

Lincoln on Colonization: A Reappraisal

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In the vast literature on race and slavery in the Civil War period, one question seems to me to be continually overlooked, or at least not to be addressed as directly as it might be. The question is this: What concern have we, 150 years on, with attitudes that everyone now condemns and an institution that no one wants to see revived? It might reasonably be asserted that, from a moral point of view, the lessons of Americans' experience with slavery have been learned. But it would be harder to say that the political lessons of that period have been learned. What, indeed, are those lessons? One of them, arguably, is that political reasoning is a very different thing from moral reasoning. Politics has a moral logic of its own—if that is the right way to put it—which Lincoln may be assumed to have understood. In this paper I test the assumption by application to Lincoln's colonization policy.

Perhaps no aspect of Lincoln's political career has been more damaging to his reputation in recent decades than his support for the colonization of African Americans outside the United States. Unlike many other controversial aspects of his career—suspension of civil liberties in the wartime North, for example—Lincoln's stance on colonization does not derive from policies adopted as president during circumstances of civil war. Lincoln

made known his support for colonization, both as a Whig disciple of Henry Clay (himself a proponent) in the early 1850s and as the Republican chief executive ten years later, when a pair of colonization projects were actually set in motion under his administration. *How* he promoted the cause has received less attention, but Lincoln’s rhetoric in favor of colonization proves to be crucial for evaluating his stance.

Lincoln’s promotion of colonization reaches a kind of climax in the “Address on Colonization to a Deputation of Negroes.”ⁱ On August 14, 1862, at a time when Lincoln had decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation but had not yet publicized his decision, he hosted a delegation of local black leaders at the White House. The purpose of the meeting was to persuade them to support his plan to establish a colony for free African Americans on the isthmus of Chiriqui in what is now Panama. The occasion was unique—never before or since did Lincoln make a direct, quasi-public appeal to African Americans for support of his policy on colonization. As it happened, both the Chiriqui scheme and the later Ile à Vache experiment miscarried, the former through failure to secure the necessary diplomatic guarantees, the latter by neglect and mismanagement.ⁱⁱ The “shocking demonstrations of carelessness and incapacity” in these attempts indicate that they were not high on the administration’s list of priorities, but in the midst of war the president had many demands on his attention besides colonization.ⁱⁱⁱ The conduct of these efforts, though it may reveal something about Lincoln’s administrative priorities, is comparatively unrevealing about the questions that have preoccupied recent scholarship. Lincoln’s words, by contrast, throw considerable light on one such question, namely,

whether or not even voluntary colonization must be seen as degrading to the black Americans whose cooperation Lincoln sought.

Those words, of course, present difficulties of their own. The nature of Lincoln's position meant that he could not speak his mind fully on all occasions without jeopardizing his influence. Many commentators have noted the timing of the meeting and inferred that the president's scheme was intended in part to calm fears among whites about the effects of large-scale emancipation. According to this interpretation, what was important to Lincoln was the *perception* that his administration had a plan for dealing with the expected exodus of freedmen and -women from the South. Not all commentators who accept this interpretation believe it absolves Lincoln, however. James Oakes makes this point in his book *The Radical and the Republican*. "The closer Lincoln got to proclaiming emancipation, the more aggressively he pursued his colonization scheme. By dropping hints of a forthcoming emancipation in the form of proposals for colonization, he was doing something peculiar, not to say unseemly. He was appealing to northern racism to smooth the way for emancipation."^{iv}

Oakes cannot be accused of failing to appreciate Lincoln's political skills. Even so, his account of the meeting relies heavily on Frederick Douglass's hostile response. Writing in the September issue of his *Monthly*, Douglass charged that Lincoln, in effect, "says to the colored people: I don't like you, you must clear out of the country"; his statements are both "illogical and unfair." Oakes characterizes the same remarks as "bizarre," "outrageous," and "sophomoric," and calls the meeting "a low point in

[Lincoln’s] presidency.” Lincoln could not see, or did not wish to acknowledge, that there was an insuperable obstacle to colonization: “Blacks did not want to go.”^v There is evidence, however, that Lincoln’s listeners reacted in quite a different way.

In fact, the delegates came to sympathize with Lincoln’s proposal, though they had not initially been receptive. Edward M. Thomas, who headed the group, wrote to the president on August 16: “We were entirely hostile to the movement until all the advantages were so ably brought to our views by you and we believe that our friends and colaborers for our race...will when the subject is explained by us to them join heartily in sustaining such a movement.” Thomas was wrong in supposing that the delegates would be capable of overcoming opposition to the colonization plan in the wider African-American community. Still, the admission that he and the others who had actually heard Lincoln speak were won over is remarkable.^{vi} What merits, then, did Thomas and the other delegates find in Lincoln’s proposal that Oakes and Douglass did not?

Personalities aside, Douglass’s chief objection to the president’s colonization policy was that it furnished white Americans with an excuse for evading the moral obligation to uphold the rights of their black compatriots. As Douglass put it in the same issue of his *Monthly* in which he criticized Lincoln’s remarks, “Colonization gives life and vigor to popular prejudice, gives it an air of philosophy, piety and respectability... No attempt is made to correct the injustice and wrong done the black man here; no attempt is made to remove the unholy feeling of caste. On the contrary this malignant

feeling, is the grand ally of the whole colonization scheme, without which its very foundation would be utterly swept away.”^{vii}

Douglass’s view of colonization, as motivated by hostility to the social and political aspirations of African Americans, has so completely won the day that it is difficult to imagine colonization once had respectable black proponents. Nevertheless, as Philip Shaw Paludan reminds us, support for colonization was not confined to whites; among prominent black emigrationists was Douglass’s onetime co-editor Martin R. Delany.^{viii} He and Douglass published the *North Star* jointly from 1847 to 1849, and they remained on good terms despite their disagreement over colonization. Without concealing his reservations, Douglass professed great respect for Delany: “He cannot speak or write without speaking and writing up the race to which he belongs, whether they be found in Africa or in America.” Delany’s lecture at Rochester on his African travels—the occasion of Douglass’s remarks—“has given our white fellow citizens the opportunity of seeing a brave self conscious black man, one who does not cringe and cower at the thought of his hated color, but one who if he betrays any concern about his complexion errs in the opposite direction.” Douglass captured the difference in their stances when he remarked on another occasion, “I thank God for making me a man simply; but Delany always thanks him for making him a *black man*.” (Delany argued that the history of African servitude in America was no evidence of inferiority but directly the contrary; it was the skill and hardihood of imported African laborers that enabled European settlements to survive and eventually to flourish in an unfamiliar

environment.)^{ix} During Douglass’s lifetime his view competed with that of Delany and others who saw in colonization an opportunity for black self-determination.

We may refine our question as follows: Do Delany’s and Lincoln’s arguments for emigration bear any resemblance to each other? So far as they do resemble each other, a comparison of Lincoln’s speech in favor of the Chiriqui project with writings by Delany will shed light on why attitudes toward colonization did not break down neatly along racial lines. Delany made the argument for emigration principally in two places: in his book *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People*, published in 1852; and in an 1854 address to the National Emigration Convention of Colored Men, entitled “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent.” Delany would later distance himself from the book, admitting errors in it which he ascribed to the adverse circumstances in which it was written and brought to press.^x At any event, the essential features of his argument there reappear in the address. “Political Destiny” was reprinted in 1862 by Congress at the time of debates over the practicability of colonization in Central America.^{xi}

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In the course of his remarks Lincoln listed the many advantages of the Chiriqui site: it is less distant from the United States than Liberia; it lies along major shipping routes; and there are excellent harbors as well as evidence of coal deposits that might be exploited to supply steamships. But Lincoln did not say, as one might expect, that the emigrants would improve their material circumstances by settling there; he conceded that their

interests might justify them in remaining at home. He did not appeal to his listeners' self-interest but to their aspiration, in common with all men, "to enjoy equality with the best when free." This aspiration was thwarted by the state of public opinion or feeling in the United States, "a fact with which we have to deal" that Lincoln was powerless to change.

Lincoln attributed opposition to colonization among blacks in large part to the circumstance "that the free colored man cannot see that his comfort would be advanced by it." This judgment, of course, does not do justice to the principled opposition of such men as Douglass. It fits, however, with the nature of Lincoln's appeal; he meant to exhort his listeners to subordinate their comfort to a nobler aim. As it turns out, mere equality, even "with the best," is not a sufficient motive for the actions that Lincoln would have his listeners emulate. The most striking passage in his "Address," in which he invokes the example of George Washington, goes unremarked by Douglass:

For the sake of your race you should sacrifice something of your present comfort for the purpose of being as grand in that respect as the white people. It is a cheering thought throughout life that something can be done to ameliorate the condition of those who have been subject to the hard usage of the world. It is difficult to make a man miserable while he feels he is worthy of himself, and claims kindred to the great God who made him. In the American Revolutionary war sacrifices were made by men engaged in it; but they were cheered by the future. Gen. Washington himself endured greater physical hardships than if he had remained a

British subject. Yet he was a happy man, because he was engaged in benefiting his race—something for the children of his neighbors, having none of his own.

The American revolutionaries may have justified themselves by reference to the principle that “all men are created equal,” but they were not averse to the honor they would gain by the greatness of their sacrifices.

It is perfectly true, as George M. Fredrickson has observed, that Lincoln is guilty here of “racializing Washington’s achievement”; his remark carries the implication “that blacks could never hope to partake fully of American nationality.”^{xii} In this respect, the “Address” stands in contrast to Lincoln’s treatment of the Revolutionary founders elsewhere. The passage may be compared, for example, with the speech Lincoln gave in Independence Hall in February 1861, when he was on his way to Washington.

I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and adopted that Declaration of Independence—I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army, who achieved that Independence. I have often inquired of myself, what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the mother land; but something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time.^{xiii}

The principle for which the revolutionaries fought was not race-specific. In 1857 Lincoln had spoken of the equality principle in the Declaration of Independence as “a standard maxim for free society,” which over time would serve to increase “the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere.” It was Stephen A. Douglas, not Lincoln, who asserted that the United States had been founded on the “white basis.”^{xiv} But Lincoln was forced to racialize the legacy of the American Revolution in order to conform with the nature of his proposal, which falls short of what justice alone would require. Denied social and political equality in their native country, American blacks would be under no such disadvantage in a country of their own. Lincoln goes on to suggest that a successful effort to found such a country would advance the cause of popular self-government by demonstrating its feasibility across lines of race. He closes the “Address” by asking the delegates to consider his proposal “seriously not pertaining to yourselves merely, nor for your race, and ours, for the present time, but as one of the things, if successfully managed, for the good of mankind.”

Lincoln had long before conceded that colonization was utterly impracticable in the short term.^{xv} But he was able to make the prospect of long-term success seem less implausible by drawing an analogy with the American states. Liberia, he noted, had a population that was already “more than in some of our old States, such as Rhode Island or Delaware, or in some of our newer States.” He was suggesting that the projected colony in Central America could grow over time to become as populous, and politically viable, as the American states, which similarly began as small settlements. The Chiriqui

settlement would be much more significant in this respect than Liberia, where only a fraction of the population were descendents of American settlers.

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Colonization does not presuppose the inferiority of the colonized minority—Delany would have had nothing to do with it if that were the case—but it does presuppose that they cannot live together with the majority as equals. Lincoln had made his stance on equality clear at the start of his debate with Douglas at Charleston, Illinois, in 1858—all too clear, perhaps.^{xvi} But this now-famous statement—Lincoln’s harshest on record in opposition to social and political equality between the races—contains ambiguities that are frequently overlooked. Lincoln begins by disclaiming any purpose on his part “in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races.” He goes on to say that even if he had such a purpose, he could produce no change in the existing social and political conditions, for “there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality.” Equality between the races, then, is made impossible by a “physical difference.” But a moment later Lincoln again raises the possibility he had seemed to rule out. Even if he had a purpose to bring about equality between blacks and whites, he could not do so as a member of Congress: “I do not understand there is any place where an alteration of the social and political relations of the negro and the white man can be made except in the state legislature.” Equality

between the races is *not* impossible, but it would require persuading members of the state legislature, or rather those who elect them, to favor it.

The “physical difference” that Lincoln speaks of turns out to be a psychological barrier. Blackness and whiteness, in themselves, are qualities wholly irrelevant to citizenship. The very fact that Lincoln felt compelled to come out against social and political equality between blacks and whites implies that such equality is possible. No one would think of coming out against, say, reversing the law of gravity. But if the barrier to social and political equality was psychological rather than physical, why should Lincoln have said he believed it would “for ever” prevent the races from living together as equals? Of course, he could not suggest the contrary without diminishing the effect of his disclaimer; but he did not have to be quite as clear as that. If anything, Lincoln had retreated somewhat from the stance he took at Peoria in 1854, when he suggested that feelings against racial equality on the part of “the great mass of white people” were not wholly consistent with “justice and sound judgment,” even though he claimed to share them.^{xvii}

The ambiguities in Lincoln’s public statements on race, though important for understanding him, do not diminish the harshness of his assessment of race relations in the United States. The fundamental obstacle to equality for blacks was not Lincoln’s own opposition, which was equivocal, but that of the white majority. Much more was required for change than legislative action; at Charleston Lincoln makes light of the idea that a mere change of laws in the state would alter relations between blacks and whites in

a fundamental way. Repealing the ban on interracial marriage—Lincoln’s example—would not make such unions socially acceptable.^{xviii} The report of Lincoln’s opening speech shows that the bare mention of “a perfect equality between the negroes and white people” provoked “great laughter.”^{xix} Was it because of Lincoln’s intonation, or because the prospect of perfect equality was ridiculous in itself? Probably both.

In view of Lincoln’s assessment of prospects for African Americans in the United States, it was not unreasonable for him to say to them: There is no equality for you here; go, then, where you can find it. The prospect of equality, one might think, would have been a sufficient motive for emigration. But, as we have seen, Lincoln goes further—he adds: Here is an opportunity for *some* of you to win lasting honor for yourselves. This part of his appeal would have resonated with the same audience that Delany sought to reach.

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The mainstream colonization movement was based on a pair of contradictory assumptions: that African Americans furnished poor materials for citizenship in the United States, but they were capable of performing wonders if sent abroad. The movement derived much of its appeal from the thought that black freedmen would effect a “redemption” of the African continent by the establishment of Christianity and civilization there; a similar thought was later applied to the establishment of large-scale commerce in Central America.^{xx} It hardly mattered that the first assumption was wrong,

so long as a majority of Americans continued to believe it. The second assumption, however, was not uncongenial to Delany's purposes.

Lincoln, Douglass, and Delany contended with a common problem: how could white Americans be induced to acknowledge the rights of blacks among them, whether free or enslaved, when blacks lacked the political power to compel such an acknowledgment? Lincoln, for his part, often appealed back to the founding principles that Americans for the most part continued to profess, even when they disregarded them in practice; and Douglass did much the same thing. In Lincoln's view, those principles could not be reconciled with slavery except as a temporary "necessity," though he denied that they required full social and political equality between blacks and whites.^{xxi} Delany had little faith in such appeals. "The rights of no oppressed people have ever yet been obtained by a voluntary act of justice on the part of the oppressor. . . . Voluntary acts, it is true, which are in themselves just, may sometimes take place on the part of the oppressor; but these are always actuated by the force of some outward circumstances of self-interest equal to a compulsion."^{xxii} On an earlier occasion Delany had claimed that "whatever ideas of liberty I may have, have been received from reading the lives of [the American] revolutionary fathers."^{xxiii} But in laying out the argument for emigration, he relied principally on the example of Magna Charta: "this great charter of British liberty, so much boasted of and vaunted as a model bill of rights, was obtained only by force and compulsion." The success of the barons against King John could never be replicated by blacks in the United States, however. Magna Charta was possible because the barons

were many and the king and his men were few, but for African Americans the situation was reversed.^{xxiv}

Though Delany implied that self-interest is the mainspring of human action, his arguments for emigration, like Lincoln's, appeal unmistakably to his readers' pride or ambition.

Shall we be persuaded that we can live and prosper nowhere but under the authority and power of our North American white oppressors; that this (the United States) is the country most—if not the only one—favorable to our improvement and progress? Are we willing to admit that we are incapable of self-government, establishing for ourselves such political privileges, and making such internal improvements as we delight to enjoy, after American white men have made them for themselves?

To this question Delany answered most emphatically “No!” Rather, “that country is the best in which our manhood—morally, mentally, and physically—can be *best developed*,” and in this regard “the West Indies, Central and South America, present now such advantages” as to make them “preferable to all other countries.” Their people “desire all the improvements of North America,” but do not wish to take them from the whites.^{xxv}

Delany was at pains to make clear, however, that “we do not advocate the *Southern* scheme as a concession, nor yet at the will nor desire of our North American oppressors; but as a policy by which we must be the greatest political gainers”—it would be a “gain by which the lever of political elevation and machinery of national progress

must ever be held and directed by our own hands and heads, to our own will and purposes.” The thrust of his argument is that it was not only unsafe but also degrading to blacks to live “by mere sufferance,” as was necessarily the case where non-whites did not constitute a majority of the population. (This was one objection to Canada as a destination for African-American emigrants, though Delany himself moved there in 1856, returning to the United States only after the outbreak of the Civil War.) Under these circumstances, the right to vote, which some states extended to blacks, was no more than the “privilege of voting a white man into office.” That being so, “our attention must be turned in a direction towards those places where the black and colored man comprise, by population, and constitute by necessity of numbers, the *ruling element* of the body politic.” Through the mid-1850s Delany’s preferred destination was Latin America—where he calculated the proportion of whites “of pure European extraction” to others as no more than one to six—though he would later turn his attention to Africa.^{xxvi}

But Delany seemed to do an about-face after 1861. His ambition, which his biographer describes as “boundless,” helps to explain his willingness, even eagerness, to serve in war the country he had called on blacks to leave in peacetime. Delany was an early proponent of black military service, arguing “always in favor of separate organization, as the only means to give character to the colored people, and promote their pride of race, thus crediting them in history with deeds of their own.” Delany proposed the creation of a “Corps d’Afrique” with which he might serve as a “private medical adviser”—he had been admitted to Harvard Medical School but was dismissed on

account of his color—and thereby gain military experience at a time when public opinion was not yet ripe for the appointment of black officers. With such experience he would be ready when the opportunity came to distinguish himself.^{xxvii}

Disappointed in his efforts to secure a position for himself as a medical officer, Delany spent much of the war as a civilian recruiting agent. The opportunity he had looked forward to did not arrive until February 1865, when Delany gained an interview with the president. Characteristically, it was not to ask a favor but to offer his services to the government. When Lincoln asked, “What can I do for you, sir?” Delany replied, “Nothing, Mr. President, but I’ve come to propose something to you, which I think will be beneficial to the nation in this critical hour of her peril.” What he had come to propose was “an army of blacks, commanded entirely by black officers,” which would “penetrate through the heart of the South, and make conquests, with the banner of Emancipation unfurled, proclaiming freedom as they go, sustaining and protecting it by arming the emancipated.” Freedmen of suitable condition would be recruited to join the force, while a few veterans could be left behind for security at each location. Lincoln replied that he had had just such a thing in mind when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. At the conclusion of the interview Lincoln wrote out an order for Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, “Do not fail to have an interview with this most extraordinary and intelligent black man.” Delany did not feel slighted by the reference to his race; the president’s language showed that he “was not content that my color should make its own impression, but he expressed it with emphasis, as though a point was

gained.” Delany was the first black field officer in the Union army to be commissioned at the rank of major. He would arrive in the South too late to see combat, but he worked to put relations between planters on the South Carolina coast and their former chattels on a new, more just footing.^{xxviii}

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Lincoln was usually in the position of calling on white Americans to do the right thing—to resist the further spread of slavery in the federal territories in the 1850s, for example, or to adopt gradual emancipation in the loyal slave states in the early years of the war. In the “Address” he was in the position of calling on black Americans to do what many in their community regarded as the wrong thing. In part Lincoln agreed. He did not argue that it was right or just for African Americans to emigrate; he did not deny it was just that they should participate fully in American nationality, but he doubted that it was possible. The self-government of African Americans, it appeared, could not be made fully consistent with the self-government of the American people as a whole.

Douglass characterizes Lincoln as having gratuitously assumed that racial prejudice is natural—as having wittingly or unwittingly “propagated the arrogant and malignant nonsense about natural repellency and the incompatibility of races.”^{xxix} In fact Lincoln did not have to make such an assumption; it was enough for him that prejudice was a durable fact, whatever its cause may be. Douglass’s charge may be stated more soberly: was Lincoln too quick to assume, as both he and Delany apparently did, that racial prejudice was an *irremediable* fact of American life, at least for the foreseeable

future? Was he guilty of having “absolutized the present”?^{xxx} In retrospect it is easy to say that he was. By August 1863, a year after the “Address,” Lincoln could affirm that the Emancipation Proclamation “works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us.”^{xxxi} By depriving the South of a source of labor and augmenting the Union army with black soldiers, the Proclamation contributed to northern victory and made possible the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Military service by blacks, in turn, made it easier for Lincoln to recommend that the states preparing to return to the Union extend voting rights to at least some of the freedmen. But in the summer of 1862, for all Lincoln knew, the military situation might deteriorate still further; the Proclamation might be modified or revoked by his successor in office, or overturned by an unfriendly court. And even if the Proclamation should fulfill his hopes for it, there was no assurance that the end of slavery would be followed by the extension of political rights to blacks, to say nothing of social equality.

But Lincoln and Delany also understood that motives for emigration were not simply negative. They reflected the attractive prospect of self-rule elsewhere as well as the repelling prospect of further oppression at home. Not long after the “Address,” Montgomery Blair, Lincoln’s postmaster general, wrote to Frederick Douglass requesting his support for the Chiriqui enterprise. (Blair had been misled into thinking Douglass might give his support by a letter he had written for his son, who was interested in signing on as a colonist.) In doing so, Blair made just the sort of appeal that Lincoln had refrained from making: “With a country so rich as Central America, possessed by a

people adapted to develop its wealth [that is, African Americans], they must soon become wealthy and powerful...” In his reply Douglass left no doubt of his opposition to the scheme, but he acknowledged that, in thus addressing him, Blair had given a “sort of recognition of the manhood and moral agency of the negro.” If such recognition was consistent with Blair’s argument for colonization, much more was it consistent with Lincoln’s.^{xxxii} Delany was sure there was no sacrifice of manhood or moral agency in promoting the cause of emigration—provided that the cause was directed by black men like himself. The fact that Lincoln could not make use of the talents of such a man as Delany reveals the fundamental defect in his plan.

Lincoln’s support for colonization must be viewed in connection with the constraints imposed on him by the nature of democracy. The Civil War did not remove those constraints, though it did loosen them. The war prepared Americans for changes that had previously been all but unthinkable. Victory under Lincoln saved the Union, and with it hopes for a full participation in national life by all Americans, regardless of race. But Lincoln could not refound the country as an avowedly multiracial democracy. What he believed he could do was offer black Americans the means to become founders themselves.

ⁱ *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 vols., edited by Roy P. Basler et al. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 5:37-75. Hereafter *CW*.

ⁱⁱ See Frederic Bancroft, *The Colonization of American Negroes, 1801-1865*, chaps. 2-3, in Jacob E. Cooke, *Frederic Bancroft, Historian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957). It came to light that the rights given the Chiriqui Improvement Company by the government of New Granada (Colombia), of which Panama was then a province, could not be transferred to the United States, and some of the land in question was claimed by Costa Rica. Ile à Vache presented a similar case. Bernard Kock, a businessman of dubious reputation, was granted a lease by the Haitian government over the uninhabited island, where he proposed to establish a cotton plantation. Kock promised to provide his workers with housing, food, medical care, and a share of the profits, in addition to their wages; the U.S. government for its part would pay \$50 to Kock for each emigrant. The island was represented to be cleared and ready for cultivation, but when the emigrants were landed in late April or early May 1863, they found that nothing had been done to prepare for their arrival. Predictably, the colony did not prosper, and the surviving emigrants were returned to American soil in March 1864. Neither enterprise failed for lack of volunteers. Senator Samuel Pomeroy of Kansas, who had been put in charge of the colonization effort, reported in October 1862 that he had received 13,700 applications to go to Central America, from which he had selected 500.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 258. Bancroft thinks “a president with methodical habits and great executive ability” might have avoided some of Lincoln’s mistakes; but he “was

overburdened with matters of vital interest to the nation” at that time, and at any event his “greatness shone in still more important talents” (226).

^{iv} James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 191.

^v “The President and His Speeches,” *Douglass’ Monthly*, vol. 5, no. 4 (September 1862), 707-8; Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican*, 191-95.

^{vi} Thomas to Lincoln, August 16, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mal:2:/temp/~ammem_DsKV::

^{vii} “The Spirit of Colonization,” *Douglass’ Monthly*, vol. 5, 705-6.

^{viii} Philip Shaw Paludan, “Lincoln and Colonization: Policy or Propaganda?” *JALA* vol. 25, no. 1 (winter 2004), 27. The term “colonization” was generally avoided by blacks who favored emigration, as tainted by association with the American Colonization Society.

^{ix} “Dr. M. R. Delany,” *Douglass’ Monthly*, vol. 5, no. 3 (August 1862), 695; Douglass quoted in Frank [Frances] A. Rollin, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany* (1883; reprinted in *Two Biographies by African-American Women* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]), 19; Delany, “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent” (discussed below).

^x See Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 80-82, and Delany’s letters to Oliver Johnson and William Lloyd Garrison, reprinted in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary*

Reader, edited by Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 217-20. A projected second edition of the book did not appear.

^{xi} *Report of the [House] Select Committee on Emigration and Colonization* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1862), Appendix, 37-59. The address is reprinted in Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 327-67, and in Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 245-79.

^{xii} George M. Frederickson, *Big Enough to Be Inconsistent: Abraham Lincoln Confronts Slavery and Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 104.

^{xiii} Speech in Independence Hall, February 22, 1861, *CW*, 4:240.

^{xiv} Speech at Springfield, June 26, 1857, *CW*, 2:406; Douglas’s claim that “this government was made on the white basis,” put forward in the first debate with Lincoln, at Ottawa on August 21, 1858 (*CW*, 3:9), was repeated in the third, fourth, fifth, and seventh debates. (Douglas had used the same language at Chicago on July 9 and Springfield on July 17, before the formal start of the debates.)

^{xv} Speech at Peoria, October 16, 1854, *CW*, 2:255.

^{xvi} *CW*, 3:145-46.

^{xvii} *CW*, 2:256.

^{xviii} *CW*, 3:146.

^{xix} *CW*, 3:145.

^{xx} Bancroft, *The Colonization of American Negroes*, 160-63, 189, 192. Lincoln quoted Henry Clay to this effect in his eulogy (July 6, 1852)—the colonized freedmen “will carry back to their native soil the rich fruits of religion, civilization, law and liberty” (*CW*, 2:132)—and added his own endorsement of Clay’s hope for “the possible ultimate redemption of the African race and African continent.”

^{xxi} For the “argument of NECESSITY, arising from the fact that the blacks are already amongst us,” which Lincoln distinguished from a moral argument in favor of slavery, see *CW*, 2:266-67, 274-75.

^{xxii} “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent,” in Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 269.

^{xxiii} Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 76. The speech in which this claim is made is also quoted in Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 183-84.

^{xxiv} “Political Destiny,” in Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 269-71.

^{xxv} *Ibid.*, 266-68. Although he did not go to Central America, in the early 1850s Delany was actually elected mayor of the *de facto* free city of Greytown on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua; he was forced to decline the position after failing to secure the cooperation of other African Americans in forming a governing council.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, 250, 258, 271. Delany believed that people of African descent were already living in Central America, “a remnant of the Africans who, with the Carthaginian expedition, were adventitiously cast upon this continent” many centuries ago (267).

^{xxvii} The description of Delany’s ambition is from Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 265. On his ideas of military service, see *ibid.*, 134-44 (chaps. 13-14); the quotation appears on 138. For the circumstances of Delany’s dismissal from Harvard Medical School, which is not mentioned by Rollin, see Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 184.

^{xxviii} Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, 162, 166-71; *CW*, 8:273. Rollin gives the interview with Lincoln “in Major Delany’s own language”; the transcript is reprinted in Levine, *Documentary Reader*, 385-88. For details of Delany’s service, which extended beyond the end of the war, see Rollin, *Life and Public Services*, chaps. 21-33.

^{xxix} “The President and His Speeches,” 707.

^{xxx} This is the charge that Howard Brotz brings against Delany and other black emigrationists; see his *African-American Social and Political Thought, 1850-1920* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 5.

^{xxxi} To Ulysses S. Grant, August 9, 1863, *CW*, 6:374.

^{xxxii} Blair’s letter and Douglass’s reply are given in *Douglass’ Monthly*, vol. 5, no. 5 (October 1862), 724-26.