into practice a community development project that was directed solely at the intentions and desires of white residents. Anthropologist Sherry Ortner has explored the processes of creating "appropriately gendered and…differentially empowered, persons" through pedagogical models of agency embedded in Grimm's fairy tales. Girls who show agency are punished severely as examples to females exposed to their didactic messages, not for the "moral content" of their acts, but for the agency itself.[144] From this perspective, the race making project in Cincinnati was to create "appropriately racialized and differentially empowered persons" as part playing the serious game of community development. The agency of members of the black community, both their readiness to defend themselves and their very self-confidence, was punished by removing the men from the community and putting them in the cordoned-off area and then in jail.

During the 1836 riots in Cincinnati, the previously unified community development consensus among improvement boosters and city leaders broke down around differences of opinion about how to handle the Negro and abolition "problems" in the city (see Chapter 6). During the 1841 riots, the mayor and city council may have been attempting to avoid a recurrence of this fragmentation of consensus in community leadership: critical decisions during the 1841 violence, such

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[144] Ortner, "Power and Projects," 139; Sherry Ortner, "Making Gender: Toward a Feminist, Minority, Postcolonial, Subaltern, etc., Theory of Practice," in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 10.

as those that disarmed the black community and incarcerated the black men, were made in small, private city council meetings rather than in large community meetings, as in previous years. This suggests that city authorities did not trust that the weight of current public opinion would support their intentions. In fact, disarming the black men and the subsequent attack on a vulnerable black community was a limiting factor for a vocal minority in the community. Editors and boosters E.D. Mansfield and John Vaughn, as well as a number of other citizens, indicated that there were limits -- concerning the tarnished honor of white men in keeping their word -- in pursuing the control and removal of Negroes and mulattoes and their abolitionist allies in Cincinnati. City leaders may have avoided direct confrontations over strategies by having private meetings.

At the same time, the white community engaged in a changing of the rules again. The city authorities had promised the black men that the women and children, and their property would be protected if they agreed to be disarmed, and then, in fact, did not ensure that they were really protected. City leaders had to be aware that deputizing citizens under the chaotic conditions of the moment would likely result in deputizing some of the rioters and other citizens who would not willingly follow orders to protect previously intended targets and victims. The work of Foucault suggests that many whites perceived African American violations of white privilege as a sort of *atrocity* that violated their notions of personal sovereignty, requiring a

massive response to prevent a recurrence.[145] Disarming the African American

community, leaving it vulnerable, and then allowing it to be attacked, is an "over-kill"

reaction, patrolling the edges of the white privilege of agency itself. White privilege is

really just a racialized formulation of the notion of personal sovereignty: only whites

may posses it in this racialized community culture. Blacks failing to show deference,

having the same characteristics as whites, wining several fistfights in a row against

whites - all of this could have been read by part of the white population as an affront

to their sense of white privilege, and requiring an effective response.

By not only disarming the African American men, but further attacking the

unprotected remaining community, the white rioters made an example of them, as

Foucault describes, as a sign to others like them that they must not show the agency of

white persons, particularly of typical American men. Local citizens at the community

meeting that voted to disarm the men participated in this attack. Editors, E.D.

Mansfield and John Vaughn noted this aspect of disarming the men almost right away.

They both alluded to a breech of the honor of being (white) men in the action of

promising protection to women, children, and even property, and then not keeping

one's word.[146] The act of disarming the African American men was intended to

demasculinize them, casting them as unable to protect their wives and families, other

members of the community, or their property. They could be jailed and their freedom

taken away at any time; or symbolically castrated and given the status of male slaves,

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[145] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 56.
[146] *Cincinnati Chronicle*, Sept. 6, 1841; *Cincinnati Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1841.

who cannot protect themselves or their wives and families, or have control over any property. In this way they were placed in a degraded, unimproved state that more closely approximated imaginary Negroes, who were easier to justify in removing from the city.

The rapes of black women, and the reactions of editors John and Charles Brough and John Wright, were part of demasculinizing and defeminizing the black community and excising it from the community at large. The rapes of black women were discussed in the papers for a week, whereas the attack of a white woman, interrupted by a passerby, was not. Like disarming the black men, this discussion of the rapes, treating the black women differently than white women, was a categorizing race making technology. Black women's bodies were not their own; they could be used by white men at will, and neither the women nor black men could stop it. The bodies of black women framed the public discourse about black agency and inferiority. The rapes of African American women, the disarming of the men and subsequent attack on the community by the rioters, and the public re-exposure of the women in the discussion of the rapes, were a thorough vandalism of African Americans and the protective and supportive community they had build in Cincinnati. The rioters, the city leaders, and the white residents who didn't stop the violence all participated in the public humiliation of this community, making all Negroes and mulattoes seem worthy of being attacked.

The arguments that abolitionists had armed the black community and had instructed it to shoot were specious. White male abolitionists, as a group, by the 1840s

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had developed a reconstruction of masculinity that challenged the more typical notions of male "power and domination in favor of intimacy and cooperation," allowing them access to empathy and the recognition of African American suffering.[147] Theodore Weld, leader of the Lane Seminary Rebels in 1834 and an active abolitionist speaker and organizer, married to feminist and abolitionist Angelina Grimke, had gone through a thorough change in his thinking, embracing this new construction of masculinity.[148] Although not present in the city during these riots, his influence on the local abolitionist community had been strong. There is no evidence that local abolitionists armed anyone during the 1841 riots, including themselves. The removal of agency from the black community and assigning it to whites was a critical part of dehumanizing African Americans in the riots. It contributed to an image of degraded, pathetic dependent Negroes and mulattoes - a racial grotesque that helped to justify their removal from the community.

Even John Vaughn, editor of the *Republican* and sometime ally of local African Americans, perhaps finally bowing to the pressure of charges that he was soft on abolitionism, could not refrain from participating in dehumanizing the black population by parodying the recent attempt to remove them from the community. He appears to be the author of a supposedly comic piece that began, "Among the various improvements of the present enlightened age, none are more striking than the

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[147] Christopher Dixon, "A True Manly Life": Abolition and the Masculine Ideal," *Mid-America* 77, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 214n3.

[148] On Weld see Dixon, "A True Manly Life": 216n9. See Chapter 4 of this study for a discussion of the differences between abolitionism and colonization in terms of their co-constructions of gender and race.

improvements in language." He then referred to an article about the Seminoles, who were "to be emigrated, with their chief" under the Indian removal policies of the federal government. This is where the parody takes off: Indian removal is a trope in this piece for Negro removal, an issue in the recent riots:

> "To be emigrated" is good phrase - when fairly under way, these Indians will be described as, "being emigrated," - and when actually at their journey's end they will have been "emigrated." We hope to hear soon that all the Seminoles are "*done gone to the West*."[149]

The last line is a minstrel-like rendition of a black person's speech - a racial grotesque. By publishing this piece, Vaughn participated in a categorizing technology describing both Indians and African Americans as subject to the spacing technology of removal, contributing the sense that Negroes and mulattoes were aliens in the local white population.

In the end, the uproar finally calmed down as the autumn approached. The city's social dynamic went back to the uneasy racial detente that tended to prevail in Cincinnati throughout the antebellum period. The attempt to start an Anti-Abolition Society and newspaper, the *Cincinnati Post and Anti-Abolitionist*, failed within the year.[150] While white Cincinnatians were Negro-phobic, they apparently had little taste for the kind of hate-driven discussions of Negroes and abolitionists that filled the pages of this paper. The initial calls for starting both the society and the paper were likely attempting to capture and concentrate anti-Negro public opinion after the riots.

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[149] "Among the various improvements…," *Cincinnati Republican*, Sept. 14, 1841; italics are in the original.

[150] The paper's first issue appeared Jan. 15, 1842; its last was in November of that year. It ceased for lack of patronage.

There were indications in one of the religious papers that empathy was threatening the assumed unanimity of the community a week after the violence ended: "Most of the negroes are discharged [from jail], and are again seen, as usual, throughout the city. Already there is a strong feeling of sympathy and kindness for that oppressed and unfortunate people."[151] The *Chronicle*, labeled by the *Enquirer* an abolitionist paper, doubled its subscription list in 1841.[152] In general, its editor E.D. Mansfield avoided engaging other papers in editorial sniping; the public rewarded his integrity with increased interest in and financial support for the paper.

Historian Nikki Taylor describes a new enthusiasm for institution building in the black community in the wake of the 1841 riots. After the population regained its footing, there was a rise in entrepreneurial activity.[153] But they were not attacked again by the white residents of Cincinnati in the way that they had been in 1841. The community would stay small and compact, below 5 percent of the total population of the city, until the early years of the twentieth century (see Table 4.1). But it reached a stability and permanency that is remarkable in light of the repeated attempts by the white residents of Cincinnati to remove them. But until the twentieth century, African Americans would live in a much whiter Cincinnati than they had between 1829 and 1841.

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[151] "Riot - Violence and Bloodshed," *Western Episcopal Observer*, Sept. 11, 1841.

[152] "*Cincinnati* Chronicle," *Philanthropist*, Nov. 3, 1841.

[153] Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*, 125-137.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

"Caucasia."

> - What Englishman E.S. Abdy thought a still undecided United States of America should name itself after he had observed over a year of its race relations in the 1830s.[1]

A. Improvement, Race Making, and Place Making in Antebellum Cincinnati

1. Improvement in the City

The citizens of antebellum Cincinnati were widely involved in the discourses and practices of improving themselves, each other, and the city. Civic leaders and booster/improvers projected an image of a harmonious society where all of its disparate elements were linked by a sense of mutual obligation, promotion of the common good, and a willingness to minimize self-interest in favor of the public interest. Under a growing certainty that what was good for trade and business was good for the city, boosters also promoted the idea that what was good for business interests was in everyone's interest to support. Their neat syntheses of Cincinnati as an ideal location, its (white) population as the best to build a city, and their republican institutions and way of life as the natural outcomes of a free society, were intended to invest their listeners and readers in improving the city. The improvement of the city - community development - became a major project for a core group of civic leaders,

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[1] E.S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America from April, 1833 to October, 1834* (London: John Murray, 1835; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), II, 301, footnote.

improvers, and boosters drawn from business, manufacturing, law, medicine, education, the ministry, and other professions.

The tendency to see one's own prosperity in that of the city led a majority of Cincinnatians to support, actively or tacitly, the improvement projects organized, boosted, and carried out by the core of improvers in the city. A corporate sense of the city as an organic whole, an organism with all of its parts working together, prevailed and was renewed in each glowing booster speech, article, or pamphlet. There was a constant reiteration of the proper harmony, stability, and prosperity to be had by all when working together toward the common good. Local boosters promoted the idea that support for projects to improve the city and region as a whole would improve the citizen, which in turn would improve the community in a perfect, unified system.

Within the power relations of the community, Cincinnatians developed a common sense about how to improve and develop the community, sometimes shifting strategies as the conditions changed. When the citizens of antebellum Cincinnati wanted to solve a problem, improving some aspect of the whole city or community, they had a consistent set of practices to get the project started. Someone would bring the problem up in a public forum, usually in the newspaper. There might be discussions of various points of view in the editorials and the letters to the editors. Someone would call a community meeting, arranging for a great list of civic leaders and other improvers to sign the announcement. A notice for this meeting's time, place, and purpose would be published in the local newspapers or put on posters placed around city. Officers, at least a chair and secretary, were selected, an agenda was

decided upon, and speeches were made based on some prior discussion among those men who signed the original announcement of the meeting and other civic leaders. After a discussion among those present that was moderated by the chair, resolutions were read and voted on. Work committees, if needed, were assigned by the chair and plans made for further action or another meeting. A report of the meeting was generally published in the local newspapers. Public improvements were typically approached in this way.

2. Race Making in the City

Antebellum Cincinnatians were also deeply involved in the practices of race making; it was an ongoing project. There was a constant conversation about race. White prejudice against the presence of Negroes and mulattoes in the state had initially put Ohio's Black Laws in place with the Constitutional conventions of 1802 and 1807. As both categorizing and spacing technologies of race making, the Black Laws established and maintained blacks as a separate category from whites, as well as providing for removal from the state as the remedy for blacks guilty of violating the laws. Provisions in the law that prevented blacks from serving on juries, voting, testifying in trials involving a white person, or serving in the militia, served to structure the legal limits of social interactions between those identified as white and those identified as Negroes or mulattoes. The so-called Black Laws were onerous to enforce, and they were nearly ignored, unless some other problem with blacks came up in a community, such as showing a lack of deference to whites or too many signs of improvement, or whites just felt that there were too many of them. Whenever

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complaints about Negroes and mulattoes from white residents increased in Cincinnati, calls to increase enforcement of the Black Laws, especially their provisions for Negro removal, increased in the local papers and in community meetings, as well.

There were differences of opinion about whether blacks and whites were separate races, whether characteristics were inherent, and whether blacks were inferior to whites in the public discourse about race in Cincinnati. The dominant attitude of whites in Cincinnati about Negroes and mulattoes was prejudice against them and a belief in their inherent and unchangeable physical, intellectual, and moral inferiority. At the same time, white elite men playing with race in the "Black Brothers" and the Chief John Ross incidents, and working class men doing the same with black face minstrelsy, betrays that in some sense they knew that race was not real, fixed, and inherent. These incidents illustrate a semi-consciousness that they were making race up "as they went." White residents from all parts of the community, men and women, participated in the discourses and other non-discursive practices of race making in Cincinnati. Many of them raised their children using forms of the racial grotesque to dehumanize Negroes and mulattoes and scare their children into proper behavior with the thought that they could be treated like blacks, or become black - with all of the negative and dehumanizing meaning that had been loaded into blackness.

Blacks and whites lived side by side in the same streets in the same neighborhoods and sometimes in the same buildings; there was no black ghetto in antebellum Cincinnati. Once they had classified Negroes and mulattoes as inferior, and were convinced that amalgamation with them of any kind was dangerous to their

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bloodlines and their privileges, white residents of all class identifications increasingly sought spacing technologies to deal with their "Negro problem." Working men tried to keep blacks out of their trades, off work sites, and out of shops. At the same time, the labor market was split with widely recognized "white jobs" (any of the mechanical or artisanal trades, the professions, and teaching) and "black jobs" (blacking boots, washing clothes, carrying water and wood, digging and other menial labor, and waiting on others), effectively spacing most working environments by race. The developing middle class -- merchants and businessmen, lawyers, clerks, independent artisans, teachers, ministers, and other professionals and their families, what historian Walter Glazer called the "occupational upper class" -- joined the wealthy in filling the memberships of colonization societies. Colonization held out the popular hope for many northerners that sending free blacks to Africa would both end slavery and find an expedient solution to their guilty anxieties about an imaginary yet inevitable race war. Both working class and middle class white residents were afraid that improving Negroes and mulattoes would encroach on their prerogatives and privileges, often expressed as a fear of social or sexual amalgamation -- a mixing technology. Colonization symbolized the spacing from blacks that many white residents desired.

Whites in Cincinnati prevented African Americans from joining voluntary associations for improvement in the community at large, so African Americans founded their own organizations, schools, and societies for self and mutual improvement. They founded their own church denominations for freedom in their style of worship, to get out of the "nigger pew" in white denominations, and to have

the right to participate in the ministry and governance. Though many members of Cincinnati's black community had spent their scant financial resources to buy themselves and family members out of slavery, they steadily and surely improved. A small middle class developed and individuals began to improve their circumstances, often by performing labor that whites wouldn't perform, such as working as stewards, butlers, and domestic servants on steamships and railroads, and in white people's homes, or shining shoes and barbering. Despite the great number of improving Negroes mixed in among the great number of improving whites in the city, many white Cincinnatians persisted in carrying a degraded, unimproved, and "uncivilized" imaginary Negro in their heads. Based on white prejudices, this construction was a racial grotesque intended to draw blacks as less than human, making them easier to abuse. And white residents developed a dominant common sense about proper race relations in the city: Negroes and mulattoes should be deferent to whites; whites should avoid contact with them, and should have the privilege of making all decisions regarding their movements or privileges; and the benefits of the improvements of the city are properly part of "the wages of whiteness."

3. The Racialization of Community Development in Antebellum Cincinnati

One of the most important indices of race as it was constructed in antebellum America was improvement itself. Race became indexed on improvement and the agency that was needed to achieve it; and improvement was assigned by race. Whites were deemed improvable and capable of improving themselves because they had agency. So they were also able to improve the communities in which they lived.

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Despite (and probably due to) the explosion of evidence to the contrary in every community in which they lived, Negroes and mulattoes were increasingly described as unimprovable. The dominant belief was that they lacked the agency needed for self-improvement, and therefore could not improve their communities. As their communities improved and grew, this dominant belief in Negroes' and mulattoes' lack of agency and improvability became more prevalent. Whites became more likely to be upset with a black person's "virtues" than their "vices," as English visitor E.S. Abdy put it. A minority of others, including some abolitionists, disagreed with the idea that blacks had no agency and were not improving as whites were, but they were drowned out by the prevailing view.

This resulted in a racialized community development ideology in Cincinnati with three elements: who could be improved; who could improve the community; and who should benefit from the community's improvements and opportunities. Practice theorists' understanding of the mutually constitutive relationship between social structure and human action helps to highlight the mutually constructive quality of this thinking in the community. This prejudice served to structure thinking about the ability of Negroes and mulattoes to contribute to the community, pulling them out of the sequence of self-improvement to community improvement to self-improvement. They were effectively spaced outside of the community and its benefits. When the city and the community are tropes for each other, then blacks can be spaced outside of the city, as well. Without the model of an exclusive ghetto, segregation wasn't typically

discussed as an option. Whites in Cincinnati tended to reach for removal, a rigid

spacing technology, as a solution to their perceived Negro problem.

The intersection of race and improvement turned community development in

Cincinnati into a serious game, in which changing the rules signaled the switch from

the basic project of community development to the serious game of development

which favored white privileges. The presence of Negroes, mulattoes, and abolitionists

in Cincinnati was perceived by many white residents as a community development

problem. Different sectors of the society framed the problem slightly differently. For

laborers and mechanics, it was often talked of as labor competition. For merchants and

businessmen, free blacks and abolitionists who provided access to the Underground

Railroad for fugitive slaves and slaves of southern merchants visiting the city

threatened southern trade and the internal improvements that required southern

cooperation. They believed that the help that abolitionists gave to the black

community made Cincinnati seem too attractive to blacks elsewhere, further irritating

southern merchants. All of these different rationales for wanting to reduce or eliminate

the black population and reduce the influence of abolitionists translated into concerns

about the future development of the city and who should benefit from it.

Colonizationists, including many boosters, civic leaders, and elected officials,

talked constantly of sending free blacks to Africa as the only reasonable, common

sense solution to the Negro problem. They either saw blacks as inherently inferior and

unimprovable or saw white prejudice as so entrenched that it couldn't be changed. In

either case, the only solution to the problem was to send all free blacks to Africa.

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Their community development strategy was removal - a spacing technology. Immediate abolitionists generally believed that blacks would improve, in the United States, and were inherently equal to whites, yet socially and politically disadvantaged by the practices of white prejudice. The immediate abolitionists' community development strategy was social interaction in the United States - a mixing technology. However, the colonizationists' view of Negroes and mulattoes in the community dominated and provided a constant reiteration of separation and spacing.

The discourses on race and on improvement and development overlapped in Cincinnati, as they did elsewhere, strengthening their connections. In letters to newspapers, pamphlets, articles, essays, and private letters, white Cincinnatians linked their views on self-improvement and race to those on the development and prosperity of the community and city as a whole. Local boosters played a critical role in linking and overlapping the discourses on race and improvement. Their writings and speech self-consciously constructed cogent and consumable images of idealized projects, such as institutions, social movements, and cities. Boosters' descriptions of local populations mixed native born whites ("pioneers") with European immigrants into a harmonious, amalgamated, virtuous population whose agency and intentions were responsible for creating the city, the region, and the nation, institution by republican institution. Sometimes Negroes and mulattoes were minimized or demonized in population descriptions, but more often they were simply left out of the careful inventory of the mixture. Booster images, by men and women, were pictures of neighborhoods, cities, region, and nations without African Americans present.

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In addition to the discourses, other development practices of boosters and improvers overlapped with those of race making, as well. Each time the "Negro problem" or the "abolition problem" came to a head as an issue in the development of the city, Cincinnatians began to solve the problem in much the same way they solved most of their community development problems. The problem was discussed in the papers, and privately, as well, it can be assumed. Someone called a meeting with a great list of civic leaders as signatories; certain names were certain to be on the list. Announcements were sent to the papers and sometimes printed on handbills. Agendas were written and speakers were picked prior to the meeting by the meeting signatories and other power brokers of the city. The meetings were filled with people. Officers were chosen, the issues were aired, and the speakers spoke. In response, the crowd stamped and whistled and hooted and clapped. When the resolutions were read, they were nearly always unanimously adopted, as opposition to the dominant way of thinking about the problem was quickly marginalized. A plan was made for further action and committees were appointed by the chair. A report of the meeting was published in the local papers.

Each of the anti-black and anti-abolition riots in Cincinnati between 1829 and 1841 was preceded by discussions in the local press and one or more large community meetings. A dominant public opinion emerged from these discussions, a hegemonically constructed (and white) public will that demanded compliance with its demands, or the consequences would be the fault of the blacks who had not left the city, or the abolitionists who insisted on exercising their rights of speech, press, or

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assembly under the U.S. constitution. What happened in the community meetings, city council meetings, private caucuses, and in the riots themselves, was the result of people making decisions *intentionally*. There was opportunism, and plenty of half-conscious decisions, but the riots and their surrounding discourses were practices with human intention informing them. They were pursued on behalf of the goals of intimidation, humiliation, and degradation of the Negroes and mulattoes living in the city and of silencing their abolitionist allies. The riots were intended to remove or reduce the presence of free blacks and abolitionists in the city.

Many of the same civic leaders and booster/improvers were involved in these meetings and committees that were involved in canal, railroad, educational, and other local improvements in the city, bringing their authority with them. They used their common sense about community development to solve this problem, as well, tuning the solutions to the specific problem at hand. What was different about the Negro problem compared to other community development problems for which the community sought solutions is the role that violence played in its solution. But even this became part of the common sense of the community. The riots were pursued because they were expedient and satisfied Cincinnatians tendency to reach for short-term solutions. Expediency was often held up as a good reason for making a particular decision. Opportunities to stop the violence against either blacks or abolitionists were missed in all three sets of riots. Generally the city authorities made a verbal or written show of disapproving of the violence and asking the public not get involved in it, while taking ineffective steps to stop it, or doing things that actually made it easier for

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rioters to attack blacks and abolitionists with impunity. The mayor seemed to be in alliance with the rioters during the 1836 riots when he told them to go home, stating, "I think you've done enough for tonight." During the 1841 riots, the city authorities' disarming and jailing of the black men left the rest of the black community completely vulnerable to attack from the rioters.

4. Race Riots and Anti-abolition Riots as Race Making Technologies

Both the race riots and the anti-abolition riots in Cincinnati, like the Black Laws and prejudicial customs, operated as race technologies, creating the categories of black, mulatto, and white, in a number of different ways. All of the race riots worked as spacing technologies, terrorizing the African American population and their non-African American family members into leaving their homes and their belongings and escaping the city. In the 1829 violence, half the Negroes and mulattoes in the city left or were driven out, many leaving permanently; during the 1841 violence, many members of the community fled into the hills surrounding the city. Calls for renewed enforcement of the removal provisions of the Black Laws had preceded both riots.

In demolishing black homes and churches and destroying their belongings, white rioters were inscribing Negroes and mulattoes, who were living all kinds of lives, with the signs of the imaginary Negroes in their heads, who were poorly clothed and fed, living hand to mouth, and dependent on others for their subsistence. As a classifying technology it marked all those of African ancestry as able to be mistreated, and then mixed them into a singular identity. Gender and race were co-constructed in these riots as well. Two black women were raped during the 1841 riots and their cases

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discussed and denied in the local papers for a week. The rapes happened after the

black men, successful armed defenders of their community, were rounded-up and put

into a cordoned-off area, disarmed, and jailed "for their protection." Protection by city

officials for the remaining women and children, and their belongings, never

materialized. The disarming of the black men, as well as the two rapes and a week-

long discussion afterwards, inscribed free black men and women with the slave status

of not having control over the use of their own bodies, and reconstructed their

masculinity and femininity differently from those of whites: black men could not

protect their families and black women could not expect protection, nor be believed

when they were victimized. The dominant discourse and practices of the community

denied both the agency and the humanity of African American men and women in

these riots and their aftermath, making them easier to attack again.

The riots constructed white people as well as black people. In the streets

among the rioters, as well as in city council and community meetings that discussed

the issues, native born European Americans and recent immigrants, from different

religious denominations, different classes, and different political party affiliations,

mixed together to become *white* people. At the same time, white abolitionists were

considered to be traitors to whiteness. They were both categorized and marked by the

symbolic violence of "wanted posters" calling them *black*, spacing them outside of the

community of white citizens, where anything might happen to them. Destroying the

press that published the abolitionist paper and attempting to attack abolitionists in their

homes was meant not only to silence them, which it failed to do, but to symbolically

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excise them from the community by treating them like criminals - outside of the community in the hope that they would actually leave.

5. The Riots as Community Development Strategies: Race Making as Place Making

During all three sets of riots, white residents from many sectors of the community - laborers, mechanics and artisans, local businessmen and merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, clerks, improvers and boosters - as well as city authorities, worked together, their separate interests coming together as they worked toward a common goal. All three sets of riots were examples of the ideology of community corporatism at work in antebellum Cincinnati. Different sectors of white Cincinnatians did their part on behalf of their common sense about what would be good for the city by each assuming an accustomed role in: city government, running the community meetings that discussed the issues surrounding each riot, editing the local press, or being members of the crowds of rioters and the onlookers that encouraged and validated them. During each of the riots, ironically, the sense of community-ism that was typical of Cincinnati's community development ideology prevailed. A dominant part of the white population, working across differences of class, religion, and region of birth, characteristics that might have divided them under other circumstances, opportunistically and intentionally pursued strategies they believed would increase the likelihood of good community development. These strategies included various ways of violently terrorizing and physically hurting members of the black community and destroying their property to increase the probability that they would leave town. They

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destroyed the abolitionist press in an attempt to silence it, believing they would reduce

the hostility of southern traders toward the city. They degraded members of the black

community through violence and humiliation, which marked them as able to be treated

that way and caused them great social suffering.

Each of the race riots and anti-abolition riots that Cincinnati experienced

between 1829 and 1841 made place in some obvious ways, such as driving part of the

black population out of the city. The black population fell below 5 percent and

remained at that level, making Cincinnati demographically whiter, until into the

twentieth century. The race riots enforced the Black Laws and the white privileges

they were intended to protect, connecting white Cincinnatians to the exclusionary

ideology of the founders of the State of Ohio and their desire to have a white state.

Geographer Yi-fu Tuan notes,

> Places can be made visible by a number of means….Human places become
> vividly real through dramatization. Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing
> the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life.[2]

The race riots and anti-abolition riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841 dramatized and enacted

the desires and sense of the community of many white Cincinnatians, dramatizing as

well the local common sense and "functional rhythms" of community race relations

that protected "the wages of whiteness." In bringing so many white Cincinnatians

together, pursuing their own interests, to work on a development project together for

the city, each of the riots infused their community ideology with a racialized

dimension. Racialized community development made Cincinnati a white city.

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[2] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 178.

B. The Implications of This Study

Early one morning in Cincinnati, at the beginning of my research for this study, I stopped to get some breakfast. The small restaurant was empty except for me and the waitress, a slight and spare young African American woman - so I started a conversation with her. I told her that I'd only been in town for few days, and Cincinnati was very different than other cities I'd been in. It had a racialized and violent tension that I felt strongly, especially from other brown-skinned people, particularly African Americans; it was taking some "getting used to." I told her I was an historian and an anthropologist, and that I'd come to the city to research local anti-black race riots that had happened one-hundred seventy-five years ago, near the beginning of the city's history. She stopped behind the counter, looked straight at me, then glanced over her shoulder (we were alone). Hand on her hip, and looking at me over an imaginary pair of glasses, she said softly but clearly, "This town is cursed....." There was fear in her voice: "I'm from [the deep South]. I came up here with my kids, by myself. I'm not as old as you, but I'm from [the deep South]. I *know*. I tell you, this town is *cursed*!" We had a mutual understanding. Looking at my brown face, she was counting on me to understand what she meant without explaining anything. "You have to *tell* it. You have to say how it got this way." I told her then, and on the other occasions that I ate breakfast there during my stay in the city, as well, that I would indeed try to tell the story of how Cincinnati got to be, as she put it, "*cursed*."

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1. Implications for Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati

My working hypothesis as I began this study was,

Anti-black race riots and anti-abolition riots in Cincinnati in 1829, 1836, and 1841, were a race making technology deployed by the white population as strategies in a community development project to create a white city.

There is ample evidence to support this claim. Beyond this claim, another can be made, that antebellum Cincinnati developed a racialized culture of community development. This was a prevailing set of assumptions among white residents in the community about who could be improved, who could improve the city, and who should benefit from the city's improvements that were tied to ideas about race which were indexed on improvement. The way community development was pursued in antebellum Cincinnati not only caused social suffering to African Americans, but it was intended to cause social suffering. A number of practices taken together -- the Black Laws, local prejudice, community meetings, the riots and the reaction of city leaders to them -- all of them were intended to cause social suffering as a way of discouraging blacks from living in the city and to keep those who did live there deferent to whites.

White Cincinnatians hoped Negroes and mulattoes would leave on their own when pressured, just as colonizationists hoped that free blacks would voluntarily agree to go to Africa. This prevented them from facing their feelings of guilt for asking blacks to do something they would not ask of themselves. It required them labeling anyone who claimed that it was mean and cold-hearted to ask blacks to leave as "overly sentimental." When the sense of community-ism and corporatism that

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prevailed in early antebellum Cincinnati was directed toward the "Negro problem" and

the "abolition problem," the vast majority of white residents explicitly or tacitly

agreed with the prevailing wisdom: that it good for public moral and the development

of the community to let the rioters burn off a little steam, chase a few blacks out of

town, and have everyone feel like they'd worked together on a project on behalf of the

whole city. It reduced class tensions by having people work together across class lines

toward a common community goal. And they hoped it made a good display of kinship

with the South, protecting trade relations with southern markets.

A second implication of this study for understanding Cincinnati in the

nineteenth century is how this fits into the historiography of community development

ideology and practice in antebellum Cincinnati. Historians Carl Abbott and Walter

Glazer have both argued that Cincinnati's boosters and civic leaders shared a

community ideology about development up to the 1840s and 1850s, when it began to

fragment.[3] The project to ensure a white city between 1829 and 1841 may have been

semi-consciously pursued to help shore-up the older community-ism that was

beginning to fragment along class and ethnic lines. The early fragmentation of

community development strategies over the local "Negro problem" showed up as

increased fragmentation in public opinion about the results and details of the race and

anti-abolition riots between 1829 and 1841. The near unanimity during the 1829 riots

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[3] Carl Abbot, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981), Chapter 6, "Cincinnati: The Abdication of the Queen City," 148-171; Walter Stix Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: the Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 9-10, 152-156.

gave way to a public opinion that was more difficult to control during the 1836

violence, resulting in attempts at "dirty tricks" by some public officials. The lack of

unified public opinion about strategies during the 1841 riots resulted in the city leaders

forgoing large community meetings to rubber-stamp their policies and to make more

decisions in city council meetings. This does indicate that the overall sense of

development ideology that Abbott and Glazer felt prevailed until the 1840s actually

started to break down in the 1830s. Ironically, the riots and the way that the

community leaders dealt with them may have prolonged the sense of community-ism

across a broad spectrum of the (white) community in Cincinnati from 1829 to 1841,

finally pulling apart after the period of these riots.

2. Implications for Contemporary Community Development

In my conversation with the waitress in the vignette that opens this section of

this chapter, the mutual understanding we had, the common sense we shared, was

about community development, the deep social suffering of African Americans and

African American communities, and history. She thought my hypothesis was

interesting, that, if race wasn't real, that the way that white Cincinnatians had dealt

with race was a community development strategy to create a white city. It rang true to

her. She thought you could still feel it one-hundred and seventy-five years later.

Maybe it was still happening…

Practices intended to develop antebellum Cincinnati were also race making

technologies that caused a great deal of social suffering among African Americans.

Today community development is accomplished differently than in the past, but

today's ideas about who lives in our cities, what their role in development is, who makes the decisions, and who receives the benefits of development are still based on deeply held and unacknowledged assumptions about the nature of both race and improvement. Because we live in a racialized society, race making practices of many kinds are still part of our contemporary community development. When I began working on this study, I believed the answer to better community development in situations where there was cultural conflict, such as the gentrification of areas with poor and minority populations, was early involvement of the target population in the project and more cultural sensitivity on the part of developers. After completing this study, I feel the problem is really a racialized culture of development in our communities. Cincinnati provides a good example of a city whose current problems with race and community development may have their origins in the early history of the city, when race making and community development first became linked through public opinion about who could be improved, who could improve the city, and who should benefit from the city's improvements. Current community development strategies that are technologies for race making, as well, are responsible for some of the social suffering caused by development that ignores human justice issues.

C. Suggestions for Further Research

The data and the findings of this study suggest a number of areas for further research. Other antebellum communities that had race riots and anti-abolition riots had discourses on race. It would be fruitful to examine these communities for racialized community development strategies. The role of women in early community

development hasn't been well studied. Catherine Beecher's discussions of communities and her foray into racial discourse suggests that scholars should be reading antebellum women's writings on the domestic sphere through the analytical lens of racialized community development thinking. White elite men's use of racial games (the "Black Brothers") to patrol the boundaries of whiteness as part of the serious games of maleness and success suggest that we knew race wasn't real at one time, and have now (strategically) forgotten it. More scholarship on these racial games is needed. Finally, the issue of the moral dimension of community development should be addressed. Community development that causes social suffering is violent and requires a moral response. Scholarship that examines the historical connections between a community's values and attitudes and its development ideologies and practices would be an important first step toward crafting an effective response.

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Cincinnati (Daily) Gazette CHS, OHS, HCL, Microfilm
Cincinnati Journal CHS, HCL
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Appendix

Individuals Who Figure Prominently in This Study

Gamaliel Bailey: Abolitionist and ex-colonizationist. Editor of the *Philanthropist* during the 1841 riots.

Catharine Beecher: Women's education improver and booster. A member of the Semi-Colon Club. She founded the Ladies Liberia Association of Cincinnati, a local women's colonization society.

Lyman Beecher: Presbyterian minister and President of Lane Seminary. An improver and booster of young men's education. Anti-Catholic and anti-Unitarian essayist. A member of the Semi-Colon Club. A member of the local colonization society.

James G. Birney: Editor of the *Philanthropist*, an abolitionist newspaper; an ex-slaveowner and an ex-colonizationist.

James C. Brown: African American leader of local group that emigrated to a settlement in Canada in 1829.

Isaac Burnet: Mayor of Cincinnati, 1819-1831. Brother of Jacob Burnet.

Jacob Burnet: Lawyer and State Supreme Court Judge. Vice-President of the American Colonization Society. Vice-President of the local colonization society. Chaired many local committees.

Cornelius Burnett: A baker and confectioner, and an abolitionist. He and his sons were reputed to aid fugitive slaves escaping from the South through Cincinnati, even hiding them in Burnett's own home.

Samuel P. Chase: Lawyer and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1860s). Member of Young Men's Colonization Society; became more pro-abolition after 1836. Defended fugitive slaves. Internal improvement booster.

Charles Cist: Writer of Cincinnati City Directories; an internal improvement and civic booster. Local federal census taker.

James Conover: Episcopalian minister and editor of the *Cincinnati Whig*. A colonizationist.

Thomas Corwin: U.S. House of Representatives (1830-1840); Governor of Ohio 1840-1842); national and local political career continues into the 1860s. Member of the "Black Brothers." A colonizationist.

Samuel Davies: Mayor of Cincinnati, 1833-1843, during both the 1836 and 1841 riots.

Christian and William Donaldson: Abolitionist brothers.

Benjamin Drake: Author, civic and internal improvement booster; member of Semi-Colon Club.

Daniel Drake: Physician, and internal, civic, medical, and educational booster and improver. A member of a number of internal improvement committees. Founder of Buckeye Club; member of the Semi-Colon Club. Pro-colonization.

Rev. Hosea Easton: New York minister and intellectual of Narragansett, Wampanoag, African, and European ancestry. Booster of black self-improvement.

Timothy Flint: Editor of *Western Monthly Review*; literary improver and civic and internal improvement booster. A member of the Semi-Colon Club. A colonizationist.

John P. Foote: Booster improver of children's education; civic and internal improvement booster. Member of the local colonization society.

Samuel Foote: Owner of the local Water Co. A civic booster and improver. Member of the Semi-Colon Club. A colonizationist.

Joseph Graham: Owner of a lumber mill; created anti-abolitionist handbills during 1836 violence. Part of the anti-press mob during the 1836 violence. Internal improvement booster.

William Greene: Lawyer, Alderman; member of City Council. Acting Mayor of the city during the 1829 riots. Booster of civic and internal improvements. Member of the Semi-Colon Club. Officer and member of local colonization society.

James Hall: Lawyer and Judge. Editor of *Western Monthly Magazine*; literary and civic improver and booster. Member of the Semi-Colon Club. Pro-colonization.

Charles Hammond: Lawyer and editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*. Booster of internal and local improvements and improver of journalism.

John Mercer Langston: He was a teenager at the time of the 1841 riots and left a first-hand account. He eventually became the first black lawyer in Ohio (1854). Organized

the Law School at Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1868; the white Trustees of the school dismissed his candidacy for president because he was black. He served as council-general in Haiti (1875-1883); he won a seat to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1889, but was contested and only served the final six months of the term.

Nicholas Longworth: Banker and wealthy merchant; major landowner in Cincinnati. Horticultural improver and booster of local viticulture. A member of the local colonization society.

Robert T. Lytle: Democrat, Ohio House of Representatives, 1829-1829; U.S. House of Representatives, 1833-35; Surveyor General of Public Lands; Major-General in Ohio Militia. Internal improvement booster. Member of the local colonization society; ardent anti-abolitionist.

E.D. Mansfield: Lawyer and editor of the *Cincinnati Chronicle*; civic and internal improvement booster. Member of the Semi-Colon and Buckeye Clubs. Founder of the local Young Men's Colonization Society.

Morgan Neville: Clerk for Hamilton, County; Democratic Party activist. City Alderman during the 1829 riots. An ardent anti-abolitionist.

James Handasyd Perkins: Unitarian minister and social improver/reformer; a member of the Semi-Colon Club.

Jacob W. Piatt: Lawyer and founder of Cincinnati's first paid fire department. Civic booster.

Charles Ramsay: Editor of the *Cincinnati Republican* and a civic booster. A colonizationist.

Bellamy Storer: Lawyer and U.S. Representative (1835-1837). Internal improvement and civic booster. Member of the Cincinnati Colonization Society.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-18960: Daughter of Lyman Beecher, sister of Catherine Beecher. Writer of short stories and novels. Member of the Semi-Colon Club. Supporter of colonization.

Theodore Weld: Abolition activist and Lane Seminary student leader; educational improver and booster; married to the feminist and abolitionist Angelina Grimké.

Timothy Walker: Lawyer, judge, and education improver and booster. City council member. Member of the Semi-Colon Club. A colonizationist.