Purgatory between Kentucky and Canada

INVERTING HISTORY WITH MICROHISTORY SERIES

VOLUME 1:
LESSER CIVIL WARS: CIVILIANS DEFINING WAR
AND THE MEMORY OF WAR

VOLUME 2:
WOMEN WHO BELONG: CLAIMING A FEMALE'S RIGHT-FILLED PLACE

VOLUME 3:
PURGATORY BETWEEN KENTUCKY AND CANADA:
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OHIO

Purgatory between Kentucky and Canada: African Americans in Ohio

Edited by

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INVERTING HISTORY WITH MICROHISTORY: PREFACE TO THE SERIES

Inverting History with Microhistory is a series of edited volumes in which scholars lead us to question the allocation and appropriation of power by individuals in relationship to their societies. Microhistory has a long tradition of fascinating stories about the past that help us interpret the present and shape our immediate future. Microhistory can be as powerful as macrohistory and, therefore, microhistory makes some people nervous.

The oldest microhistory that I have ever read was that of a great hunter standing up to a charging bison. It was painted on the walls of a Lascaux, France cave some fifteen thousand years ago by prehistoric humans. Actually, I "read" the second edition of the story in a full-size reproduction that was created for tourists like me. Even though it has been two decades since I visited that microhistory, its story is so basic that I have not forgotten it. In fact, I have been inspired by its powerful message. In our lifetimes, events happen in a way that can be described as charging bison that suddenly appear in our paths. What we choose to do at those moments is our contribution to the drama of human history.

The oldest stories that I am aware of are stories about individuals who faced overwhelming challenges in particular places. When the stories were told near firelight or by moonlight, the great story tellers could capture the passing breeze and work it into the story. They illuminated the stages of our imaginations with moonlight and fire flare-ups. They held us in a spell as we waited to hear about the choices the protagonists made and the traumas they endured. We remembered the stories and the life lessons of cleverness and foolishness, of bravery and loyalty. We came to identify each other by the stories we shared. Our stories are where our communities were born. We were members of small communities in those moments and we told microhistories that we could relate to on a personal level.

Along the way, other storytellers introduced new characters such as Nation and Empire. These giants were invading us or we were numbered with them as invaders. Our stories now featured great monarchs and generals who led us or our enemies into macrohistory and who were justified by the metanarratives written by the victors who broadcast these bigger histories to larger audiences by daylight in imposing and official public places like schools and stadia.

Behind the waving flags of battalions and nations in marketplaces and military encampments, humans continued to gather around the firelight to hear stories of individuals facing the challenges of ever more complex societies with all of the rules and structures that provide order out of the chaos of masses of people engaged in the art of survival. The micro-level stories grabbed us, comforted us, taught us, inspired us, and identified us as individuals who matter.

Inverting History is a series of edited volumes that contain stories about individuals, the challenges that they faced and the decisions that they made. In our globalizing world, we have a challenge facing us. Will our stories of the past unite us or divide us? Will we fight over limited resources or share our knowledge and creativity to overcome zero-sum game local and regional wars? How will we choose to deploy our power to shape the present and the near future? Our resource desperation is charging at us like giant bison.

Stories and Power

Power is perhaps the most elusive prey in history. The hunt for power seems to be one plot in that oldest recorded story in the Lascaux cave. The quest to capture power from the Other is a plot in discussions about adding marginal individuals and groups to official narratives of history. Stories empower their audiences. So, it may be important to control microhistory if one wishes to limit or expand the number of empowered individuals.

Stories about events along the human trek through time influence the allocation of power in the present. Sociologist and historian Charles Tilly saw this connection. “Social pressures,” he wrote, “are path-dependent. That is why history matters.”[1] Tilly identified three types of constructions of past events: metahistory, world-systems, and macrohistory. Such narratives often imbue the Nation/Empire/State with so much power that only superhuman titans like Octavian Augustus or Elizabeth I could discipline these new characters. Ordinary people seem to follow almost mindlessly in their wake, sucked into history en masse by the riptides and crosscurrents of the charisma and superiority of each titan who is singularly qualified to challenge the charging bison of historic moments and trends.

Sometimes, empowered, mindful, ordinary individuals like Fannie Lou Hamer or Napoleon Bonaparte succeeded and that makes some titans rather nervous. Such individuals, whether born into work-a-day families or as less-empowered nobility, manage to focus the energies of compatriots into a political wedge that threatens the stability of elite castes. Individuals

like Joan of Arc, Sundiata Keita, Sojourner Truth, Vicente Guerrero, Aung San Suu Kyi, Benjamin Franklin, Rosa Parks, and Mohandas Gandhi empower ordinary people through their example. Histories about such relatively ordinary people who stood up to the political bison of their times fall into a category called microhistory. Tilly identified this fourth type of history as microhistory which is the study of "the experiences of individuals and well-defined groups within the limits set by large-scale structures and processes."[2] Stories about these individuals have the potential to reinforce or to weaken the power of the official histories that created a comfort zone for the ruling titans.

One scholar whose words seem to express some trepidation over microhistories of ordinary people is Gertrude Himmelfarb, an American expert on Victorian intellectual history.

> Race/gender/class…any part of that trinity involves a considerable revision of the past . . . but the whole requires nothing less than its deconstruction.[3]

As far as I know, there were people of varying races, social classes, and genders in the Victorian era and many of them were intellectuals who were featured on lecture circuits and in various gazettes. Queen Victoria graced many of them with an audience. Queen Victoria's audiences confess, to some extent, a measure of the diversity of her imperial subjects by race/class/gender and reflect the diversity of her empire's global trading partners. This reality gave me pause when I read Dr. Himmelfarb's words about "women, blacks, Chicanos, etc." She wrote,

> What they are all 'clamoring for' is not a place on the periphery of history—that they always had—but at the center, and not intermittently but permanently.[4]

Himmelfarb's comments suggest that history belongs to white male titans and everyone else is relegated to a dream-like story of standing up to charging bison as painted on the wall of a cave.

What if titans fear ordinary people more than they fear bison? This question arises after reading Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson's summary of microhistory as a movement in Europe. Magnusson was associated with the Center for Microhistorical Research in Reykyavik, Iceland. His essay can be used to map a tense space between Tilly's and Himmelfarb's perspectives on the subfield of microhistory. Magnusson wrote that his entry to microhistory occurred around the time of the Ronald Reagan administration. At this time, Magnusson saw that microhistory was tinged with the residue of European colonialism. He included the linguistic turn, the contribution of Foucault and Derrida, and the microhistory tension

between the French *Annales* school and the post-fascist Italian school exemplified by the work of Ginzburg. "In the final analysis," he wrote in 2003, "so far as I am aware, the ideology of microhistory has as yet failed to make any deep and lasting impression upon the discipline at large."[5] If Magnusson is correct, then from his side of the Atlantic Ocean, microhistory must fail as surely as the Lascaux artist recorded the injury of a human who stood up to the charging bison.

Magnusson's assessment, however, leads me to query the trepidation even further by interrogating the very ancient microhistory in the Lascaux cave. As I understand Foucault and the others mentioned by Magnusson, the question underlying those approaches is this: How in the name of titans' History did the colonized subjects ever find the power to topple European colonial administrations? Titanic histories lose power when microhistories are admitted. Therefore, if Magnusson's assessment is correct, microhistory must fail for its success will open up a Tilly-type path that leads to the democratization of global economic power and a Himmelfarb-type reconstruction of the European-dominated global economic order. (Before I proceed, it is important to reveal that I toured Versailles Palace, emblem of French national and imperial power, before I visited Lascaux.) What if the paintings on the wall of Lascaux's caves are an invocation or a spell rather than a history? What if a shaman wished individuals to take on the spirit of the rampaging or charging bison and dominate the other humans and animals of the region? Given that the territory above the Lascaux cave became a stage upon which Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Louis XIV, and Napoleon launched empires, we should leave a door open to the possibility that the Tilly-type residue of the least microhistory, even the simple yet empowering story of a human standing up to a bison, may change world orders on a Himmelfarb scale over many generations and millennia.

According to the oldest story that I have ever read, the crafting of microhistories is older than the crafting of macrohistories. According to Kathleen Canning, the trinity of race/class/gender was practiced in the field of women's history long before it was discovered by Foucault or Derrida.[6] In this subfield, the great charging bison was white male dominance. Women's history had at least two objectives: "the decentering of the Western white male subject and the reformulation of subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict," and an end to the "historical exclusion of women and the identification of human with male."[7] With their pens, early women's historians claimed a permanent place in the narratives of the past, just as Himmelfarb described.

Historians who factored for race/gender/class show something rather

curious, something that is not always so readily apparent in other history. In African American history, the master narrative centers upon slavery, namely that most African Americans entered the American theater of history as conquered commodities. Microhistories of the plantation experience, including abolition literature, often reinforced the idea that power belonged to white males. However, an early African American practitioner of microhistory, George Washington Williams, used his pen in the late nineteenth century to restore African American soldiers to the stage of macrohistories about American wars when he published his *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880; as Negroes, as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens.* He claimed a place for them in the victors' narratives just as surely as many African American veterans received their pensions. In the history of the nation of India, European dominance is only the most recent hegemony. In the imperial cycles of Indian history, the elite castes eventually shared power with the invaders. Mrinalini Sinha affirmed this with her observation that in Indian history, "neither feminism nor women are ever articulated *outside* macropolitical structures that condition and delimit their political efforts."[8] Such Indian women, along with many American women, were not standing up to the charging bison of social power. In both of these cases, those who are identified by race/gender/class, some African American veterans and some privileged women in India, claim a share of power in the established Nation or Empire. The subjects of these microhistories wanted to run beside the charging bison called Nation or Empire. They reinforce the macrohistory that Himmelfarb did not wish to see deconstructed.

So, while I think that the images painted on the Lascaux caves are the texts of one of the oldest microhistories, I dare not pretend to give an authoritative interpretation of the text. In the same manner, I do not predict that microhistories will undermine official histories. In fact, some reinforce macrohistories, world histories and metanarratives written in the long twentieth century. Microhistories often privilege the experience of an individual or a small group of individuals against the backdrop of narratives about such historical titans as Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Mao Zedong. In these contexts, microhistories do tend to invert the place of historical actors on the stage of the past but they do not always subvert the hegemony. The microhistories in this series recognize that individuals and groups have the agency to support and to reject systems of organizing society.

—Marsha R. Robinson, series editor

Notes

[1] Charles Tilly, "Future History," in *Theory and Society* 17, no. 5 (September 1988).
[2] Ibid., 706.
[3] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Some Reflections on the New History," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (June, 1989): 668.
[4] Ibid., 664.
[5] Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon, "'The Singularization of History': Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 701-735.
[6] Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 370.
[7] Ibid., 371.
[8] Mrinalini Sinha, "Mapping the Imperial Social Formation: A Modest Proposal for Feminist History," *Signs* 25, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 1078.

Some Social Networks Used by Ohio African Americans

American Civil Liberties Union
Black Aristocracy
Cleveland Call and Post
Cleveland Plain Dealer
Cleveland Community Relations Board
Commissions and Committees
Conventions
Congress of Racial Equality
Dayton Daily News
Dayton Journal Herald
De Facto Segregation Committee
A Sorority at Defiance College
Democratic Party
Disk Jockeys
Executive Committee of Fifteen
Freemason
Garreston House
Interracial House Visit Days
Jet Magazine
Karamu House
Ministers and Clergy
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association of Colored Women
National Catholic Welfare Conference
Ohio Anti-Slavery Society
Palladium of Liberty
Radio
Ravenna Town and Country Club
Republican Party
Task Force
The Guardian
The Philanthropist
The Mystery
Underground Railroad
United Freedom Movement
Women Religious

CHAPTER ONE

PURGATORY, PROLOGUE, AND DEMOCRACY: AFRICAN AMERICAN SCRIPTS FOR THE SECOND STAGE OF MEDITERRANEAN SOCIAL NETWORKING REVOLUTIONS

MARSHA R. ROBINSON

Democracy is a multigenerational project.

Democracy is carved out of tyranny by the liberal and diligent application of the sharp-edge of social networks. As we crafted these chapters for this volume, we were aware of fresh waves of democracy erupting around the Mediterranean Rim where spaces of political heaven are the goals of those living through the hell fires of social revolutions and demonstrations of the Twitter Revolutions of 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Purgatory between Kentucky and Canada: African Americans in Ohio focuses on the micro-tactics of ordinary people who sought peace in the middle of societies at various degrees of unrest. Some chapters focus on the printed word as a tool to change perceptions about African Americans. Other chapters focus on individuals acting in their communities. All of the chapters address the agency of individuals who attempted to create a little space of peace in a place that is less heavenly than some might suppose. We hope that the lessons that we have learned from our research subjects will inspire ordinary people everywhere to continue to pursue full inclusion in their social contracts until liberty and civil rights are common traits of the normal human condition.

Why Stage This in Ohio?

Ohio was a purgatory for people seeking to exercise and allocate the power of citizenship. While crossing the Ohio River was similar to the biblical crossing of the Jordan River for those seeking to leave the realm

of slavery, individuals and institutions were torn about the lingering residue of slavery, namely practices such as social death in the form of disenfranchisement and racial segregation. Individuals, black and white, exercised their own agency to make Ohio more of a social heaven however they defined it.

Between the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland are eighty-eight Ohio counties with a history of ambivalence about African Americans' social and political status. Once an enslaved person crossed the Ohio River, that person might have left slavery behind but there was no guarantee that they had acquired full citizenship rights in Ohio's social contract. It was literally an African American citizen's purgatory in that it was neither heaven nor hell.

The Ohio River was commonly known as the Jordan River in Negro spirituals because it marked the frontier between freedom and slavery just as crossing the Jordan River marked the end of the Exodus journey of the Hebrew descendants of Abraham who left slavery in Egypt. The theme of the Ohio River as a frontier has been taken up by David Gerber in *Black Ohio and the Color Line* (University of Illinois Press, 1976), by Nikki Taylor in *Frontiers of Freedom*: *Cincinnati's Black Community 1802-1868* (Ohio University Press, 2005), and by Darrel E. Bigham in *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and Its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (University Press of Kentucky, 2005). Unfortunately, the frontier was not confined to a map. The frontier between African-Americans and European-Americans was too often etched on the colorless soul. Global citizen and native of Detroit, MI, Ralph J. Bunche described the damage that racism does to democracy.

> One of the rocks on which the noble philosophy of human equality has run afoul takes shape as the frightful bogey, race…In a world such as ours some such creed of inequality is both inevitable and indispensable. For it furnished a rational justification for our coveted doctrines of blind nationalism, imperialism, and the cruel exploitation of millions of our fellow-men.[1]

In this volume, we present a multigenerational history of African Americans in Ohio who diligently used social networks and informed reason to combat the rationale of racism as a justification for rationing civil liberties.

Ohio African American History for an International Audience

Actors in mid-performance under stage lights are marginally aware of their audience. So it is for the historian, especially one who is so dedicated to making sense of their own ethnic or national history that they may not be aware of the international audience of their narrative. For these scholars the question is "What happened to us?" or "What did we do?" There is little risk in saying that these questions often drive many African American scholars of Black history. It is evident in the abundance of works that privilege slavery, the plantation, the migration away from slavery and the neo-slavery of twentieth century urban experience in which too many of the working class cycle between housing projects and the Constitutionally-endorsed slave labor inside modern prisons. These macro-level experiences were real—very real—and they continue to limit the options of many people of African descent in the United States.

Very recently, the residue of slavery polluted public discourse in the 2012 presidential election. Every now and then, a candidate or a supporter of a candidate was so engrossed in their performance of race on the campaign stage and before the bright lights of the media that they would forget about the composition of the audition. So, if many of the most politically empowered agents of the present continue to be bound by the script of race and plantation economy, it is quite reasonable to assume that many historians of the African American experience have been trained and encouraged to continue to contextualize the present by reifying the dynamics of the past in an endlessly looped Möbius strip of race versus oppression and suppressions and repressions that can ensnare the audience and the reenactors in a black hole of historicized prejudice.

Over the last decade, though, someone in my audience coughed and drew my attention away from historicized prejudice. Most of those in my recent audiences are members of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Dream Generation, people whose feet are shod in a purer democracy that repels historicized prejudice. Many are first or second generation New African Americans from African nations where slavery is not a racial issue, places where their ancestors were not enslaved but were forced to answer "Suh" to the colonizer for the span of three or four generations. I am not the only one with a changing audience. The audience to the performances of African American history proliferates around the world and their increasing identification with African American cultures is getting my attention. Why is this international audience watching the historical drama of African American ancestors?

As I travel the world physically and virtually, I have been pulled from what felt like obligatory performances of the Möbius script of historicized prejudice and have been shown another stage of historical drama. On this global stage, Black Studies/African American history is not about being an oppressed minority; rather, it is a template of being in the global majority of people who are marginalized within their own nation's social contracts.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Dream Generation demands a restaging of African American history. The structural facts of the canonical narrative will not change but the interpretations are no longer serving the needs of our audience who is socially networked and globally connected via on-line role-playing games in which they track two and four simultaneous screens of action. Scholars must adapt to our new audience whose parents never sat on segregated buses. As Henry Louis Gates wrote,

> We are scholars. For our field to grow, we need to encourage a true proliferation of ideologies and methodologies, rather than to seek uniformity or conformity…African-American Studies should be the home of free inquiry into the very complexity of being of African descent in the world, rather than a place where we seek to essentialize our cultural selves into stasis, and to drown out critical inquiry."[2]

This global audience asks for revision or addition or complexity because for more than a century it has related to something deeper than novelty or fashion. Dr. King's Dream Generation attends our performances of African American history because they are intellectually hungry. Kelly Miller may have identified an ideological orientation that has since been muted by trauma narratives or historicized prejudices.

> If you wish to reach and inspire the life of the people, the approach must be made not to the intellect, nor yet to the feelings as the final basis of appeal, but to the manhood that lies back of this.[3]

In many ways, the African American narrative is an accumulation of millions of micro-struggles for full inclusion in and equal enjoyment of the social contract of the United States. The residual struggle of plantation slavery that Bunche addressed in the 1930s reappeared in the blogs and political banter of the 2012 presidential election. What became embarrassingly obvious is that too many members of the formerly dominant classes only self-identify with the flip-side of the Möbius script—white supremacy. Without racism, this definition of manhood disintegrates and that can be a traumatic experience. Miller elaborated about the definition during his generation.

> The American white man in his ordinary state is supremely conscious of his manhood. He may be ignorant or poor or vicious; yet he never forgets that he is a man.[4]

So the pursuit of manhood/personhood for oppressors and oppressed is a theme of African American history that is a template for understanding many ethnic and national histories. It is a theme of rap music and modern literature. The deprivation of manhood is a form of conquest and imperialism whether the contest is international or intra-national. In the African American case, as Miller has stated, the contest is reduced to color or racism and it was so effective that it reproduced around the world as attested to by global citizen Ralph Bunche.

> The theory of race, endowed with a false dignity by pseudo-scientific treatment, thus serves to justify economic policies, to bolster up political ambitions, to foment class prejudices and many other types of social antagonism among both groups and nations.[5]

Eventually, racism as an explanation of inequality around the world is "exposed as shameless subterfuges thriving on ignorance and hysteria."[6] It is no new fact that the African American experience is a template or model of oppression around the world. This explains the global audience members of the drama of African American history. Henry Louis Gates asks us to add other stages. Perhaps he had this modern global audience in mind.

Picture-within-a-Picture African American History

Return to the audience. Our audience members, including you-the-reader who will become you-the-teacher when you share the stories in this book with others, sometimes have access to television and computer display screens that show multiple pictures or cascading windows. This is such a different experience than that of the nineteenth and early twentieth century audience members when drama was performed on stages, in pulpits and in movie theaters. African American history has been adapting.

For much of the twentieth century, the Civil Rights Movement drew its strength from the unifying experience of racial discrimination. The great questions were "What happened to us?" and "What did we do?" It was a movement dominated by the Southern context and the great marches for civil rights. So it may be no accident that the scholarship of the mid- to late-twentieth century focused on the Southern experience and the Great Migrations to the North. I believe that there was a necessary essentialism

in order to generate the unity needed to achieve and solidify the disintegration of the Jim Crow system. However, African American history is far more complex than this historiography suggests.

In this volume, we accept Gates' invitation to render a more complex narrative. We do so in two ways: time and geography. The majority of our chapters focus on the nineteenth century and all of these narratives involve Ohioans. In other words, we are not writing a script about plantations.

We have much company in our presentation of African American history beyond the plantation. Robert Warner's *New Haven Negroes: a Social History* (1969) presents a Connecticut community of free African Americans who make W. E. B. Du Bois look like just another grandson and this is what he was for his grandfather was a powerful New Haven citizen.[7] Gary B. Nash normalized the Forten family, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in his *Forging Freedom: the Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (1988).[8] The works continued a tradition practiced by nineteenth-century Ohio scholars such as George Washington Williams and William A. Joiner in that these narratives include Northern free African Americans.[9] Sometimes such stories are dismissed for the populations of these areas were small when compared to the numbers of enslaved persons. However, at the end of the twentieth century another group of scholars brought us the history of African Americans on the American borderlands. Jane Landers gave us *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (1999) and Larry E. Rivers added *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (2000). In each we learn of free and enslaved African Americans who had more civil rights to family and property in the Spanish system than in the English system. [10] We can keep pushing to the Western frontier. Quintard Taylor's *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (1998) is a global sensation as is his co-edited volume with Shirley Ann Wilson Moore *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000* (2003).[11] These works show us that more dignity is recoverable from African American history when we break the rule of 1619 CE and disregard the redlining on English/American maps. It is my experience that these narratives have a transformative effect on students belonging to Dr. King's Dream Generation for they render slavery and racism all the more deplorable by presenting evidence of "What did we do?" when slavery was absent. There is far more to African American history than slavery. There is a nineteenth century narrative written by those who lived it and by those who received it from the elders of their families and communities. It is a narrative that is slowly being resumed. It is a complex narrative of African Americans as empowered people and citizens rather

than as commodities. This is a narrative that resonates with globally connected audiences.

Ohio: Purgatory between Kentucky and Canada

There are at least two ways to present Ohio African American history. One method presents Ohio as the Promised Land beyond the wilderness of plantations. This is the approach taken by: Keith P. Griffler in *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (2004); Darrel E. Bigham in *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and Its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (2006) and, Kimberley L. Phillips in *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (1999).[12] Each of these important works enhances our knowledge of "What happened to us?" with respect to the millions upon millions of enslaved people and they help us appreciate the enormous challenge that each slave faced and the victory of their descendants who made it to the heavenly Promised Land north of the Ohio River.

We have chosen a second way of presenting Ohio African Americans' history by inverting the dominant narrative with micro-histories that stage African Americans as pioneers and citizens. Ours is not a book about slavery. We look at Ohio history and our findings join us to those who write narratives about African American pioneers and citizens of America's frontiers, especially those who founded and defended communities in New England. The franchise mattered in antebellum Ohio where some African Americans did vote, as Ric Sheffield presents findings about Ohioans who were socially connected those with a tradition from the 1821 New York State Constitutional Convention in which almost all African Americans were disenfranchised. George Walker wrote,

> In their struggle to regain the suffrage, blacks in New York displayed a level of sophistication and intensity of purpose which seemed to dwarf many of their other activities…as spokesmen in both the press and pulpit rallied in solid phalanx to make the acquisition of the vote an overriding priority. In this sense blacks were the true exponents of democracy.[13]

We see echoes of this in challenges brought to the Ohio Supreme Court over the "visible admixture rule" in Ric Sheffield's chapter, in the passionate patriotism of David Jenkins' *Palladium of Liberty* newspaper as presented by Willie J. Harrell, Jr., and in the legal actions taken by Solomon Day's community as presented by Debra E. Robinson. Many African American pioneers demanded full political inclusion in Ohio's

social contract.

Many African Americans in Ohio seemed disinterested in colonization as they created their own communities, prospered, and endowed future generations with schools, churches and cemeteries as Ken Goings, Eugene O'Connor and Debra E. Robinson show us. These actions manifested the sentiments that Robert Warner found in New Haven, CT, during the same generation where the American Colonization Society was unpopular according to an 1831 pamphlet, "Resolution of the People of Color…with an Address to the Citizens of New York in Answer to Those of the Colonization Society."

> We are content to abide where we are. We do not believe that things will always continue the same. The time must come when the declaration of independence [*sic*] will be felt in the heart as well as uttered from the mouth.

A year later, the Peace and Benevolent Society of Afric-Americans of New Haven Negroes was more direct. "We are Americans and any of us who goes to colonization is either weak in mind or a traitor."[14]

Pioneer African Americans in Ohio contributed to the development of an African American intelligentsia, a group so well versed in the Greco-Roman culture upon which the Enlightenment ideals of Liberty and Equality were founded that they could articulate these ideals throughout the social networks of the day. Ken Goings and Eugene O'Connor bring us William Scarborough's struggle to teach the classics so that his students could enter the "Republic of Letters." They remind us that W. E. B. Du Bois published his gratitude for the opportunity to teach in Ohio in Scarborough's department at Wilberforce University. Aaron Pride shows us that this generation networked with the family of William Monroe Trotter and Trotter took these ideals to Boston where he boldly confronted Booker T. Washington's anti-intellectualism. Trotter and Du Bois collaborated in the 1905 creation of the Niagara Movement. Ohio can be considered an African American intellectual haven.

In the nineteenth century, Ohio was a veritable purgatory where African Americans carved out a degree of heaven as they claimed their place in the American social contract. The foundations of freedom that they laid survived the Great Migrations of Southerners and other immigrants in numbers that triggered new waves of racism. However, the bonds of equality forged by the pioneers reappeared in the Dayton Catholic Schools' efforts to desegregate. Expectations of equality and democracy reappeared in the aspirations of Cleveland's youths from several ethnic groups during the Martin Luther King era. While the

national media had its eyes on Montgomery and Watts, local televised and printed media presented another picture to Ohioans. According to some Cleveland area desegregation pioneers who were interviewed by Dana Aritonovich, Ohio African Americans and their allies used the social networks of radio to free Cleveland by transcending racial and religious divisions so that all citizens enjoyed more inclusion in the American social contract.

Ohio was a purgatory for people seeking to exercise and allocate the power of citizenship. While crossing the Ohio River was similar to the crossing of the Jordan River for those seeking to leave the realm of slavery, individuals and institutions were torn about the lingering residue of slavery, namely practices such as lynching, disenfranchisement and racial segregation. When we change our stage and present micro-histories of African Americans in Ohio, we discover a global truism: viable democracy is a multigenerational effort cultivated one brave individual at a time who navigates social networks to reach the global majority.

Our hope for the new democracies born of the Twitter Revolutions around the Mediterranean and elsewhere is that they may draw inspiration from Ohio African Americans to remain diligent in their application of the sharp edge of the social network to carve political heavens out of the purgatories of tyranny.

Notes

[1] Ralph J. Bunche, *A World View of Race*, (Washington, DC: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), 2.
[2] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Loose Canons: African American Studies in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 127.
[3] Kelly Miller, *Out of the House of Bondage* (reprint New York: Arno Press, 1969; original New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co. Pub, 1914), 87.
[4] Miller, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 88.
[5] Bunche, *World View of Race*, 3.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Robert Austin Warner, *New Haven Negroes: a Social History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940).
[8] Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: the Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
[9] George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers and as Citizens; Together with a Preliminary Consideration of the Unity of the Human Family, an Historical Sketch of Africa, and an Account of the Negro Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883); William A. Joiner, *A Half Century of Freedom of the Negro in Ohio* (Xenia, OH: Smith Adv. Co., 1915).

[10] Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Larry E. Rivers added *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).
[11] Quintard Taylor, In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990 (New York: Norton, 1998);
[12] Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004); Darrel E. Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and Its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); and, Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
[13] George E. Walker, *The Afro-American in New York City, 1827-1860* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 190.
[14] Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, 50, 51.

CHAPTER TWO

"ALL MEN ARE CREATED FREE AND EQUAL": NATIONAL COMMUNITY IN *PALLADIUM OF LIBERTY*, OHIO'S FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWSPAPER, 1843-1844

WILLIE J. HARRELL, JR.

> We have been induced to undertake the publication of this paper, that we may commence speaking through the press. It may be urged by some that a press cannot effect any thing, but we look to the press for future good,—by the machinery of the press we can almost speak, and hope through it to effect much in ameliorate our condition [*sic*].
>
> —"Our Course," *Palladium of Liberty*, December 27, 1844[1]

In the nineteenth century, Ohio served as a conduit for African Americans seeking to escape the racial prejudices of slavery. Cities and towns from Cincinnati to Cleveland and from Marietta to Toledo served as breeding grounds for the anti-slavery movement. Pledging to fight for the abolition of slavery and to form laws that would protect African Americans after they were free, the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (OASS), established in Zanesville, Ohio, in April 1835, employed numerous avenues to encourage Ohioans to join the abolitionist's cause. Representing all shades of the slavery debate, journalism played a vital role in these affairs. While OASS used James Birney's newspaper, *The Philanthropist*,[2] as a vehicle to advance their cause, some African American abolitionists found a voice in the emergent *Palladium of Liberty*,[3] a weekly African American newspaper that appeared in Columbus in 1843 with the specific purpose of

> helping to create and shape a reality that would bring about both the eradication of slavery, and an end to the severe discrimination, enforced by law, against Black Ohioans.[4]

Published by the Executive Committee of Fifteen, a group of free Blacks, *Palladium* released its first issue Wednesday, December 27, 1843. Beneath its masthead appeared its motto which set the tone for the newspaper and claimed justice for all men: "We Hold These Truths to Be Self Evident, That All Men Are Created Free and Equal," an obvious play on the renowned line that appeared in the "unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America." In this inaugural issue, "The Prospectus,"[5] editor David Jenkins called for a united effort to fight against the oppression and subjugation African Americans faced not only in Ohio but also on a national scale. He proclaimed,

> We are born citizens of these United States, therefore, as good citizens we should adhere to all the mandates of the law, and in order to effect the great end we have in view, as a people, we must unite in the great work of reform—when we speak of reform, we mean we must speak as one man.

Calling for a "combined system of action," Jenkins wrote, "Let us press on, step by step, and use the sword of truth, which is mighty and must prevail." He requested *Palladium*'s readers to aid in this endeavor by sending in letters.

> Send in your communications for the press. [We] believe that a paper conducted by an arrangement of this kind will be crowned with the best of consequences.[6]

With this call, Ohio's first African American civil rights-oriented newspaper had finally arrived—sixteen years after the first African American newspaper, *Freedmen's Journal*, was launched—to contribute to the growing importance of abolitionism in America.

By examining the discursive strategies employed by *Palladium*'s editor, this chapter investigates how Jenkins used the periodical as a major force to influence public opinion in Ohio and to support full political independence for its constituents. Since newspapers have been historically considered "important social and linguistic site[s]" that have "played a particularly important role in imagining the nation," *Palladium* made it possible for Black Ohioans to engage in a national discourse about issues surrounding slavery by providing readers with a sense of community on a national level.[7] Because the agenda for the pre-Civil War newspaper reflected the "collective cultural values" of the constituencies where they were published, *Palladium* focused on the importance of community cohesiveness in the Black community. [8]

Scholars have virtually ignored the role *Palladium* played in the anti-slavery movement. Arguably one of the most principal factors explaining *Palladium*'s absence in scholarship would be the fact the newspaper entered into an arena that was already dominated by African American newspapers associated with internationally known abolitionists like Garrison or Douglass that addressed similar issues. It is not surprising, then, that this kind of analysis overlooked *Palladium*'s importance. Likewise, scholarship has rarely featured Jenkins's life. Born in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1811, Jenkins practiced various professions throughout his life as a farmer, barber, paper hanger and painter, as well as an operator in the Underground Railroad. Jenkins relocated to Columbus in 1837 and became a principal proponent of civil rights activities. A recruiter for the 127th Ohio Infantry during the Civil War, Jenkins was appointed to the Freedmen's Bureau in Mississippi and eventually left Columbus in 1873 and moved to Canton, Mississippi. Jenkins died in 1877.[9]

Like many African American newspapers, however, *Palladium* did not have a particularly long life: publication ceased on November 13, 1844. The second issue appeared on February 7, 1844, more than five weeks after the publication of the first issue, suggesting that publishing the paper, even in its initial stages, was not an easy proposition.[10] As Armistead S. Pride and Clint W. Wilson II have noted, the Black newspaper in antebellum America struggled financially.

> Antebellum papers had proved essential to the Black struggle to elevate the freemen and liberate the enslaved, but it was no secret that in starting a paper and trying to keep it going publishers faced tremendous odds, that is, rarely anything but failure unless they had occasional infusions of unobligated cash from either institutions or charitable individuals.[11]

Palladium was no exception to this rule. Although financial success stumped *Palladium* in its almost twelve month existence, once established, the newspaper was a persistent, formidable opponent of slavery and oppression. Since nineteenth century African American periodicals echoed the various measures to which Blacks "turned in an effort to change their oppressed status in American society," Jenkins championed a variety of issues and documented not only the cruel treatment Blacks faced in Ohio but also the discrimination they suffered.[12] Perhaps it was Jenkins's punitive and sometimes aggressive editorials and commentaries that disturbed some possible supporters who otherwise might have been generous with their funding. Revealing the newspaper's financial woes to its readers in an editorial entitled "Delay of Our Paper," published just a little over a month before *Palladium*'s final issue, Jenkins charged that the

newspaper's misfortunes were a direct result of it subscribers' lack of support.

> We neglected to mention this in our last, that we intend to discontinue our paper for a short time, to enable us to make new arrangements, and the course we intend to pursue for the future. We are much embarrassed in the finances of our paper, in consequence of the backwardness of our subscribers. If you intend to pay us, now is your time. It will be some weeks before we shall be able to send you the next number, but don't forget that you owe us, send it in.[13]

No doubt Jenkins expected to obtain the assistance of the local community in Columbus, both Black and White. After four more issues, however, *Palladium* ceased publication. Distributed throughout the Midwest and Eastern United States, *Palladium* contributed editorials that supported education, temperance, moral reform, the annexation of Texas and the elective franchise. African American newspapers such as *Palladium* illustrated how editors "borrowed, revised, and asserted new rules for Black life in America."[14] Jenkins did not intend to isolate *Palladium* from other Black papers. Not only did he publish original articles written by local Ohioans but he also reprinted articles from other well-known African American newspapers, increasing the newspaper's national coverage as a service to its readers. Articles were often reprinted, for example, from Martin R. Delany's *The Mystery* and other periodicals such as the *Milwaukie Democrat*, the *Richmond Whig*, the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald*, the *Richmond Enquirer* and the *Journal of Commerce*.[15]

Conceivably, according to historian Dennis Charles Hollins, Jenkins borrowed the title of *Palladium* from OASS's *Report of the First Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society* which stated,

> The press, that palladium of our liberties…has not only failed to condemn the guilty and refused to defend the innocent, but by systematic misrepresentation has been the chief instrument in formenting [*sic*] the mind of the disorderly and goading them on the outrage.[16]

Possibly, however, Jenkins borrowed the title from Junius, a pseudonym of Harry Sampson Woodfall, who contributed a series of letters to the *London Public Advertiser* from January 21, 1769 to January 21, 1772, although there was no evidence that Jenkins was familiar with the *London Public Advertiser*.

> Let it be impressed upon your minds, let it be instilled into your children, that the liberty of the press is the *Palladium* of all the civil, political, and religious right.[17]

At any rate, Jenkins felt that Black Ohioans were entitled to all the rights and benefits of being American citizens and he used *Palladium* as a catalyst to achieve these ends. Therefore, Jenkins fully embraced a "rhetoric of Black elevation" which was aimed to "bring about the general uplift" of the Black community by "educating and informing them about events which were of special concern to Black Ohioans."[18] In a June 5, 1844, "Letter to the Editor" written by Geo. W. Roots, the secretary of the Executive Committee of Fifteen, Roots summed up *Palladium*'s purpose:

> Mr. Editor, if we do not use every exertion in behalf of the poor dejected slave, we are answerable; and if duty be any thing more than a word of imposture; If conscience be not a bug bear [*sic*] we are preparing to make ourselves as wretched as the slaves. Come let us arouse to the sense of our duty and prepare our minds for sober judgment, for the voice of humanity issues from the plantations in the South [illegible] claiming in their hearts, liberty.[19]

In the following issue, Jenkins published another letter to the editor that was signed simply by "S. H. B" of Wooster, Ohio, who argued that *Palladium* fought for "the cause of human rights—the cause of our oppressed fellow man—the cause of truth—and the cause of God." S. H. B. concluded that "bondage can never be remedied, unless, it is done by all our united efforts."[20] By publishing such editorials as the ones above, Jenkins hoped that a national identity would be a shared experience by his readers. Although Jenkins gave *Palladium* the stamp of his enduring interest in the effects of slavery on Blacks, his editorials and commentaries did not hinder writers of letters and articles sent to the periodical, themselves testimony to the need for a Black newspaper in Ohio.

Slavery in Ohio, however, was abolished by the state's original constitution in 1802. As stated in the constitution, "no alteration of this constitution shall ever take place, so as to introduce Slavery or involuntary servitude into this State."[21] Because of its Black Laws, though, which aggressively barred Black immigration, Ohio "provided a classic example of how anti-immigration legislation could be invoked to harass Negro residents."[22] The state legislature enacted Black Laws in 1804 and 1807 that would later compel Blacks entering the state to post bond of $500 guaranteeing good behavior and to produce a court paper as proof that they

were free. The timing of the appearance of *Palladium* was crucial, then, because it demonstrated that the resistance of the Black community concerning Black Laws in Ohio had strengthened. In response to the Ohio Supreme Court decision, John Newton Templeton, a free man of color and the first African American graduate of Athens College (Ohio University), delivered an "Address at Chillicothe (Ohio) in the Methodist Church, on the 4th of July [1829]." In the address Templeton posited, "Could not the press in Ohio, &c. effect wonders on this subject, by impressing these and other considerations on the minds of the public?"[23] By the time Jenkins edited the first few issues of *Palladium*, fourteen years later, equality was neither abundant nor "bleak and devoid of hope" in the state.[24] Jenkins wrote in an editorial "that the black laws [*sic*] of '4 and '7 not only conflicts with our common sense of justice; but that the constitution of the State of Ohio" perpetuated the essence of such laws.[25] By 1843, Columbus' Black community was utilizing whatever means necessary to achieve equality. This awareness of Black liberation was most evident in the calling of a "state convention of colored citizens" on August 10-12, 1843, to protest the continuing threat of Black Laws. "Address to the Citizens of Ohio," a report on the convention, was subsequently published in the first issue of *Palladium*. The conventioneers sought to call attention to the "unjust and impolite course which is pursued toward us; a course which grants us the name of freemen, but robs us of their attributes." The report ended with a voice of prophecy. The conventioneers revealed that they did not intend to ask Ohio to "abolish" its "form of government," but sought to request that the state "would repeal all laws and parts of laws that make a distinction on account of color, and which degrade us on that account." If this occurred, Ohioans would make "manifest to the world your love of justice, your hatred of oppression, and your determination to preserve a strict adherence to the great principles" of the Founding Fathers.[26]

The *Palladium* on the Declaration of Independence

As with many African American newspapers of the time, *Palladium* was a pro-American medium of communication. These kinds of publications "hinged on the editor's belief that democratic values such as liberty, that equality could eventually become viable for people of color, in the true spirit of the forgone Revolution."[27] Its thirty-seven issues, four pages with three columns each, measuring approximately twelve by nine inches, were filled with democratic ideas on liberty and equality. Moreover, the political rhetoric of liberty and justice for all which had been previously laid by the Founding Fathers began to shape the editorials in *Palladium*. In