

Dear MRSEAH Participants,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my work, “The Tyrant Intemperance.” This is the slimmed-down second chapter from my Master’s thesis, which I’m planning to turn into my dissertation project. Broadly, the project will look at the history of alcohol, temperance, and prohibition through the lenses of race and racism. It starts by investigating the uses of alcohol under slavery and goes until the passage of state prohibition laws in the Progressive era. My goal is to show how ideas about alcohol and race have shaped one another, as well as how Black reformers have used temperance to respond to those ideas and their consequences. Because I’m but a second year PhD student, however, I’m still a whole ‘comprehensive exams’ away from being able to sit down, reflect, and flesh that out a bit more!

My goal for the chapter I’ve submitted here is to transform it into my first journal article. What you’ll read is my first draft of that article, trimmed down from what was originally a 42-page thesis chapter on the antebellum Black temperance movement. Very generally, this article takes cues from newer histories of abolition to argue that Black temperance agitation ought to be seen as an assertive counterpart to abolitionist campaigns.

I’ve struggled a lot with carrying out the transformation from chapter to article. First and foremost, I’ve had a tough time trying to pull what I want to say out of this. It feels like there are a thousand directions I could take with this (and even more emerge as I read for my exams), which I think comes through in the draft. So, my first goal for this MRSEAH is to hear your thoughts on what is interesting, what stands out, and hopefully have a discussion that helps me clarify what I should focus on a bit more. Are there things I should leave out? Explore more (with word limits in mind)? What needs clarity? Does the framing work? Etc. A second and related hope I have for this event is to receive some advice on how to actually write and organize a journal article. I’d love any tips and feedback you all have for how best to navigate this process, which I’m finding simultaneously particular and overwhelming.

Again, thank you so much for your time, and I’m really excited to gather over a delicious meal and hear your thoughts!

All the best,
Mackenzie Tor

**“The Tyrant Intemperance”:
Temperance, Abolition, and Antebellum Black Reform Thought**
Mackenzie Tor

Frederick Douglass understood what it was to find release in the bottom of a bottle. At a temperance gathering in Paisley, Scotland in 1846, he confessed, “I knew once what it was to drink with all the ardour of an old soker.” Before making his brave escape from bondage in 1838, he frequently indulged in the apple brandy that his enslaver gave him, occasionally finishing the drinks that his friends could not. Like it did for many others, intoxication gave Douglass a veneer of invincibility. His audience roared with laughter when he related, “I used to think I was a president.” But his tentative freedom as a fugitive had put these scenes into perspective.

Despite finding humor in it, Douglass knew his past was redolent with malicious forces. Since his escape, he had considered how alcohol abetted the stability of American slavery. To that same crowd, he explained, “In order to make a man a slave, it is necessary to silence or drown his mind... In no other way can this be so well accomplished as by using ardent spirits!” Drinking distracted from sorrow and reprieved pain, and slaveholders used its numbing effects against the enslaved. With the benefit of hindsight, Douglass argued that slaves’ drinking habits led whites to promote racist, paternalistic ideas that justified the oppression of Black people. He publicly swore off alcohol because of this perceived connection between intemperance and slavery: “As I desire, therefore, [slaves’] freedom from physical chains, so I desire their emancipation from intemperance, because I believe it would be the means—a great and glorious means—towards helping to break their physical chains and letting them go free.” As he stood before his Scottish listeners, he declared, “I am a temperance man because I am an anti-slavery

man; and I am an anti-slavery man because I love my fellow men.”¹ Though Douglass is hardly remembered for his work in the temperance movement, he and many other Black reformers crusaded zealously for the cause throughout the antebellum era. For them, temperance was a sister to abolition. Their efforts in the latter, however, have largely overshadowed their efforts in the former.

In large part, this owes to how historians have viewed Black moral reforms broadly—namely, that they merely imitated white-led movements. In this view (and contrary to Douglass’ words on the subject), historians contend that Black reformers had little original interest in temperance. Instead, they argue that African Americans’ participation in the temperance movement stemmed from their internalization of whites’ idea that they were ‘degraded’. According to these scholars, Black activists mimicked white goals and values because they lacked racial consciousness. For example, Donald Yacovone, who has written the most thorough historical treatment of antebellum Black temperance and its intellectual shifts, argues that in the 1830s Black temperance supporters adhered to white leadership. By the 1840s, he argues, reform became more race conscious, emphasizing “the theme of community survival as well as the connection between black temperance and abolitionism.” For Yacovone, Black agitators only eventually discerned the political value of temperance after a period of patronizing the white movement. Because of the perceived timidity of anti-alcohol agitation, then, it has received scant historical attention compared to bolder efforts in anti-slavery.²

¹ Frederick Douglass, “Temperance and Anti-Slavery: An Address Delivered in Paisley, Scotland on March 30, 1846,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed. John Blassingame (5 vols., New Haven, 1979-1992), 1:205-9.

² Donald Yacovone, “The Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement, 1827-1854: An Interpretation,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 8 (Autumn 1988), 288. For other examples of critical historiography, see Howard H. Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861* (New York, 1969); Frederick Cooper, “Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50,” *American Quarterly* 24 (Dec. 1972), 604–25.

Black temperance reformers push us to challenge these sets of assumptions. Yacovone is correct to argue that the Black temperance movement was dynamic, but he and others failed to fully acknowledge reformers' awareness of racial prejudice. Black reformers considered sobriety a pathway to immediate emancipation: the prompt and complete abolition of slavery and the guarantee of full citizenship rights to all Black Americans. Invoking Douglass' rationale, Black reformers viewed alcohol consumption as a key to upholding slavery. For Black Americans, they argued, drinking engendered dependence and diminished progress toward abolition by justifying paternalistic proslavery arguments. As a demonstration of self-control, temperance was therefore inextricable from abolition. In terms of citizenship, temperance was crucial to fulfilling the equal protection of legal rights and the promise of civil rights. Black activists understood that the few legal rights and privileges they had been granted—such as suffrage and jury service in some states—were both piecemeal and fragile. Furthermore, in clamoring for civil rights, they insisted on equal access to education, public transport, and other facets of public life. They believed that abstention from drink would combat the overwhelming discrimination African Americans faced by “clear[ing] away the mists of prejudice, which so unjustly attempts to withhold from us our rights, as American citizens.”³

Because temperance and abolition were inextricable to Black temperance reformers, they were optimistic about the hopes for an interracial temperance movement. There were two reasons

³ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention, for the Improvement of the People of Color in These United States, Held By Adjournments in the City of Philadelphia, from the 3rd to the 13th of June Inclusive, 1833* (New York, 1833), accessed through Colored Conventions Project Digital Records (hereafter CCPDR), 17. Scholarly works abound on Black political and civil rights. For examples, see Erica L. Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class* (Athens, GA, 2012); Kabria Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Black Women and Educational Activism in Antebellum America* (New York, 2019); Van Gosse, *The First Reconstruction: Black Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2021); Sarah L. H. Gronningsater, “Expressly Recognized by Our Election Laws’: Certificates of Freedom and the Multiple Fates of Black Citizenship in the Early Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 75 (July 2018), 465–506; Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (New York, 2013).

for this. First, white-authored temperance propaganda published by the American Temperance Society (ATS) praised the universality of the cause. Anybody anywhere could choose to swear off the ‘demon rum’. The second reason emerges in light of new histories of abolition and their conclusion that anti-slavery activism was an interracial struggle dating back to the eighteenth century. Considering the intersection of temperance and abolition, Black reformers expected that whites would be as supportive of their attempts to promote sobriety as they were of their attempts to eradicate slavery.⁴

Such hopefulness was short-lived. White reformers siloed temperance and abolition, unlike how Black activists viewed the causes. In fact, the professed universality of temperance worked against racial integration. As the movement gained steam in the North, it lagged in the South, owing partially to the connection between anti-alcohol and anti-slavery campaigns. White leaders separated the movements out, choosing to view temperance as racially exclusive to deradicalize the issue and gain more white supporters. They excluded Black members from their societies, and some whites attacked Black temperance demonstrations. This animosity gradually drove Black reformers of the 1840s and 50s to preach self-reliance in their temperate pursuits. Leaders encouraged keeping all-Black organizations, rather than integrated ones. By 1850, Black temperance efforts became independent of white support. So, rather than a gradual emergence of race consciousness, the main shift in the Black temperance movement should be understood as a general turn from integration to separatism as the dominating strand of thought. Decoupling

⁴ For examples, see Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York, 1996).

moral reform from racism does a disservice to the persistent, original political agitation of Black activists seeking equality through temperance.

The temperance movement was therefore a fundamental element of Black intellectual thought in the nineteenth century. Far from the current historiographic consensus, the seed of temperance agitation was combatting anti-Blackness in all its social, political, and institutional forms. Black reformers maintained that their sobriety would effectively equalize the racial hierarchy. Their temperance work was thus more than a meek attempt to curry favor with white Americans. It was a method of resisting the discriminatory and oppressive racial system under which Black Americans lived, and it grew gradually more militant over time. This article will explain the course of the movement in four sections: an overview of its makeup; the ideology of its leaders in the 1830s; segregation in temperance movement; and the separatism of the 1840s and 1850s. Placing the Black temperance movement within its proper context of intensifying battles over slavery and racism in antebellum America will reveal that, far from being derivative, Black reformers had unique reasons to urge quitting the bottle.

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Both Black and white temperance proponents mobilized in favor of the cause beginning in the 1820s. However, while white concerns about temperance were rooted in the religious, social, and economic changes of the antebellum period, Black concerns about temperance were intimately linked to the proliferation of slavery and racism throughout America. Tellingly, Black temperance advocates couched their promotion of sobriety in the language of improvement, just as white ministers in organizations such as the ATS did.⁵ This language was crucial to exposing

⁵ On the origins and ideology of the temperance movement, see Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Urbana, IL, 1984); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York 1815-1837* (New York, 1978);

Black reformers' intentions to overcome entrenched discrimination and achieve full citizenship rights. Like white reformers, they had a desire to improve their communities locally and nationally, but the cause was more radical for Black Americans. Through the press, national conventions, and temperance societies, Black men, women, and children endorsed abstinence from alcohol as a basic way of dismantling prejudice.

This temperance fervor was a reaction to the pervasiveness of racism in both the North and South. As middle-class values took hold in the early nineteenth century, white Americans questioned the place of Black people in their polity. Many white northerners, for example, promoted colonization, whereby white 'philanthropists' would bankroll the transportation of free Black men and women to the American colony of Liberia in Africa. White colonizationists believed that, physically and morally, Black people constituted "a corrupt and degraded class" and would therefore be incapable of assimilating into white American life. Addressing this perception with reference to the South, Frederick Douglass explained, "One of the great arguments of the enemies of the negroes has been his fondness for intoxicating drink, although he learned his fondness from his master, he is denounced as drunken—as worthless—as degraded." Black temperance thus emerged from racist white ideas that intemperance "degraded the blacks."⁶

Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, CT, 1979); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (1978; 2nd ed., New York, 1997).

⁶ Charles Carroll Harper, "Address of C.C. Harper," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 2 (Aug. 1826), 188; Douglass, "Intemperance Viewed in Connection with Slavery," in Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:167-68. See also Henry Clay, *Speech of the Hon. Henry Clay, before the American Colonization Society, in the Hall of the House of Representatives, January 20, 1827* (Washington, 1827); Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (New York, 1979); Paul J. Polgar, *Standard-Bearers of Equality: America's First Abolition Movement* (Chapel Hill, 2019), chap. 5. These ideas occasionally justified violent racial outbursts. For examples, see John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830* (Baltimore, 2003), 368-78; 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.

Free Black Americans refused to stand silent in the face of such accusations, and one avenue for combatting these racist ideas about drunkenness and degradation was to organize in favor of temperance. Black organizational interest in the cause dated to the eighteenth century, when the Free African Society—a Black mutual aid society in Philadelphia—denied membership to those who drank. However, the first Black-led society dedicated strictly to the promotion of temperance appeared in 1829 in New Haven, Connecticut, followed shortly by the establishment of organizations elsewhere in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts. These initial groups were primarily local societies in northern cities with sizeable free Black communities. They were often affiliated with religious establishments, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Leading abolitionist and Presbyterian minister J.W.C. Pennington, for example, established a temperance society in Brooklyn, New York in 1830. By 1840, like-minded organizations ranged the North, as temperance became ever more integral to “gain[ing] more credit for themselves than all [their white] abolition friends” could do to achieve their freedom.⁷

These associations cropped up in the wake of the first Black newspaper *Freedom’s Journal*, which was essential to spreading temperance values. It was founded and edited by Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm in New York beginning in 1827. Their goals were manifold but underlying them all was a desire to promote “the dissemination of useful knowledge among our brethren, and to their moral and religious improvement.” As such, the newspaper published articles on education and literacy, religion, and temperance. Moral reform, they argued, would encourage Black people to ameliorate the condition in which slavery and segregation had forcibly left them. They therefore decried the “unseemly spectacle” of “coloured

⁷ “An Address to Colored Young Men,” *Northern Star and Freeman’s Advocate* (Albany, NY), Feb. 17, 1842. Yacovone, “Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement,” 282–83. For more on the Free African Society, see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), chap. 4.

men, drinking and carousing in grogshops.” It would also disprove the harsh theories underlying white racism, namely the assumption that Black people were morally inferior to whites. In fact, the editors alleged that “in point of temperance [Black drinkers] have the advantage of the white population.” Referring to efforts in temperance, Sabbath-keeping, and education, one author wrote, “We think it highly important that every means should be made use of that will have any tendency to improve the condition of our people. This is the land of our nativity, and we have claims on its inhabitants, which ought not to be gainsayed or neglected.” In order to revert the beliefs belying racism, Cornish and Russwurm considered it necessary to swear off ‘demon rum’.⁸

The national Black convention movement further united temperance supporters across the United States. In direct response to an outbreak of mob violence in Cincinnati in 1829, free Black leaders called a convention in 1830 to discuss tactics for combatting white racism. Among the issues that the conventions addressed were the perceived moral failures of people of color, alleged to have stunted progress toward citizenship. Abstaining from alcohol was crucial to moving forward. At the first annual convention in Philadelphia in 1831, the presiding committee announced, “*Education, Temperance, and Economy*, are best calculated to promote the elevation of mankind to a proper rank and standing among men... We would therefore respectfully request an early attention to those virtues among our brethren, who have a desire to be useful.” In this sense, temperance was a direct response to the racial violence that plagued the nation. In fact, it

⁸ Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, “To Our Patrons,” *Freedom’s Journal* (New York), Mar. 16, 1827; “Grog-Shops,” *Freedom’s Journal*, July 20, 1827; “Continued from No. 3,” *Freedom’s Journal*, Apr. 18, 1827. On *Freedom’s Journal*, see Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, 201–4; Richard Newman, “Protest in Black and White: The Formation and Transformation of an African American Political Community during the Early Republic,” in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, ed. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill, 2004), 180-204; Jacqueline Bacon, “The History of Freedom’s Journal: A Study in Empowerment and Community,” *Journal of African American History* 88 (Winter 2003), 1–20.

became so important to convention members that the following year they voted in favor of recommending the continued formation of temperance societies among Black Americans. These would adhere to the principle of total abstinence from spirits.⁹

In 1833, the national convention boosted the organizational capacity of the Black temperance movement through its establishment of an affiliated temperance society. That year, convention leaders called for the formation of a committee on temperance consisting of J.W.C. Pennington, Philadelphian Abraham Williams, and William Rich, who would later assist in operating the Underground Railroad in New York. In their report, the committee praised the successes of the temperance organizations that had already been formed but fretted that too many African Americans dismissed the cause. To “act with more efficiency, and assume an attitude to guide public opinion,” the committee recommended the formation of the Colored American Conventional Temperance Society. This was a national temperance group which corresponded with local affiliates, quickly establishing twenty-three branches in eighteen cities.¹⁰

Temperance organizing at the national level trickled down to the regional and state levels, where Black leaders convened to discuss reaching more followers. In 1836, for example, Black New Englanders met in Providence, Rhode Island to deliberate the creation of a regional temperance society. Mirroring the conventional societies, local auxiliaries would report to the umbrella group, the New England Temperance Society of Colored Persons. According to its president John W. Lewis of Providence, the society was “a moral lighthouse, built up on the coast of intemperance, and illuminated by the oil of total abstinence” guiding those in need to

⁹ *Minutes and Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the People of Colour, Held By Adjournments in the City of Philadelphia, from the Sixth to the Eleventh of June, Inclusive, 1831* (Philadelphia, 1831), CCPDR, 5. *Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention, for the Improvement of the People of Color in These United States, Held By Adjournments in the City of Philadelphia, from the 4th to the 13th of June Inclusive, 1832* (Philadelphia, 1832), CCPDR, 28. On violence in Cincinnati, see Taylor, “Reconsidering the ‘Forced’ Exodus of 1829.”

¹⁰ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, CCPDR, 17. Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, 534, 300.

“shelter in the harbor of sobriety.” The dissemination of organizations was crucial. The more people and places that the movement reached, the chances that “slavery and prejudice shall be utterly abolished” improved.¹¹

Indeed, the movement did bring in a broad cast of characters. Though male reverends, businessmen, and antislavery agents tended to lead Black organizations, workers, women, and children provided robust support. This array of crusaders argued that ‘demon rum’ negatively affected their lives, that they were much happier without its incursions. Black sailors, for example, stayed in temperance boardinghouses in port cities such as Boston and New York. Often, anti-alcohol arguments focused on the family. This was what motivated 11-year-old Frisby Cooper, who presided over a youth temperance association. In an address, Cooper lamented the ways in which intoxication disrupted home life, as poor parents squandered their earnings at dram shops. He pushed the children of his organization to preach teetotalism to their families and friends, so that more money would be invested in their schooling.¹²

Drunkenness’ effect on family life similarly attracted many women to the temperance movement. Antebellum middle-class gender ideals placed women at the helm of the home, while men fulfilled their obligations in the public realm. Both Black and white male middle-class leaders expected women to be chaste and virtuous, inculcating children and husbands with moral behaviors such as temperance. Such limiting ideals doubly burdened Black women, who grappled with racism, as well; however, for many Black women they symbolized an avenue to freedom much in the way that temperance did. In appealing to gender norms, “they attempted to

¹¹ John W. Lewis, “Colored Temperance Convention,” *Liberator* (Boston), Oct. 29, 1836.

¹² “Boarding House for Colored Seamen,” *Liberator*, June 24, 1842; “Worthy of Patronage,” *Liberator*, Oct. 2, 1863; Yacovone, “Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement,” 293; Frisby Cooper, *Colored American* (New York), Sept. 25, 1841, accessed through University of Detroit Mercy Black Abolitionist Archive (hereafter UDMBAA).

erase memories of enslavement and to prove false the assumptions of many whites that blacks were incapable of creating stable family and community structures.”¹³

Because of this attachment to home and family, women and children were often portrayed as innocent, unwilling victims of inebriation while husbands and fathers stumbled home in a drunken stupor. For example, a contributor to the *Colored American* newspaper shared a story of a friend who “drank of the poisoned waters” and became “a demon in human shape.” With this, “He broke the heart of his wife—beggered his little innocent children.” Intemperance in the home was something of a muse for esteemed Black poet and abolitionist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, later influential for her work with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. In her poem “The Drunkard’s Child,” an inebriated father stumbles home to witness his child’s death. The young boy dies in poverty “On a coarse and wretched pallet” in no small part, she implied, because the father has spent his nights at “the haunts of vice.” For Black women, then, defending the home from the ‘liquid poison’ strengthened the bonds of family and community on the path toward emancipation.¹⁴

Ideology, however, never fully circumscribed women to a separate sphere; in reality, they often participated in the movement publicly. This was deemed acceptable because both temperance and women’s authority were considered integral to a moral home. For example, one Black newspaper reported that “a committee of ladies” had been “appointed” to use “their influence” to persuade stubborn drunkards to recant. Though they were often excluded from leadership positions, women were among the most dedicated of the movement’s soldiers. Some societies, such as the New England Colored Temperance Society, even banned women from

¹³ Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville, 1992), 4.

¹⁴ Robert Sears, “A True Picture,” *Colored American*, May 27, 1837, UDMBAA; Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (Boston, 1855), 13-14.

joining their ranks, but they continued to crusade for temperance anyway. They frequently sat in on meetings and conventions, supporting the cause in ways that did not often make official minutes. Much of their support was also material. In 1852, for example, the Glasgow United Total Abstiners in Scotland sold handicrafts made by Black women from New York at their temperance bazaar.¹⁵

Nevertheless, there were some opportunities for women to enjoy leadership positions. Many male-led Black temperance societies organized female corollaries. Jane Putnam, who was active in Boston's Black reform circles, was elected president of a female auxiliary temperance society formed there in 1833, for instance. It proved to be "a noble example"—the all-female group garnered over 100 members. African American women similarly gathered in a New York church in 1837 to create their own temperance organization, where 68 women promised to abstain from alcohol. In fact, women seemed to be some of the most zealous members of temperance societies, in some cases making up the majority of integrated societies' membership rolls despite the lack of leadership opportunities.¹⁶

The diverse makeup of its membership showcases the success of the Black temperance movement. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, publications proudly described associations' fruitful outreach efforts. Lewis, for example, was one of several spokesmen who toured the

¹⁵ "Temperance Among the Fugitives," *Voice of the Fugitive* (Sandwich, ON), Apr. 23, 1851, UDMBAA. "Temperance," *Liberator*, Nov. 9, 1838; Shawn C. Comminey, "National Black Conventions and the Quest for African American Freedom and Progress, 1847-67," *International Social Science Review* 91 (2015), 8-9; Bernard Aspinwall, "Democracy and Drink," in *Britain and Transnational Progressivism*, ed. David W. Gutzke (New York, 2008), 103. On Black women's subverting ideological expectations generally, see Jane E. Dabel, *A Respectable Woman: The Public Roles of African American Women in 19th-Century New York* (New York, 2008), chap. 2.; Psyche Williams-Forson, "Where Did They Eat? Where Did They Stay? Interpreting Material Culture of Black Women's Domesticity in the Context of the Colored Conventions," in *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson (Chapel Hill, 2021), 86-104.

¹⁶ "Temperance Meeting," *Liberator*, Apr. 20, 1833. Yacovone, "Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement," 283; Dabel, *A Respectable Woman*, 145; Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 83.

country in the hopes of helping establish auxiliary societies. Origen Bachelier, an agent of the Black-led New York City Temperance Society, boasted of the numbers of new pledges taken at affiliated meetings, ranging from nine to 119 at each. He concluded, “It will be time for the whites to talk of their superiority when they have better Temperance meetings than these.” Frederick Douglass once announced that Philadelphia—home to roughly 1,500 African Americans—hosted 80 Black temperance societies. Reformer William Wells Brown similarly bragged of his own successes with the movement in Buffalo, where an estimated 500 of the city’s 700 people of color joined his society within its first three years. It is difficult to gauge the accuracy of these numbers; however, they do intimate that the expansive and structured nature of the Black temperance movement worked to bring in a variety of supporters. These professed triumphs reveal the central importance which Black Americans ascribed to temperance.¹⁷

Through their vast temperance organizing, Black male and female leaders strove above all to solidify a community. White middle-class temperance reformers pilloried the poor drunkard, building their platform on the notion of control. But, among Black reformers, community organizations such as temperance societies were integral to developing a common response to racism and slavery. Though scenes of intemperance saddened Black reformers, they urged a collective uplift that would entail positive benefits for all free and enslaved Black Americans; outreach through local temperance societies was crucial to eradicating ‘improper’ behavior. Thus, the goals of their movement were to rebuke white racism, and to assist in the emancipation of the enslaved and achieve citizenship. So, although white and Black temperance

¹⁷ Origen Bachelier, “Colored Temperance Societies,” *Liberator*, Dec. 3, 1831. “Temperance Agency,” *Liberator*, Dec. 29, 1837; Douglass, “Intemperance and Slavery: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland, on October 20, 1845,” in Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:56; William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author & Reformer*. (Chicago, 1969), 72.

movements emerged in tandem, Black advocates had their own independent agenda. Sobriety as preached through their wide-reaching organizations would bring legal freedom and equality.

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As enthusiasts coalesced and the movement gathered steam in the beginning of the 1830s, Black temperance leaders preached messages that reflected their ambitions for a broad support base. In the allied abolitionist movement, most organized groups included both Black and white members. In the temperance movement, Black advocates initially sought to replicate that spirit of camaraderie. They did this by pushing the idea that “rum would degrade them in common with white people.” The ‘demon rum’ was a ubiquitous harm; no one could escape it. Contrary to what historians have argued, though, this did not mean that these Black reformers were unaware of the racial issues they faced. The linkages between intoxication and slavery were actually quite personal to the reformers. They maintained that temperance carried an urgent import for Black Americans, as abstention from alcohol became mired in the broader struggle against racism.¹⁸

The 1833 report proffered by the committee on temperance at the national convention comprised one early, extended articulation of this Black temperance philosophy. First, Pennington, Williams, and Rich praised efforts at nationwide sobriety. They were pleased that “In every section of our country, and among every class of persons, the principles of the American Temperance Society have progressed at a ratio, wholly beyond all anticipation.” Like white counterparts in the ATS, they adopted total abstinence from intoxicating beverages. However, the committee understood that this measure had an additional meaning for Black Americans:

¹⁸ Frederick Douglass, “Intemperance and Slavery: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland, on October 20, 1845,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed. John Blassingame, vol. 1, One (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1845), 57, <https://frederickdouglass.infoset.io/islandora/object/islandora%3A92#page/3/mode/1up>.

Not that intemperance abounds more among us, than among others, for in the face of the declaration to the contrary, made by the disparagers of an injured people, your committee are prepared to prove, that it does not exist among us even to so great an extent as among others; but notwithstanding, it, more than any thing under our control, tends to perpetuate that relentless prejudice, which arrays itself against our dearest interests; frowns us away from the avenues of useful knowledge and of wealth; and which with a cruel hand wrenches from us our political rights.

Although intemperance was no more frequent among Black drinkers than others, they explained, it had a weightier effect on the whole of their community if they were seen intoxicated. When drunkenness did occur, it gave shape to justifications for withholding Black rights. Abstention from alcohol thus protested that prejudice.¹⁹

The Black temperance movement was not only ordered toward rooting out prejudice in the North, though. The committee touted the connections between drinking and slavery, a device that became ever more popular in the following years. They wrote, “The RUM system, like that of slavery, is upheld by ignorance, avarice, and incorrect views of duty.” Similar faults underpinned both “systems.” By giving into drink, they argued that Black Americans would diminish their chances of attaining abolition. They therefore believed that adhering to temperance would not only help them secure their rights as free people but also “free our brethren from the chains of American oppression.” Regardless of status, abstention from “the waters of death” would have a positive, unique effect for Black Americans. It would ultimately combat anti-Blackness, allowing them to achieve their goal of immediate emancipation.²⁰

These causes became thoroughly intertwined throughout the antebellum era, securing a similar membership base. Influential Black reformer Charles Lenox Remond explained this to a Scottish audience in 1840, calling anti-slavery and temperance “synonymous.” Abolitionists “felt interested in the temperance cause for many reasons... but when they learned likewise that

¹⁹ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention, CCPDR*, 15–18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

intemperance had been one of the chief supports of slavery in that country, then they felt doubly strong in their indignation at the vendors of such an article.” Noting the paternalistic uses of alcohol under slavery, Remond contended that inebriation was akin to oppression. It fostered dependence and impaired judgement. Others echoed these sentiments. In his speech to the New England Colored Temperance Society in 1837, reformer Thomas Cole of Boston noted that via temperance free Black people “shall add speed to the car of abolition, and sustain those mighty advocates who are agitating the country in behalf of the downtrodden slave and the rights of humanity.” As such, Remond, Cole, and others maintained that freedom was not having the ability to imbibe so much as it meant the freedom to achieve, learn, and progress with a clear mind.²¹

One eloquent expression of this came in 1834, when William Whipper delivered a speech to the Colored Temperance Society of Philadelphia, an affiliate of the recently established national conventional temperance organization. As a successful businessman and the president of the local auxiliary, Whipper was a high-ranking member of Philadelphia’s substantial free Black community. He was a staunch supporter of temperance, influential in the national conventions’ adoption of temperance platforms. In his address, Whipper created an extended comparison between slavery and intemperance, arguing that the former was “but a concomitant” to the latter. Whipper, ever the awkward presence behind a podium, knew he might have caught his Black audience off guard with such a bold statement. Drunkenness and slavery were analogous to one another, he began to explain. Slavery revolved around the master-slave relationship. The master was “a tyrant—a murderer of his species—an earthly demon, pouring out his wrath on the

²¹ Charles Lenox Remond, “Paisley Temperance Society Soiree,” *Liberator*, Oct. 30, 1840; Thomas Cole, “An Address Delivered by Thomas Cole, of Boston, before the N. England Colored Temperance Convention, Held in Boston, Sept. 1837,” *Liberator*, Oct. 13, 1837.

innocent and unoffending, inflicting torments and stripes on the aged and infirm, separating husband and wife, parents and their offspring, like cattle and beasts of burden.” Viciousness at the hands of cruel masters deprived the enslaved of his or her humanity, so that “Though born and reared in the image of man, he walks to and fro with the taciturnity of a brute.” He claimed the extreme and cruel constraints of slavery stripped its victims of the ability to foster their intellects.²²

For Whipper, the same could be said of drunkenness—or worse. He contended that “the tyrant intemperance” was “a *demon* more ferocious in his character and the destructiveness of his sway.” This was because “the wickedness of the former [slavery] is confined to Africa and her descendants; while the latter [intemperance] abhorring all national distinctions, spreads its ‘wide wasting calamity’ over the great family of nations.” Because of its omnipresence, Whipper argued that alcohol sustained all other moral failures, including slavery. He was aware that these sentiments would be shocking to his activist listeners. However, he justified himself by explaining that alcohol underpinned the slave trade, since traders persuaded Africans to engage in it by giving them liquor. He asked, “Shall we, by the flood of our indignation, bear the names of the perpetrators of that trade into infamy, without accompanying with them the means by which their designs were executed?” Whipper believed that intoxication was a baseline vice, one from which other sins and moral failures emerged. One could not truly call themselves an opponent of slavery without first calling themselves an opponent of strong drink.²³

Though he argued that drunkenness was a ubiquitous error, he also reasoned that there were unique purposes for Black Americans to support the crusade. Foremost among these was

²² William Whipper, “Speech by William Whipper: Delivered before the Colored Temperance Society of Philadelphia,” in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley (5 vols., Chapel Hill, 1985-92) 3:120, 122.

²³ *Ibid.*, 122-23, 124.

that which Pennington, Williams, and Rich had cited one year earlier. He figured, “If the three hundred thousand free colored people possessed such a [temperate] character, the moral force and influence it would send forth would disperse slavery from our land. Yes, it would reverse the present order of things; it would reorganize public opinion, dissolve the calumnies of our enemies, and remove all the prejudices against our complexion.” For Whipper, temperance was a matter of discrediting racism and proving the ability of free Black people to rise above prejudice. In that way, it would prove the irrationalities that sustained the national racial hierarchy. So, while he argued that temperance was universally necessary, nowhere was it more urgently required than among free people of color.²⁴

Contemporaries criticized thinkers such as Whipper, Pennington, and Remond for their appeals to respectability, nonresistance, and espousal of middle-class values. However, values such as temperance did not belong only to white reformers. Black leaders had adhered to these ideas just as long to pursue their own needs: community-building, abolition, and citizenship. In this sense, Whipper and others do not stand out for their concessions to white Americans. They staked their own claims as to the benefits of temperance for Black Americans, seeking ultimately to contest white racism. What differentiated them was their approach to reform as a universal undertaking. They were among a cohort of Black reformers eager to work alongside white reformers, believing that betterment was for all, even if Black people stood to gain more from it.²⁵

Throughout the 1830s, these integrationists had been optimistic. However, that hopefulness quickly depleted as white temperance societies remained segregated and white supporters sparsely attended Black-organized temperance meetings. By 1839, Whipper himself

²⁴ Ibid., 125–26.

²⁵ For criticism, see Henry Highland Garnet, *Impartial Citizen*, Aug. 8, 1849, UDMBAA.

had a change of heart, noting both the success of Black moral reforms and the lack of recognition that had followed it. Looking to the triumphs of the Black-led Pittsburgh Temperance Society, one newspaper editor argued that any white person who felt that free people of color could not be “elevated” were spreading “Base slander.” But for all their achievements, Black Americans remained excluded and enslaved. Where there was once hope for interracial temperance efforts, the unrelenting stubbornness of prejudice stifled it.²⁶

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This collective realization emerged amidst a backdrop of intensifying conflicts over slavery and race in the 1840s and 1850s. Questions about slavery’s expansion plastered newspapers following the Mexican-American War and filibustering crusades into Latin America. The 1850s—which began with the passage of a severer Fugitive Slave Act that emboldened abolitionists—witnessed violence over slavery in Kansas, Harper’s Ferry, and even the hallowed halls of Congress. And, of course, there were the abolitionists themselves, many of whom suffered at the hands of angry white mobs. On an antislavery lecture tour in 1843, Frederick Douglass sustained a lifelong hand injury after proslavery protesters clubbed him in Pendleton, Indiana. On that same trip, Charles Lenox Remond fretted that “in Indianapolis... two hundred men have been drilling for the past week on horseback with the avowed determination to burn, kill & destroy if the attempt shall be made to hold the [antislavery] meeting there.” The racism and violence that emerged reflected white prejudices that bled into the temperance movement.²⁷

Despite integrationist reformers’ best attempts, white support for Black moral reform organizations was scant even though they welcomed white attendees. Editor of the *New-York*

²⁶ “Pittsburgh Temperance Society,” *Colored American*, May 20, 1837, UDMBAA. Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, 306.

²⁷ Remond, “Charles Lenox Remond to Isaac and Amy Post: 27 September 1843,” in Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:417.

Tribune Horace Greeley, for example, attended the Black-led Annual Convention of the Delavan States Temperance Union in 1846. He also published its proceedings on his paper's front page the same year. The write-up included letters from white abolitionists who voiced their support for the Black reformers utilizing temperance to challenge the "extreme poverty," "ignorance," and "unreasoning prejudice against their color" that white racism fostered. But such support was rare. Despite Black outreach, many temperance groups remained racially segregated. After attending a large temperance convention in Connecticut in 1840, the editor of the *Colored American* wondered why the society was "still composed entirely of colored persons, no other class however, being prevented from joining." Most likely, white temperance advocates continued patronizing their own racially exclusive societies.²⁸

Though white temperance leaders praised the ease of joining the movement, they closed their associations—even those which claimed to be the most welcoming—to Black members. Among these were the Washingtonian societies, a branch of the temperance movement founded in the early 1840s by a group of converted drinkers. What differentiated the Washingtonian reformers from other temperance groups were their 'experience meetings', open gatherings where struggling and reformed drinkers presented their personal battles with alcohol. They encouraged anyone interested to attend, hoping that the assemblies' judgement-free nature would inspire others to pledge themselves to temperance. This approach made the Washingtonian societies particularly popular among the poor and the working class, and in some cases these efforts were directly targeted at them. In Providence, Rhode Island, for example, volunteers from their Washingtonian society scavenged the streets searching for potential converts to take under their wings. Despite such eagerness for new members, though, Black Americans were excluded

²⁸ "Annual Convention of the Delavan State Temperance Union," *New-York Tribune*, July 11, 1846; "Connecticut Temperance Meeting," *Colored American*, Sept. 19, 1840, UDMBAA.

from Washingtonian gatherings. An 1841 article published in the *Colored American* denounced Washingtonians for their sole focus on “the white drunkard.” The writer asked, “Why is it, that in hunting the foreign inebriate, and the Five Points drunkard, and the inebriate of every other class, that you have not thought of the colored drunkard?” So long as the group remained exclusionary, the author pointed out, America would never be completely reformed.²⁹

The Sons of Temperance, a national fraternal organization, similarly and seemingly more controversially banned the admittance of Black men into their lodges. This was something which minister Samuel Ringgold Ward experienced firsthand and admonished in his newspaper *Impartial Citizen*: “Negro-hating temperance like negro-pew religion, is rather a curse than a blessing to the colored man, and how much ‘love, purity and fidelity,’ either imparts to or infuses into the whites, we think is quite a question.” He rightfully deplored such “‘deck passage’ temperance.” In another instance, when a Black man named William H. Reynolds attempted to join a division of the Sons in Pennsylvania, the executive board refused to dignify his request with a vote. They merely reiterated a decree from the state’s ‘Grand Division’ that “*no colored person should be admitted as a member.*” White reformer Henry C. Wright, who reported these incidents to the *Liberator*, mocked the rule: “For many cogent reasons, every well-wisher to the cause of Temperance, and every friend of the enslaved millions of this misnamed Republic—every friend of Humanity and Christianity, should shun all connection with a social combination that thus rejects all fellowship with their fellow-beings because God made them black.” He

²⁹ “Washingtonians,” *Colored American*, Dec. 4, 1841, UDMBAA. John S. Gilkeson, *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 34. For Washingtonians, see Tyrrell, *Sobering Up*, chap. 7; Ruth M. Alexander, “‘We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters’: Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850,” *Journal of American History* 75 (Dec. 1988), 763–85.

concluded, “By sustaining the prejudice against color it is, like the Church and the Republic, the handmaid of slavery.”³⁰

This outright racism transpired during a crucial moment for the white temperance movement. By 1842, it had splintered because of the perceived radicalism of the Washingtonians, who empowered the working class and disavowed religion. At the same time the movement fractured, however, it began making new inroads into the South. In fact, the working-class organizations attracted the most southern support, especially the Sons. As a movement, white reformers celebrated these gains. But Southern temperance still lagged for a few reasons, among them the interconnectedness of temperance and abolition. To convey themselves as moderate and maintain Southern support, white leaders distanced themselves from anti-slavery and doubled down on segregation within the movement.³¹

In extreme cases, racist violence toward Black temperance activists occurred from outside the temperance community, too. On August 1st, 1842, the Black-led Moyamensing Temperance Society of Philadelphia marched in a temperance parade in honor of West Indian Emancipation Day, the anniversary of when the British freed slaves in the Caribbean. Though intended to be a day of celebration, the parade took a gruesome turn when white onlookers

³⁰ Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Impartial Citizen*, Jan. 2, 1850, UDMBAA; Henry C. Wright, “Sons of Temperance the Auxiliaries of Slaveholders,” *Liberator*, Dec. 17, 1847.

³¹ Tyrrell, “Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation,” *Journal of Southern History* 48 (Nov. 1982), 485–510. See also W. J. Rorabaugh, “The Sons of Temperance in Antebellum Jasper County,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (Fall 1980), 263–79. The 1846 World Temperance Convention in London exemplified forthright segregation, where Frederick Douglass was the sole non-white attendee. Though many in attendance were also abolitionists, the convention attracted some proslavery supporters. To avoid controversy, the meeting’s chairman Joseph Sturge issued a clear directive: there were to be no mentions of the concurrent controversy over American slavery. Douglass addressed the crowd and spoke on racism, slavery, and temperance, anyway. This led to a heated public exchange with Reverend Samuel Hanson Cox, who accused Douglass of villifying the temperance movement and jeopardizing support. See “The Proceedings of the World Temperance Convention” (London, 1846), x; Douglass, “The American Temperance Movement, Slavery, and Prejudice: An Address Delivered in London, England on 7 August 1846,” in Blassingame, *Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:339–41; *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago, 1999), 41, 44–45.

believed that the marchers' banners contained rebellious messages, though the banner actually featured an emancipated slave and a rising sun with the word 'liberty'. Nevertheless, when the crowd claimed to see what they saw, they reacted brutally. Black demonstrators scattered, and a white mob chased them down alleys and into houses. Newspaper reports indicated that several Black Philadelphians were badly injured. White scavengers set fire to the Black neighborhood, including its Temperance Hall. Once the fires came under control, the city declared the Temperance Hall "a nuisance" because mob members had set it on fire twice during the riots. White neighbors worried that the violent mob would continue to wreak havoc on the community if it were left standing. Following this appeal, the city's commissioners tore the building down, which prominent Black Philadelphian Robert Purvis deemed "a serious evil."³²

The uproar's instigators were chiefly composed of Philadelphia's working-class Irish population, who often found themselves excluded alongside free Black Americans, relegated to similar jobs and neighborhoods. Like they saw Black Americans, most whites assumed that Irish Catholics were degraded, drunken, and disorderly in no small part because of the importance of whiskey in their culture and in their professions. As free Black and Irish Americans vied against one another for economic and social security, and as temperance came to be seen as an elite value, the Black temperance parade most likely unsettled the Irish. The 1842 riot was therefore an act that was both anti-Black and anti-temperance, a reminder to local Black communities that their position at the bottom of the social hierarchy was to remain a touchstone for all whites. This was a message that made Purvis especially distraught. Writing as part of a committee, he asserted, "the chief instigators of the mob were found among the enemies of the Temperance cause, and that their principal object was to impede the progress of that cause; at least so far as it

³² "To the Public," *Liberator*, Aug. 26, 1842; "Riot in Philadelphia," *Age and Lancaster (PA) and Chester County Weekly Gazette*, Aug. 6, 1842.

relates to the colored population of Moyamensing and its vicinity.” From within and without America’s temperance movement, whites objected to the progress of Black temperance and, by extension, racial equality.³³

Thus, whether through bloody force, cultural attitudes, or rigid stipulations, white temperance reformers often shunned Black participants. In the most severe cases, such as the 1842 riots in Philadelphia, the latter were forcefully discouraged from celebrating their twin causes of antislavery and sobriety. Even though white reformers proposed that temperance was a commitment fit for any human, Black Americans found themselves barred from the white movement time and again. As they saw it, white onlookers desired to hold them back from their progress, which was in and of itself a critique of white racism. In response to this segregation, Black reformers overarchingly changed their reform tactics.

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Whipper’s intellectual shift away from integration was emblematic of a broader change in Black reform thought toward a more assertive, independent approach. This is not to say that everyone had always believed in the universality of the temperance cause; Whipper did, as mentioned, have his opponents. But by the beginning of the 1840s, Black reformers were generally more vociferous in their efforts to pursue temperance on their own, driven by the relentless racism of white temperance advocates. Unsurprisingly, this coincided with similar shifts in the abolitionist movement, which splintered in 1840. While some remained committed to strategies of moral suasion, others looked to party politics for change. They argued that white

³³ According to Roediger, “The attacks on Black temperance halls came at a time when the drinking habits of the white working classes had come to be seen by reformers and by some workers as alarmingly undisciplined.” David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, 1991), 108; Robert Purvis, Charles W. Gardner, and Daniel A. Payne, “The Late Riots,” *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), Aug. 11, 1842.

racism proved too challenging to conquer with appeals to morality, and many Black abolitionists—such as Pennington, minister and leading reformer Henry Highland Garnet, and eventually in 1851, Frederick Douglass—turned to the political wing of the movement in order to effect direct action as debates over slavery intensified on a national scale.

The shift to a more militant Black reform thought can be seen through abolitionist physician Martin Delany's rise to national prominence. Known as the "Father of Black Nationalism," Delany was influential in his articulation of separatist thinking and support for emigration to Canada, Haiti, or Latin America—all places where Black populations looked to be relatively free and equal. Emigration was hotly contested among Black reformers, as critics alleged that leaving America would dignify colonizationists and abandon the enslaved. In an editorial column in his newspaper the *North Star*, Frederick Douglass warned of the futility of leaving and urged his readers to "'Stick by the ship'—stand to your post." But for Delany, Black Americans comprised "a nation within a nation." Though they made up a significant portion of the population, they were legally deprived of citizenship, existing outside a white American governance. Signaling to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, he explained, "A people capable of originating and sustaining such a law as this, are not the people to whom we are willing to entrust our liberty at discretion." The racism engrained in American politics and society was disheartening. To leave a country with discriminatory laws, economy, and society was therefore an act of protest.³⁴

In the U.S., Delany was also an ardent supporter of temperance—he had helped establish societies since the 1830s—and his emigrationist thought did not preclude him from pursuing that

³⁴ Douglass, "A Few Words to Our Own People," *North Star* (Rochester, NY), Jan. 19, 1849; Martin Robison Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, 1852, chaps. I, XVI. Unlike colonization, free Black Americans undertook emigration and would leave of their own will, rather than someone else's.

passion. In fact, temperance held a similar role for Delany as it did for integrationist reformers such as Whipper, Pennington, and Douglass. He argued that equality would follow from moral elevation; however, he also contended that morality was not enough to eradicate the oppression that plagued Black life in America. With such restrictive laws in place, no African American, free or enslaved, could truly flourish. Thus, emigration would not desert the enslaved but reveal Black capabilities away from the oppressive thumb of white America. He wrote, “We believe it to be the duty of the Free, to elevate themselves in the most speedy and effective manner possible; as the redemption of the bondman depends entirely upon the elevation of the freeman; therefore, to elevate the free colored people of America, anywhere upon this continent; forebodes the speedy redemption of the slaves.” Living abroad would provide ample opportunities to explore the maximum potentials of Black Americans, unfettered by legal discrimination. For Delany, overseas settlements were ideal places to practice temperance.³⁵

There was, according to Delany, another reason to swear off alcohol aside from elevation: it would facilitate rebellion. This can best be seen in his novel *Blake; or, the Huts of America*, published serially in the *Weekly Anglo-African* beginning in 1859. The work centers on an enslaved man named Henry whose wife has just been sold to a new owner in Cuba. Devasted, Henry retaliates by vowing to never “serve any white man again.” He escapes his enslaver and travels the South to organize a massive slave rebellion. During his journey, Henry meets several people, white and Black, enslaved and free. White locals often offer him alcohol, which he always refuses. For example, when making their escape to Canada, Henry and his entourage stop to rest at a blacksmith’s shop in Indiana. The white blacksmith suspects the posse of fugitives

³⁵ Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People*, chap. XXIII. Shelley Block, “A Revolutionary Aim: The Rhetoric of Temperance in the *Anglo-African Magazine*,” *American Periodicals* 12 (2002), 10–11.

and invites them to take a seat in his workshop. At first, they oblige, trusting the man. He offers them a drink as he put the bottle “up to his mouth, drenching himself almost to strangulation.” When Henry refuses, the blacksmith asks, “Temperance, I reckon?” “Rather so,” the group replies. In order to successfully make their escape, Delany indicated that temperance was imperative.³⁶

This especially appears to be the case when contrasting the temperate slaves with the drunken enslavers. Once Henry and his crew head to the family’s home, they realize that the blacksmith has sent them there as a trap. He, along with the town’s slave patrol, arrest the enslaved fugitives and keep them overnight in stables near a tavern. The vigilantes celebrate the capture of the fugitives, “being for the evening the victims of excessive indulgence in the beverage of ardent spirits.” However, Delany clarified that their drunkenness led them to blunder, for the white patrol did not realize that there was a knife in the stables in all their drunken stupor. Henry uses it to cut the groups’ cords and, when an intoxicated patroller comes to check on his prisoners and offer them a cup of spirits, Henry uses it to threaten him. As Henry and his friends escaped, he “compelled the man who was already partially intoxicated, to drink as much as possible, which soon rendered him entirely insensible.” Henry stands in stark contrast to the immoral white characters in the novel. Through temperance, he keeps his wits about him and effectively executes his plan to escape. As one scholar has pointed out, this is reflective of Delany’s own thoughts on reform: “In *Blake* abstention from alcohol is a means not for peaceable assimilation, but rather a means for furthering insurrection.” Through Black elevation *and* rebellion, meaningful change would be effected in America, but the latter could not happen without the former.³⁷

³⁶ Delany, *Blake; or, the Huts of America*, ed. Floyd J. Miller (Boston, 1970), 29, 145.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 151-52; Block, “A Revolutionary Aim,” 14.

In the tense context of the 1840s and 1850s, then, temperance had acquired an additional meaning that made it “part of a radical call for black independence.” No longer could free Black people depend upon white support in their aims of eradicating intemperance and slavery—not even that of the most prominent white reformers like William Lloyd Garrison. The self-emancipated minister Henry Highland Garnet articulated the reason why at the 1847 national convention in Troy, New York: “The cause of freedom had so far advanced, that some method hitherto untried, needed to be resorted to... He delieved [sic] most religiously in the doctrine of self-help.” Like Delany and so many others, Garnet was pleased with perceived progress but dismayed at the lack of evident results. According to him, change would only follow once Black Americans banded together to make it themselves.³⁸

In his steadfast adherence to the principle of self-help in reform, Garnet was radical, promoting improvement and rebellion as the primary means of achieving emancipation. Like other Black clergy, Garnet also supported the temperance movement, on one occasion even calling out one of his peers for their half-hearted commitment to the cause. Much like with Delany, Garnet’s temperance thought took shape around his abolitionist thought. In an address to the enslaved at the 1843 national convention, he praised such leaders as Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and Joseph Cinqué. Each of these men had taken their fates into their own hands, sending a message to their masters that they were “DETERMINED TO BE FREE.” He implored enslaved people to see that:

The diabolical injustice by which your Liberties are cloven down, NEITHER GOD, NOR ANGELS, OR JUST MEN COMMAND YOU TO SUFFER FOR A SINGLE MOMENT. THEREFORE IT IS YOUR SOLEMN AND IMPERATIVE DUTY TO USE EVERY MEANS, BOTH MORAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND PHYSICAL, THAT PROMISE SUCCESS.

³⁸ Block, 13; *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People, and Their Friends, Held in Troy, N.Y., on the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th October, 1847* (Troy, NY, 1847), CCPDR, 6.

It was incumbent upon the enslaved to liberate themselves via temperance, education, or even violence. This latter method that Garnet proposed concerned integrationist reformers, who fretted that it would dissuade white abolitionists from continuing to fight for immediate emancipation. In fact, following Garnet's speech, a coalition of convention delegates led by Frederick Douglass voted against publishing it in the official minutes, warning that the address contained "too much physical force."³⁹

Garnet nevertheless continued to endorse the promise of self-emancipation via temperance. Speaking to a female benevolent society in 1848, he dwelled upon the glories of Africa's ancient past; he praised the scientific advancements of Egyptians and the spiritual significance of Ethiopia. "When these representatives of our race were filling the world with amazement," he announced, "the ancestors of the now proud and boasting Anglo Saxons were among the most degraded of the human family." With this in mind, he pondered how "this race [shall] come forth and re-occupy their station of renown." The answer lay in "following after peace and temperance, industry and frugality, and love to God, and to all men, and by resisting tyranny in the name of Eternal Justice." For Garnet, much like for Delany, temperance remained important insofar as it was a vehicle for self-control, giving one the clarity to rise and resist.⁴⁰

The gap between Delany's and Garnet's militancy of the 1840s and 1850s and Whipper's and Pennington's integrationism of the 1830s appears large. Delany and Garnet saw the need only for a Black agenda, while, in the 1830s, Whipper and Pennington wanted all to reform

³⁹ Garnet, "Speech by Henry Highland Garnet: Delivered before the National Convention of Colored Citizens, Buffalo, New York, 16 August 1843," in Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:407-8; *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens, Held at Buffalo, on the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as American Citizens*. (New York, 1843), CCPDR, 13. Garnet, *Impartial Citizen*. See also Bell, "National Negro Conventions of the Middle 1840's: Moral Suasion vs. Political Action," *Journal of Negro History* 42 (Oct. 1957), 247-60.

⁴⁰ Garnet, *The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race: A Discourse Delivered as the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, N.Y., Feb. 14, 1848* (Troy, NY, 1848), 12, 28.

themselves and abstain from alcohol. The gulf between them, however, was not so wide. Both anchored their thought in what moral reform meant specifically to Black people and thought particularly about what it might mean for the proslavery arguments that African Americans were ‘ignorant’ and ‘degraded’. Both camps believed that temperance was integral to moral elevation, and that moral elevation was integral to emancipation and political rights. The radical thinkers, though, pushed a step further to advocate insurrection and direct political action. Abstention from alcohol would still be vital—it would just serve a more revolutionary purpose. The key difference between the universal and separatist temperance reformers was not, therefore, who they fought *for* but who they fought *alongside*. As it became increasingly clear that white racism would not subside, the Black temperance movement detached from the white movement. Black reformers would take matters into their own hands to achieve their goals of dismantling slavery and racism.