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Education for All: The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Richmond and Petersburg, 1865 - 1870

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EDUCATION FOR ALL
THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU SCHOOLS IN RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG, 1865 – 1870

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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This study examines the development of Freedmen's Bureau schools in Central Virginia at the end of the Civil War. Under the watchful eye of Ralza Manly, Superintendent of the Virginia Freedmen's Bureau education division, establishing schools for freed slaves faced innumerable challenges ranging from inadequate financial resources to hostile southern whites who opposed northern intervention into local affairs. Nevertheless, northern benevolent societies and hundreds of altruistic, yet paternalistic, educational missionaries converged on Richmond and Petersburg determined that education was essential if blacks were to achieve true freedom and become self-reliant and independent. While the Bureau devoted much of its energy towards establishing schools for the freedpeople, Manly and northern educators worked to expand educational

opportunities for whites. This, together with the black schools, laid the foundation for creating free, albeit segregated, public schools for both races in Richmond and Petersburg, the first such enterprises in post-Civil War Virginia.

CHAPTER 1

Preface

"This is the end of our second week in school, and no help has come! We have allowed ourselves to work much harder than we should have done if we had not looked every day for teachers."[1] Northern teacher Lucy Chase penned this observation in the spring of 1865, a few weeks after the fall of the Confederacy. It provides a succinct yet vivid description of the hectic process that teacher missionaries underwent when trying to start schools for freed slaves in Richmond. The presence of Chase and countless other volunteers in the former Confederate capital shortly after Union forces occupied the city marked the start of an expanded effort by northern educators to introduce schools to the freedpeople in Central Virginia. Chase's altruistic spirit and thousands like her helped spawn one of the largest philanthropic programs ever attempted by the United States government.

At the end of the Civil War millions of impoverished former slaves, most illiterate and lacking rudimentary education, faced an uncertain future. Federal officials soon realized if emancipated slaves were to leverage their newfound freedom within a predominately white society, the development of a comprehensive school system was

[1] Letter from Lucy Chase, 29 April 1865 in *The Freedmen's Record* 1 (June 1865): 97 (hereinafter referenced as *FR*).

necessary. Prior to the war, southern states had not only actively discouraged any schooling for blacks, free or slave, but also manifested little interest in spending money toward educating the white masses; thus, most communities were ill-equipped and unwilling to dedicate resources for emancipated slaves. The task, then, of building a viable and sustainable infrastructure for black schools rested on the shoulders of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, better known as the Freedmen's Bureau, as well as numerous northern freedmen's aid societies. Providing schools for the freedpeople was a daunting challenge. While the Bureau's immediate concern was to reunite families and provide relief to itinerant freedmen through the distribution of rations, clothing, and fuel, nonetheless, for political and social reconstruction to succeed, northerners realized blacks must also have access to education.

Created during the last weeks of the war, the Freedmen's Bureau represented a vast extension of federal authority into state and local affairs. In many respects the agency foreshadowed the vast federal bureaucracy of the twentieth century. For four years after the war the Bureau played a critical role in the daily lives of freedpeople and white southerners. This study examines how paternalism, white-black attitudes, gender, and local-federal relations affected the development of the Freedmen's Bureau schools in the Richmond and Petersburg districts, which together comprised one of the largest enrollments of ex-slaves in Virginia. It probes the interrelationships between supporters and critics of black education during the formative stages of Reconstruction. Thus, much of the narrative is told from the viewpoint of the participants – members of northern

benevolent societies, teachers, students and parents, the white community, newspaper editors, and officials of the Freedmen's Bureau.

In assessing whether the Bureau succeeded in its mission to expand educational opportunities to freedmen and freedwomen in Central Virginia, it is important to keep in mind the plethora of Reconstruction scholarship already available. Earlier interpretations have accused the Freedmen's Bureau of being too intrusive or not intrusive enough in its quest to provide economic, political and educational benefits to the freedpeople. Needless to say, the scholarship has changed significantly over the last one hundred years, reflecting a deep divide among historians.

Until the 1960's the "Dunning School" largely shaped historical ideas about Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Bureau.[2] William Dunning and his many followers published unflattering histories of the Reconstruction period that criticized northern political and social policies in the post-war South. These scholars held the Freedmen's Bureau and its schools in low esteem, accusing the federal government and Yankee invaders of forcing radical social ideals upon a defeated South. Dunningites argued that northerners' callous disregard for southern society vitiated any hope of peaceful reconciliation and fomented a violent backlash by citizens unwilling to allow New Englanders to interfere in their daily lives. The Dunning School's powerful hold on

[2] William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907); John W. Burgess, *Reconstruction and the Constitution, 1866-1876* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1902); Claude Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1929).

historical scholarship overshadowed friendlier studies of the agency by writers such as W. E. B. DuBois, Luther Jackson, and John and LaWanda Cox.

In 1901 W. E. B. DuBois credited the Bureau with building the foundation of a free public school system across the south. He considered Bureau teachers heroes, comparing their work to that of a religious crusade and acknowledging the sacrifices they made to educate the masses. "The crusade of the New England schoolma'am," DuBois wrote, "seemed to our age far more quixotic than the quest of St. Louis seemed to his." The din of war had been replaced with the soothing site of women in "calico dresses" who sought "a life work in planting New England schoolhouses among the white and black of the South. They did their work well."[3] Two decades later, Luther P. Jackson, writing about the freedmen's schools in South Carolina, argued that the Bureau and northern benevolent societies accomplished great things. Although he admitted the educational movement "failed to reach" the "modern ideal of the education of the all the people," it nevertheless built the infrastructure necessary to expand the reach of public schools to blacks across the state.[4] During the 1950's Reconstruction scholars John and LaWanda Cox concluded "that even the most friendly studies of the Bureau have exaggerated its weaknesses and

[3] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1901): 358. See also W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1935).

[4] Jackson, "The Educational Efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and Freedmen's Aid Societies in South Carolina, 1862-1872," *The Journal of Negro History* 8, no. 1 (January 1923): 40.

minimized its strength." Rather than fomenting racial animosity, Bureau agents "sought to promote mutual confidence between blacks and whites," the Cox's wrote.[5]

Nonetheless, despite these generally favorable assessments about the Bureau the Dunning legacy continued to influence historians. In 1941, education historian Henry Swint accused "Yankee schoolmarms" of using blacks in their attempt to remake southern society in the image of northern institutions. Northern teachers, he wrote, considered southerners "minions of Satan," and fueled seeds of hatred and discontent, destroying "any possibility of securing co-operation, or even acquiescence," from the local citizenry. Swint pointed out, however, that many enlightened southerners endorsed educating blacks. The question was not whether freed slaves should attend school, but rather who would control the program. "The Southerner did not fear the education of the Negro," Swint argued, "he feared Negro education in the hands of the typical 'Yankee teacher,' under the program of education advanced by the Radical legislatures."[6] That same year Wilbur J. Cash published his seminal panoramic study of southern society. He described the Reconstruction era as a "vast effort to coerce and destroy" southern political and social structures. Cash saved some of his most potent vitriol for the "horsefaced, bespectacled Yankee schoolma'am," whose lack of intellect and unfamiliarity with local traditions "had no little part in

[5] John and LaWanda Cox, "General O. O. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau,'" *The Journal of Southern History* 19, no. 4 (November 1953): 428, 456,

[6] Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), 57, 59, 95, 141 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

developing Southern bitterness as a whole . . . and . . . contributed much to the growth of hysterical sensibility to criticism."[7]

Historians continued to attack the Freedmen's Bureau schools into the next decade. In his 1955 study of the Freedmen's Bureau, historian George Bentley took a sympathetic view towards the plight of vanquished southerners. He concluded: "The Bureau could have accomplished more had its schools not aroused the hostility of southern whites." Rather than circumscribing the curriculum to reading and writing, Bentley wrote that agency officials looked the other way when teachers introduced politics and sociology into their lesson plans. White southerners blamed educational missionaries for exploiting blacks in order to advance an agenda espousing "social equality." Bentley argued further that had the agency and northern educators allowed former masters a greater role in school supervision, perhaps the outcome would have been more successful. Instead, Bentley wrote, "the Freedmen's Bureau had fed the flame of race hostility and had canceled out much of the good it had otherwise accomplished for the Negro and the nation."[8] The views of Swint, Cash, and Bentley reflected the contemporary "climate of opinion" in which blacks were subject to widespread discrimination and disenfranchisement. Any revision to this historical interpretation was possible only when there was a noticeable shift in American racial attitudes.

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[7] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1941; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 136-137 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[8] George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 78-79, 184, 214 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

The impetus for a different interpretation of Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Bureau was the civil rights movement. During the height of the social ferment in the 1960s, scholars took a critical approach toward the Bureau, attacking its performance not for inciting southern hostility and arousing racial tension, but for acquiescing to the demands of local white leaders, struggling to maintain their hegemony over the freedpeople. Historian William McFeely, disagreeing with earlier historiographical interpretations, argued that Bureau officials succumbed to pressure from the Johnson administration to hand over more government control to former Confederate leaders. "The Freedmen's Bureau," McFeely said, did not "feed the 'flame of racial hostility,' as Bentley claimed. Instead, it banked the freedmen's aspirations."[9]

Echoing McFeely's criticism, education historian Ronald Butchart called the Bureau "an agency of compromise, conciliation, and co-optation" whose policies served to "placate southern whites." Rather than using education as one part of a multi-pronged strategy to secure black political and social rights, the agency mistakenly assumed that schooling was a panacea. In partnership with benevolent societies, this misguided effort, Butchart argued, was destined to fail because northerners based their promises of a better life on a set of paternalistic, middle-class white values that embraced education as the sole means of achieving social uplift. Put another way, northern educators attempted to export their version of civilized behavior to make blacks more like whites, and in doing so,

[9] William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 3.

solidified "white control and dominance." In the end, Butchart argued, "the school was not given to the freedmen to facilitate liberation. It was given to them in place of liberation."[10]

In the past fifteen years scholars have published several state-level studies of the Bureau. These historians have focused their attention not only on the complex forces at work during Reconstruction, but also the hopes, aspirations, and interactions of opposing constituencies who battled to control the outcome of the new social order. Caught between opposing political factions, faced with limited federal resources, and garnering little support from an inimical white populace, bureau agents and northern benevolent societies in the field of education did the best they could under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Historian Paul Cimbala has argued that much of the older Freedmen's Bureau historiography have de-emphasized how these "very real obstacles" impacted the work of Bureau agents; instead, earlier historians placed greater weight on "Yankee ideology's internal weaknesses and the racism of Northerners."[11]

Recent scholars of the Freedmen's Bureau have refrained from judging the agency's work based on twentieth century standards of right and wrong. Randy Finley, who studied the Bureau's work in Arkansas, condemned earlier scholars for making the history of the agency "a morality play." The tendency to call northerners racist or paternalistic, he said, is "too present minded" because "they decontextualize Reconstruction and judge 1865 and 1866 from the perspective of the New Deal or the

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[10] Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 74, 107, 206-208.

[11] Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), xvi.

Great Society."[12] In other words, rather than using twentieth century social morals to judge the Bureau's goals and methods, it is better to examine them within the context of ideals extant in nineteenth century America. In his examination of the Texas Bureau, Barry Crouch concluded that the agency was not "as dismal as past historians have pictured it." Recognizing that "from a modern perspective, the quality of freedom and independence may not be what was envisioned for black Texans," Crouch asserted "the Texas Freedmen's Bureau did what was humanly possible." Paul Cimbala acknowledged the presence of systemic weaknesses within the Georgia Bureau, but argued: "Its men deserve better than summary dismissal of their work as being no more than the efforts of a racist society attempting to define a subordinate kind of freedom for the ex-slaves."[13]

Rather than speaking as one, these recent studies have shown that the Bureau and its legion of agents were many things to many different people. Moreover, there were regional differences throughout what is often presented as a monolithic South. Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller have written: "there were in fact many Bureaus, as agents, freedpeople, and white southerners negotiated . . . the meaning of freedom in their local areas."[14] Indeed, in matters of educating the freedpeople no single template worked in every community. Numerous obstacles stood in the way forcing agents and teachers to adapt quickly to changing conditions on the ground. In Richmond and Petersburg,

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[12] Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 167.

[13] Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation*, xiv-xv; Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 130.

[14] Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., "Preface," *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), x.

widespread economic hardship, shortages of supplies, financial and fundraising woes, recalcitrant local whites, and, at times, strained relations between the Bureau and northern benevolent associations, conspired to derail the education movement in Central Virginia. Given the many challenges, roadblocks, and ideological conflicts thrown at them, it is amazing that the Bureau and educational missionaries were able to accomplish anything at all.

With the exception of William Alderson's 1952 article, "The Freedmen's Bureau and Negro Education in Virginia," there have been few studies of Bureau schools in Virginia, particularly at the community level.[15] Richmond and Petersburg were the political, industrial, and transportation hub of Virginia. The struggles and triumphs taking place in these two cities reveal important clues as to how the complex web of nineteenth century race, gender, and political relations and ideas impacted black education. Within this framework, several groups will be examined – educational philanthropists, the Freedmen's Bureau, the freedpeople, and the southern white community.

Not unlike their southern counterparts most northerners held a paternalistic attitude towards freedpeople, typically viewing them as helpless children who lacked the cognitive skills necessary to build their own schools. Educational missionaries, however, and the associations who sponsored them believed outside intervention into southern affairs was a necessary by-product of emancipation and the only option available to ensure that illiterate blacks received an education. They were eager to transplant northern-style schools and the

[15] William T. Alderson, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau and Negro Education in Virginia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 29 (1952): 64-90.

Protestant work ethic – industry, piety and self-reliance. Thus, the education program was not only about teaching freedpeople to read and write, but also about uplifting blacks by erasing "bad habits moral laxity," traits philanthropists directly attributed to slavery.[16] Leading the charge to inculcate blacks with civilized education were women, who took advantage of shifting gender roles in which most men shunned humanitarian work, preferring instead to pursue business opportunities. Black education afforded women chances to expand their spatial boundaries and participate in a historic movement, but more important it allowed them a voice in which to influence policy and fundraising.

Providing the organizational backbone and logistical support rested with the Bureau's Superintendent of Education. In Virginia, Ralza Manly, a New England educator who had served as pastor in a Union black regiment, assumed the post and immediately took an active leadership role on several fronts, including procuring suitable buildings to house classrooms, instituting a standardized, efficient school system, and encouraging blacks to lend financial support to their schools. Along the way, he faced a pressing dilemma: given the Bureau's temporary status, how to fulfill the agency's mission to educate thousands of freedpeople without a stable and reliable source of funding. Nonetheless, the Yankee educator pressed forward, determined to instill literacy in the black community. One of his more conspicuous achievements was establishing a normal school that served as a training ground for blacks to become teachers for their own people. Manly's role demanded extraordinary stamina as he maneuvered his way towards

[16] Paul Cimbala, *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War.* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2005), 78.

developing a viable school system for blacks, and whites. In fact, while educating freedpeople was his main objective, Manly supported greater access to schools for local whites. The Bureau's education strategy in Central Virginia, then, sought to reconstruct southern society by expanding educational opportunities to both races. By 1869 this approach engendered the creation of free, yet segregated, public school systems in Richmond and Petersburg for blacks and whites.

The success of the Freedmen's schools depended on the reaction by the black community. Despite abject poverty and the remonstrance of former masters, freedpeople celebrated their emancipation by manifesting an unwavering energy and optimism at the chance to attend and support their schools. In doing so blacks challenged long-held southern tradition in which education was seen as a privilege reserved for whites. As Eric Foner has pointed out, "access to education for themselves and their children was, for blacks, central to the meaning of freedom."[17] Northern teachers in Richmond and Petersburg voiced astonishment at the reaction by blacks when they learned northern missionaries had arrived to open schools. The enthusiastic response extended beyond just attendance. Blacks contributed money and labor to help build schoolhouses and procure supplies. At the same time, some parents refrained from patronizing Bureau schools, preferring instead to send their children to private tuition-based schools, drawing the ire of northern missionaries who thought these enterprises were completely inadequate. What this showed was an inexorable determination on the part of blacks to prove they were

[17] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 147.

capable of making independent judgments regarding their future. Through labor, money, and attendance, freedpeople fought to preserve permanent access to education.

Standing in their way was the local white citizenry who had difficulty adapting to the new social order in which blacks were now free. Suspicious of outside influences, they not only had to cope with the influx of Yankee educators who were upsetting traditional social and racial boundaries, but also with Union military officials in control of drafting and facilitating education policies. Prejudice against Yankees and racist hostility towards any efforts at black advancement had been embedded in the southern psyche for decades, the result, in part, of relentless attacks by northern abolitionists who excoriated and denigrated the South for defending a society dominated by slave labor. This paranoia survived the war as whites in Richmond and Petersburg expressed their displeasure at "Yankee invaders" through verbal assaults, intimidation, and vandalism against school buildings. In some ways, southern opposition to black schools was less about education than it was their hatred of northern institutions and ideals. Over time, local whites realized that in order to ensure black subordination civic leaders had to wrestle control of the education agenda away from northern pedagogues.

Black education in Central Virginia at the end of the Civil War is a story of dogged determination, personal sacrifice, pragmatism, and compromise on the part of Freedmen's Bureau officials, individual teachers, and the freedpeople themselves. Advancing black literacy required cooperation between the freedpeople and whites and between northerners and southerners. Because of clashing ideals and motives, it was by no means inevitable

that the Bureau experiment would succeed in establishing a viable public school system for both races.

Chapter 2

Motives, Attitudes, and Expectations

Armed with an evangelical, humanitarian zeal, northern educators converged upon the southern states determined to instruct former slaves in the meaning of freedom: education, moral rectitude, civility, economy, piety, and self-help. These educational missionaries and their supporters expressed a paternalistic and condescending view of blacks, arguing that former slaves were incapable of uplifting themselves without northern benevolence. However, these sentiments should not overshadow what they set out to accomplish. Introducing schools to millions of uneducated freedmen and freedwomen was no easy task. The controversial program northern philanthropists fought to establish demanded personal courage and a mature sense of reflection. Despite the perilous conditions, northern educators were willing to endure intimidation and pillory among white southerners all for the glorious cause of building schools for the freedpeople. Failure was not an option to these crusaders, who believed an educated black community represented a critical first step towards sectional reconstruction.

The movement to educate freed slaves began several years before the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. As northern armies extended their grip across the South, slaves deserted the plantations, making their way into Union military camps. Army commanders suddenly faced the demanding task of sheltering and feeding thousands of black men and

women, boys and girls, young and old. It was not long before urgent appeals from military officials on the ground went forth, encouraging northern benevolent organizations to send volunteers south for the purpose of not only providing much needed clothing, but also to establish schools for freedpeople.

The American Missionary Society promptly answered the call for help and in September 1861, established the first schools for runaway slaves, commonly referred to as "contrabands," at Fortress Monroe in Virginia. Four months later, shortly after the fall of Port Royal, the Rev. Solomon Peck set sail for the South Carolina coast to organize a school for slave children. As 1862 dawned, the Treasury Department dispatched one of their agents, Mr. E. L. Pierce, to South Carolina with orders to assess the needs of the freedpeople and report back with recommendations. During his tour of the mosquito-infested coast, Pierce wrote to a close associate, the Rev. J. M. Manny of Boston, enjoining him to "rouse the philanthropic people of New England" to recruit teachers and other aid workers to help the thousands of "unfortunate colored human beings."[18]

Shortly after Pierce returned to Washington, General Thomas West Sherman, commander of Union ground forces in Port Royal, issued an appeal on February 6, 1862, calling attention to the deplorable condition of "uneducated, ignorant, and improvident" blacks in South Carolina, many of whom had been "abandoned by their constitutional guardians." Sherman averred that the hordes of freed slaves now living under Union protection were incapable of caring for themselves. Blacks were "in such a state of abject

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[18] "History of the Formation and Action of the Educational Commission for Freedmen, Now New England Branch Freedmen's Union Commission," in *FR* 4 (January 1868): 1; "Historical Survey," in *American Missionary* 12 (September 1868): 193-194 (hereinafter referenced as *AM*).

ignorance and mental stolidity as to preclude all possibility of self-government and self-maintenance in their present condition," he concluded.[19]

Together with providing suitable clothing and "relieving . . . immediate wants," Sherman encouraged the creation of a "suitable system of culture and instruction." Until blacks became "capable of . . . thinking and acting judiciously" for themselves, he declared, "the service of competent instructors whose duties will consist in teaching them, both young and old, the rudiments of civilization and Christianity," was essential. Sherman's paternalistic remarks illustrated a common perception that without northern altruism, ingenuity, and know-how, blacks would forever remain a degraded, uncivilized, and exploited class. Put another way, because the "peculiar institution" had spawned laziness and dependence, freedpeople were perceived as incapable of self-help because they lacked the incentive to rise above their current condition.[20]

In response to Pierce's and Sherman's pleas, leading citizens in major northern cities, representing philanthropic, religious, education, and business interests, gathered together to develop a plan of action. A meeting of Boston citizens at the home of a local clergyman organized the Education Commission, later known as the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. In late February 1862, at Cooper Union Hall in New York, where several years earlier Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous "Right Makes Might" anti-slavery speech, several leading philanthropic citizens organized the National

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[19] Annual Report of the New York Freedmen's Relief Association (New York 1866): 5 (hereinafter referenced as *NYFRA).*

[20] Ibid., 6. See also, *The War for the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* Series I, Vol. VI (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), 6:222-223.

Freedmen's Relief Association of New York. Less than four weeks after Sherman issued his appeal, over four dozen teachers, superintendents, and missionaries – forty men and twelve women – set sail from New York to Port Royal. Their immediate concern was relieving the physical wants of the black refugees, but within a few days teachers began the arduous task of establishing schools at various points. At first the condition of the freedpeople precluded teachers from introducing a standard school curriculum; instead, they instructed the black masses in the "duties and habits of industry and civilized life."[21] Over the next few years other organizations, such as the Pennsylvania Relief Association, the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission of Cincinnati, the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission of Chicago, and countless denominational organizations began to lay the groundwork for providing material, physical and education aid for the freedpeople across the south.

The first benevolent associations established clear guidelines in regard to the treatment of blacks, specifically in the distribution of food and clothing, as well as educational pursuits. While the New York Association was eager to lend a helping hand, its members demanded blacks "earn their livelihood like other freemen, and not be dependent on charity." Officers of the New England Educational Commission promoted "the industrial, social, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement of persons released from slavery." At the same time, however, the Commission deprecated "any excess in

[21] *NYFRA*, 10; "History of the Formation and Action of the Educational Commission for Freedmen, Now New England Branch Freedmen's Union Commission," in *FR* 4 (January 1868): 2.

contributions to the physical relief of the colored people" so as to "avoid any thing tending to pauperize them, or to relieve them from the salutary pressure of want, excepting so far as may be really necessary to prevent distress." Thus teachers were instructed to emphasize personal responsibility, self-motivation, and economic self-sufficiency, key attributes of northern free-labor ideology.[22]

During the ante-bellum period, the northern states had evolved into a dynamic, capitalist society. Through discipline, hard work, and frugality, enterprising individuals had before them an almost endless opportunity to achieve economic independence and, equally important, social advancement. Attaining wealth and social standing was impossible, however, unless citizens had access to a system of free schools. Educators and politicians alike viewed public education as the essential platform for endowing future generations with the intellectual and moral imperatives necessary to expand political democracy and economic opportunity. In contrast, free-labor ideologues pointed to the baneful effects slave labor had on southern society: an uneducated populace, slow economic development, widespread indolence, and inhibited social immobility. Overthrowing this pernicious cycle of human denigration and dependence, which had an especially detrimental effect on blacks, became the battle cry of northerners committed to improving the lives of freed slaves. In its place, thousands of men and women traveled south determined to spread an enlightened education program espousing moral instruction, community, and self-support. Not all free-labor ideologues displayed an affinity for blacks,

[22] *NYFRA*, 6; *FR* 1 (July 1865): 107.

however. A large number worried more about inefficient southern economic systems; most manifested racist views and cared little about blacks as individuals.[23]

Members of benevolent associations believed northern philanthropy, at least initially, had to take the lead in educating freed slaves. One New England aid society told its members that blacks might one day be capable of self-help, but "they need to be an absolute burden for but a very short time. They are, on the whole, ready and willing to help themselves, if they can be shown how to do so."[24] Henry Martyn Dexter, a Boston minister associated with helping freedpeople, informed his congregation: "It would not be a very prudent thing to turn loose . . . millions of children to their own care, without any oversight, so these adult children will be the better for some fatherly supervision, until they shall become accustomed to the new way."[25] Dexter's paternalism illustrated a common sentiment among northern whites: blacks lacked commonsense skills and had no comprehension of how to behave in a civilized manner. Before black parents could instill in their children a conventional sense of right and wrong, then, they first had to learn these rules from northern benefactors. In this regard, a teacher's committee for a New England society reminded Bostonians of the "large multitudes of destitute negroes at the South,

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[23] For further analysis of free labor ideology see, Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor and Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[24] *First Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Barnard Freedmen's-Aid Society of Dorchester* (January 1865): 5 (hereinafter referenced as *Barnard Freedmen's Aid Society*).

[25] *What Ought To Be Done With The Freedmen And The Rebels?: A Sermon Preached in the Berkeley-Street Church, Boston* (Boston: Nichols & Noyes, 1865): 14, contained in *American Freedmen's Union Commission, Miscellaneous Monographs and Pamphlets*, University of North Carolina (hereinafter referenced as *UNC*).

who . . . will need for a longer period, instruction in the elements of knowledge and in the arts of civilized life."[26]

From the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico to the southern hinterland, northern societies opened dozens of schools. In places such as Craney Island, Newburn, Key West, New Orleans, and Vicksburg, military officials and northern benevolent societies created make-shift schools in churches, abandoned buildings, and in many cases, outdoors among army regiments. Eager to leverage their newfound freedom, black men and women of all ages, manifesting an insatiable hunger for knowledge, responded to the opportunity for education in overwhelming numbers.

From her post in Newburn, North Carolina during the summer of 1863, Bessie Canedy, who later spent several years teaching at the Freedmen's Schools in Richmond, Virginia, wrote how after only one week, over two hundred pupils of all ages had crammed into tight quarters. In what would become a common theme in many teachers' letters during Reconstruction, Canedy expressed her surprise at the unusual quickness with which black students were able to absorb the material, in many cases exceeding the capabilities of white students. "The avidity with which they grasp at the least shadow of knowledge is intensely interesting," she wrote, ". . . and as far as I can judge at present, they will soon leave white pupils behind."[27] In June 1864 a teacher in Jacksonville, Florida informed her adopted society: "You would be astonished at the degree of mental quickness and

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[26] *Barnard Freedmen's Aid Society,* 5

[27] Letter from B. L. Canedy, 27 July 1863, in *Report of Friends Association of Philadelphia, 1864*, 22-23 (hereinafter referenced as *Friends Association*).

improvement which these children . . . evince," especially given the fact that most of them had only been granted freedom four months earlier.[28] Amazed at the zeal with which adult freedmen and freedwomen embraced "the means of instruction placed within their reach," a Tidewater Virginia teacher enthusiastically proclaimed: "The work of instructing these eager learners is the most absorbing of any I ever engaged in."[29]

Military officials offered similar uplifting stories. During his visit to a "contraband" school in Vicksburg, Army Chaplain Jason Peet observed: "The children appear to improve more rapidly than white children of a similar age." Despite this optimistic assessment, Peet, like most Americans, still considered blacks to be an inferior race. In a letter to the National Freedmen's Relief Association, Peet was reluctant to acknowledge the superiority of the "African to the European," even though, in his words, he had never seen "scholars learn with such rapidity as these contrabands."[30] In a report describing schools for freedpeople in Key West, Brigadier-General D. P. Woodbury extolled "the capacity of the colored people to rapid moral and intellectual improvement." He was particularity complimentary of the good manners and deference black students evinced. Modesty, frankness, and affection "in their manner to their teachers," Woodbury wrote, were attributes "few white children could exhibit."[31] What these observations from military officers and teachers suggests is that everyone involved in the education movement

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[28] Letter from Esther H. Hawkes, 12 June 1864, in *Freedmen's Advocate* 1 (July & August 1864): 25 (hereinafter referenced as *FA*).

[29] Letter from N. Colman, in Ibid 1 (December 1864): 42

[30] Letter from Jas. Peet, 16 March 1864, in Ibid 1 (May 1864): 17.

[31] Letter from D. P. Woodbury, 17 May 1864, in Ibid 1 (June 1864): 21.

probably had very low expectations for blacks to begin with and were surprised by their intellectual capabilities.

The educational work performed during the war had produced auspicious results, but when Richmond fell in April 1865, a new sense of urgency emerged: how to provide schools to millions of freed slaves suddenly released from centuries of bondage, destitute and uneducated. Although a Union victory had assured emancipation, northerners concluded that southern blacks remained "in a position of great peril" because of the widespread "bitterness and anger" regnant among their former masters. Now was not the time to abandon the freed slaves, northern philanthropic leaders proclaimed. To prevent atrocities against the freedpeople and the curtailment of their individual liberties, the American Freedmen's Aid Commission asserted that the federal government had "incurred obligations and assumed duties" to protect the rights of freed slaves, a duty which it could not ignore "without heinous criminality." However, unless safeguards were put in place, southerners opposed to the education of black people would paralyze the movement to expand education through onerous "statutory enactments or popular violence" leaving blacks to "perish in their ignorance."[32]

Learning from their prior experiences during the war, these northern philanthropists discerned that freedpeople required more than teaching of "the ordinary branches of school education"; they also needed instruction in basic lifestyle skills, which were just as important as "book learning." Association journals enjoined all persons to join the crusade

[32] *American Freedmen's Aid Commission: It's Origin* (New York, 1865): 3, in *UNC.*

to educate blacks, rhetorically asking: "Is it better, is it safer to give them intellectual advantages, which the humblest classes in free states enjoy; or to leave to them to become dangerous classes in their ignorance and barbarism?" Exporting the New England education model, then, was paramount, for it reinforced "lessons of industry" and "domestic honesty." These attributes would help the "pupils (children and adults) to unlearn the teachings of slavery."[33]

The New York Freedmen's Relief Association, which argued a system of northern education opened endless avenues for blacks to improve their wealth and status, asserted that the fruits of victory would ring hollow unless the "blessings of intelligence" overshadowed the "evils of ignorance."[34] In an article about the various benevolent societies, the *New York Herald* echoed this sentiment: "Negroes will unquestionably be made better members of society, less subject to the influences of the enemies of social order, more industrious, because more ambitious to have the comforts and luxuries of life, if they can be thoroughly educated than if they were allowed to remain in ignorance."[35] These comments by the paper underscored a pressing concern expressed by many northern reformers: the fear of freedpeople becoming long-term wards of private and government organizations. Northern racial attitudes exacerbated this fear, which suspected the black race was incapable of economic self-sufficiency and exercising full citizenship rights.

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[33] "Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society," in *FR*, 1 (April 1865): 49-50

[34] *Statement of Appeal of the New York Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission* (New York 1866): 5, in *UNC*.

[35] *New York Herald*, in *The National Freedmen* 2 (February 1866): 48 (hereinafter referenced as *NF*).

Pauperism, then, had to be discouraged and eradicated because if left unchecked, it threatened social order. These views help explain why benevolent associations demanded freed men and women exhibit traits consistent with free labor ideology. The Freedmen's Aid Societies, however, were ill equipped to meet the physical and educational needs of the millions of freedpeople living in the South. Help from Washington was necessary.

Federal intervention on behalf of emancipated slaves had been contentiously debated in the halls of Congress months prior to the fall of Richmond. On March 3, 1865, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. Designed to help blacks make the difficult transition from slavery to freedom, the law entrusted the Bureau with the "supervision and management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen."[36] The Bureau Act represented a significant expansion of the federal bureaucracy in order to administer what was then the most comprehensive social welfare program ever attempted by the national government. Organized under the auspices of the War Department, Secretary Stanton appointed Oliver Otis Howard, a former commander in the Union Army of Tennessee, as its superintendent. Historians have disagreed about Howard's contributions. Critics such as William McFeely squarely blamed Howard for all the Bureau's shortcomings, which certainly extended to matters of education. By treating freed blacks with "paternal supervision" rather than "man to man respect," the commissioner, McFeely concluded, "served to preclude rather than

[36] U.S. Congress. "Freedmen's Bureau Act." U.S. Statutes at Large, 38th Congress, Session II, Chapter 90, 507-509.

promote Negro freedom."[37] On the other hand, historian John Carpenter considered Howard a true visionary whose policies towards black education "probably had the most lasting results and benefits." Indeed, according Carpenter, Howard "had set precedents for the future which could never be undone."[38] Many nineteenth century contemporaries admired the general. With his solid administrative skills acquired as an army commander, Howard had been Lincoln's choice to lead the Bureau. He received a hearty endorsement from General William Tecumseh Sherman, moreover, who said the new Bureau could not have been placed "in more charitable and more conscientious hands."[39]

Upon assuming his duties, Howard learned the new agency had no buildings, no staff, and no organizational structure; in short, he "had a law to execute without any specified means to execute it." Although the Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865 contained no specific provisions regarding the education needs of former slaves (that would come later, in 1866, when Congress extended the life of the Bureau Act), Howard firmly believed schooling was "the true relief" and that development and encouragement of educational opportunities should be a high priority. This suggests Howard viewed education as the only way blacks could leverage their newfound freedom by helping them obtain the intellectual discipline necessary to become landowners and participate in the political process. He told an Augusta, Maine audience that the ravages of war, scarcity of money,

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[37] McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather,* 5, 328.

[38] John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), 168.

[39] W. T. Sherman to O. O. Howard, 17 May 1865, quoted in Ibid, 82-83.

and a "lifetime of prejudice" made it impossible for southern communities to establish schools. Hope for the future, then, rested upon the shoulders of the federal government and northern altruism. Only the introduction of a northern model of practical instruction, Howard averred, embracing moral and religious training, could eradicate the fearful prejudice and hostility against blacks among callous southerners. Addressing skeptics who claimed former slaves would never appreciate nor lend direct assistance to their education, Howard countered that despite economic disadvantages, blacks were eager to provide support. "I have found that black people are like other human beings," Howard asserted, "they have pride like white people. They don't like to be pauperized, or regarded as paupers." He dismissed pessimists who thought southern blacks and whites could never peacefully coexist in close proximity to each other. "My experience leads me to a conclusion diametrically opposite," Howard declared. "If my individual likes and dislikes may be referred to, I know that I can employ a negro and he and I can live together; and if that is the case, there is no reason why another two can not do so likewise." Although he may have had an affinity for blacks, Howard cautioned not to mistake this for belief in social equality. "Social equality is an absurdity. It does not exist anywhere – not here in Augusta," he declared.[40]

With an eye on the educational network benevolent associations had built during the war, Howard began to develop a strategy for expanding schools to the freedpeople. He earnestly wanted the associations' work to continue and understood that without the

[40] "Meeting at Augusta, ME., in Behalf of the Freedmen – Speech of Gen. Howard," in *NF 1* (August 1865): 233-237.

missionaries' assistance very little could be accomplished. In one of the first circulars distributed from Bureau headquarters, Howard assured northern associations: "It was not the intention of the Government that this Bureau shall supersede the various benevolent societies in the work of administering relief." Instead, his goal was "to systemize and facilitate" the activities currently underway.[41] Hoping to tap into their superior fundraising prowess, Howard proposed that the aid associations supply the teachers, pay their salaries and assist with purchasing school supplies. In return, the Bureau would provide transportation for teachers, secure buildings to accommodate classrooms, and assume overall supervision of the schools.[42]

One of Howard's first responsibilities was the selection of Assistant Commissioners who shared his vision to serve as the chief Bureau official in each of the former confederate states. In Virginia, Howard appointed Col. Orlando Brown, a Union army veteran who had been actively engaged with helping the freedpeople in Virginia's Tidewater region. Brown was an enthusiastic advocate of providing schools for ex-slaves. In his view, education was the panacea for stamping out the scourge of racial bigotry. As educational opportunities spread across the south and freedpeople became more independent, white animosity towards blacks would abate, he thought. "Through education," Brown declared, "embracing moral and religious training, the fearful prejudice and hostility against the blacks can be overcome." To serve as the Bureau Superintendent

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[41] Circular No. 2, in *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin* 1 (August 1865): 62.

[42] Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau*, 63-64; William Preston Vaughan, *Schools for All: The Blacks & Public Education in the South, 1865-1877* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), 9.

of Education in Virginia, Howard chose Ralza Manly, a well respected northern educator who had served three years as a Chaplain in the Union army, first with the 16th New Hampshire Volunteers, and later with the 1st U.S. Colored Cavalry stationed in Norfolk.[43]

Born in Dorset, Vermont on January 16, 1822, Manly, although he was an ordained minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, made teaching his life work. He received his college preparatory schooling at Troy Conference Academy in Poultrey, Vermont and in 1848 obtained a college degree from Wesleyan University in Middleton, Connecticut. Except for a brief period as editor of the *Vermont Christian Messenger*, Manly served as the principal of several New England academies. His last assignment, prior to entering the military in 1862, was as president of the New Hampshire Conference Seminary and Female College.[44]

While teaching in New England, Manly had addressed audiences across the region concerning the importance of having only well-trained teachers instructing students. During a lecture delivered to a Vermont teacher's convention in 1851, Manly said nurturing young minds required a corps of teachers who exhibited not only sound moral leadership, but also "knowledge and discipline," traits he considered essential in efficient classroom management. As a "molder" and "fashioner," the teacher possessed extraordinary power to influence the character of young men and women, he wrote. In effect, Manly argued, "the teacher reproduces himself in his pupil." He recounted

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[43] "The Uses of Adversity," in *NF* 1 (November 1865): 335.

[44] Who was Who – Biographical Sketch of Rev. Ralza Manly, Ralza Manly Collection, Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referenced as Manly Collection).

examples in which "the labors . . . of a single teacher for a single town" had "formed the character of the pupil for life." The "moral life" that throbbed in a "teacher's heart" and shaped "his conduct," Manly declared, influenced "the nature of a child purifying and saving him" from corrupting influences. School teachers, then, not only impressed themselves upon their students "by an unchangeable law, but . . . everyday . . . does a work which neither man nor angel nor God himself can undo." He believed men were better candidates than women: "The teacher should be more of a man than anybody else – not possessed of greater genius but of more manhood, not greater in single endowments, but complete in the development and control of every faculty – a working model of the Almighty Masterpiece."[45] This is an interesting statement. Even though Manly had served as principal of a women's academic institution, this gender reference suggests he believed men, more than women, were better suited to control their emotions in and out of the classroom. His views were doubtless influenced by the fact that up until the mid-nineteenth century the majority of teachers were men. While Manly supported educating women, he evidently harbored doubts about their ability to teach. This suggests he thought males, rather than females, knew what was best for women's education. Over time, he would have to modify these views, especially given conditions on the ground as the Bureau Superintendent of Schools in Virginia.

Most northerners were skeptical of opening their wallets for black education. Public sentiment towards "freedmen's aid" was apathetic at best and downright hostile in

[45] Lecture delivered at the Teacher's Convention for Orange County, Vermont, 10 January 1851, Ibid.

many circles. Few citizens were abolitionists; most remained detached and disinterested in the plight of former slaves. The Executive Committee of the New York Freedmen's Relief Association opined that northerners of all classes regarded the ex-slave "as a hopeless vagabond, who had no health in him, and whom it would be foolishness to attempt to aid." Spending precious money, public and private, aiding and educating blacks was seen as profligate; worse, many feared it would lead to "perpetual pauperism." Even ardent friends and supporters of blacks were skeptical of the vast humanitarian effort underway. "It is my honest conviction that all your efforts will do more harm than good," one "sagacious" gentleman wrote from Washington. "I feel sure that, while you benefit individuals, you will, in the broad careless views which the world will take, exhibit a disastrous failure, and furnish a very strong popular argument against" uplifting former slaves.[46] Although the exact identity of this gentleman is unknown, given the fact the letter emanated from the nation's capital it is possible he was a politician. Thus, the gentlemen's assessment may have reflected not only a deep-rooted anxiety about educated blacks upsetting well-established racial norms in which whites were seen as the dominant race, but also the potential impact to the political landscape. In other words, emboldened ex-slaves might disrupt the racial balance of power in Congress and state legislatures, political bodies historically dominated by whites.

Still, many others manifested optimism and pointed to the potential economic benefits educated blacks would have on northern business.[47] The editor of the *National*

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[46] *NYFRA*, 9-10.

[47] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 147.

Freedmen asserted: Literate freedpeople "will not only be better members of southern society, but a better consumer of Northern manufacturers." Thus, the editor claimed both sections had a vested interest to encourage the building of schools because it would "pay the North to teach him, and the South to encourage him to be taught."[48] *Harpers Weekly* went one step further, arguing that along with blacks, extending educational opportunities to the southern white masses promised rich rewards. Deflecting criticism against educating both black and whites, the magazine observed: "As men are educated their demands increase, and their increasing demands start all the vast machinery of trade." Broadening education in the South "quickens the spindles of Lowell, the loom of Lyons, the fields of the west, the presses in the East."[49] Conspicuously missing from the article was any mention of how southern manufacturers might benefit from improved education. This omission suggests that *Harper's* was mainly interested in the benefits black education would produce for the North.

The potential negative effect uneducated blacks had on society resonated in northern pulpits as ministers encouraged their congregations to show support in establishing schools for freed slaves. Many of their sermons contained a mixture of devotion to duty laced with doses of racial paternalism and bigotry. During a sermon at the Berkeley Street Church in Boston, the Rev. Henry Martyn Dexter explained that freedpeople "must have help in their first endeavors after knowledge." Without schooling,

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[48] "The Freedmen's Societies," in *NF* 2 (February 1866): 49.

[49] *Harpers Weekly*, in *American Freedmen* 1 (April 1866): 10 (hereinafter referenced as *AF*).

blacks would be a burden to society because "unintelligent citizens are a curse to the republic, and a dead weight upon it." Thus it would be unwise Dexter asserted, "to turn loose . . . millions of children to their own care, without any oversight;" such "adult children will be the better for some fatherly supervision, until they shall become accustomed to the new way." The right to vote, however, should not be predicated on blacks first obtaining an education. Dexter pointed out that freed slaves were no different than the thousands of European immigrants who landed on American soil devoid of "civilized" education. Many of these foreign-born citizens, he wrote, were "as degraded in character, and as low in brain culture, as the blacks"; yet "we scarcely have thrown even a delay in the way of their blundering straight up to the ballot box with a vote."[50]

While Dexter decried racial prejudice on the basis of skin color, arguing "honest and Christian republicans" should support freedpeople having access to schools and attaining citizenship rights, he dismissed as foolhardy any thought of blacks attaining social equality. "We need not marry them, nor give them in marriage; we need not walk arm in arm with them in the streets; we need not prefer them in any respect to our own color – those are questions regarding *social*, not *political* equality." Instead, Dexter said all good Christians should "respect and honor and love them, in their appropriate place, just as we do our Irish and German fellow citizens in their places; and we must recognize their place as being that of full, honorable, republican manhood and womanhood." Concluding his sermon with an emotional appeal, Dexter thundered: "the allurement . . . of almost incredible success, the promptings of philanthropy, the urgency of duty, the impulse of

[50] *What Ought to be Done with the Freedmen*, 9, 11, 14, in *UNC*.

gratitude for what they have done for us, and the gravest considerations of common safety, . . . impel us to act promptly . . . in aiding the . . . freed negro to know how well to use his sudden freedom." [51] In Dexter's view the primary aim of educational philanthropists was to train ex-slaves to become compliant workers and passive citizens, in other words, a distinct class of people beholden to whites.[52]

The responsibility for introducing freedpeople to northern education and keeping them in "their place" rested on the shoulders of the various benevolent associations and the thousands of teachers swarming across the southern heartland. What motivated the men and women of the freedmen's aid movement to endure harsh conditions and endless pillory from a hostile southern populace? What influences shaped their altruistic spirit and what characteristics must they have manifested to confront their arduous work? Some twentieth century historians painted a sinister picture stressing malice towards the South and a desire to radically transform race relations was the prime motivation.[53] Others have concluded that "abolitionists . . . predominated among teachers and missionaries who went South."[54] While some volunteers may have expressed such sentiments, benevolent societies did not openly seek candidates who espoused abolitionist dogma. In fact, numerous teacher recruitment circulars published by the various aid societies fail to mention abolitionism, or any other political litmus test, as a requirement for teaching freedpeople. Moreover, during

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[51] Ibid., 15-17.

[52] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 53-54, 58.

[53] For example, see Henry Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870*, chapter 3.

[54] James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 171.

his research in the voluminous American Freedmen's Union Commission archives Ronald Butchart found scant evidence to support the view that teachers in the Freedmen's schools exhibited abolitionist sentiments.[55] Certainly, northern educators viewed slavery as anathema, but that does suggest they all espoused abolitionist theory or hatred of the South. Indeed, anti-slavery advocates could be just a racist as southerners. As one education historian has argued: "Followers of antislavery ideology . . . were hardly motivated by visions of a strong assertive black race in American society."[56]

Understanding why so many felt compelled to teach freed slaves is challenging. Through letters and other contemporary publications, however, it is possible to draw plausible conclusions about the motivations of these courageous educational missionaries. Many went south anxious to *participate* in the laudable goal of uplifting blacks through schooling. While northern educators viewed the education of freedpeople as an opportunity to do something useful and a once in a lifetime chance to act in a truly historic movement, many considered it a moral duty.

Indeed, northern philanthropists asserted that helping those in distress was an obligation of all Americans. An appeal from a New England society declared: "To the relief of the freedmen the public are called not only by the demands of true political economy, but by consideration of justice to a race which for so many years have been the victims of oppression, and by the dictates of common humanity towards brethren in need." The New York Freedmen's Relief Association reminded northerners of their sacred duty to

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[55] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 131.

[56] Ibid., 132.

God in helping to secure the peace: "Not long since God was reminding us of our neglected duty in the thunders of war; but now he is calling us to it in the general ascents of peace. Let us hear and live, for nations die when they are deaf to him." George Stuart, President of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, believed the physical, moral and intellectual uplift of freed men and women was "a duty which we owe them – a debt which it is obligatory for us to pay. We shall be recreant in our duty to God and our country if this appeal is despised." The New England Freedmen's Aid Society declared the opportunity to transplant northern schools in the south was a powerful obligation that could not be ignored: "When in God's providence, we are allowed to become the instrument of a great good to others, that very fact binds us to do our utmost to make that good available to them."[57]

Teachers expressed gratitude and thanks at the chance to participate in such noble work. Bessie Canedy wrote in 1863: "Every hour spent with them is a fresh surprise, and a new cause of gratitude that I am here." She ruefully wished the rewarding work she was currently engaged in had presented itself when she was younger: "I . . . have one regret in connection with being here, and that is, that I have not a whole fresh life to give to this noble work."[58] Canedy's enthusiastic dedication never waned. Four years later she reflected: "No work or rest can attract me from this so long as I have the strength for it

[57] "Duty to the Freedmen," in *FR* 1 (October 1865): 157; "American Freedmen's Aid Commission: It's Origin," 7, in *UNC*; "Statement of Appeal," 5, in *UNC*; *Barnard Freedmen's Aid Society*, 6.

[58] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 27 July 1863, in *Friends Association*, 23.

. . . . I did not anticipate an easy work, nor do I find it so; but there is not the least cause for discouragement."[59] Several days after arriving in Petersburg, Carrie Blood expressed her hope that she would be "permitted to labor advantageously and faithfully for these whom God in his providence has sent to this place." Just having the chance to be useful was rewarding. "To be able to do something is a privilege I shall not soon forget," she wrote.[60] In some respects it is not surprising Canedy and Blood found their work rewarding, given the fact that teaching was one of the few opportunities women had available to them for work outside the home.

An analysis of the Richmond and Petersburg teacher rolls published in various Freedmen's Aid Society journals suggest a majority of teachers called New England home. Some were long-time educators who had taught in primary or Normal schools. By no means do these rosters contain the complete inventory of northern educators, but there is sufficient evidence available to draw plausible conclusions about the demographic profiles of teachers in Central Virginia. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers were white, while approximately 27% were black.[61] Indeed, according to Ronald Butchart more blacks

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[59] Bessie Canedy to Ednah Cheney 29 November 1867, in *FR* 3 (December 1867):189; See also, Bessie Canedy to Ednah Cheney, 11 June 1868, in Ibid 4 (July 1868): 114.

[60] Letter from Carrie Blood, in *NF* 1 (March 1866): 146-7.

[61] The demographic statistical data presented here has been gathered from federal census records, commission books housed in the American Freedmen Union Commission archives at Cornell University, along with the generous assistance of Ronald E. Butchart, Professor of Social Science Education at the University of Georgia. For several years Dr. Butchart has been compiling a comprehensive database detailing the geographic origins, gender, race, age, religion, etc. of teachers who instructed freedpeople in the South during the Reconstruction period. Dr. Butchart plans to make his digital database available to the general public in the near future. Information about Professor Butchart's "Freedmen's Teacher Project" can be found on http://www.coe.uga.edu/ftp. My analysis is based on 147 teachers, and while many data points are unavailable and/or incomplete, the statistics presented here provide a reasonable baseline about who taught in the Richmond-Petersburg Freedmen's Bureau schools.

served as teachers in the South between 1861 and 1876 than has been previously documented. He estimates between "one third and one-half" of all teachers in southern schools were black.[62] Of the teachers in the Richmond and Petersburg area whose geographic origin is known, approximately 54% hailed from New England. The middle states (New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey) represented the next largest area with 30%, the vast majority – more than two-thirds – coming from New York. When race is considered, 67% of white teachers were New Englanders, while the majority of blacks, 60%, were from the South. The number of teachers from New England and the middle states runs contrary to the demographic picture for the entire South. Here, only 20% of all teachers called New England home, while 15% were from the middle states.[63] The reason for the disproportionate share of New Englanders and New Yorkers is probably because the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and the New York Freedmen's Relief Association were two of the largest organizations sponsoring teachers in Central Virginia.

It is clear that northern philanthropists manifested a strong evangelical character. Of teachers whose religious affiliation is available, the vast majority were members of mainstream Protestant sects. Baptists represented the largest group with 26%, followed closely by Episcopalians at 20%. Other denominations included Presbyterians, 14%, Methodists, 11%, and Congregationalists, 9%. Quakers accounted for approximately 13% of teachers in Richmond and Petersburg.

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[62] Ronald E. Butchart and Amy F. Rolleri, "Reconsidering the "Soldiers of Light and Love:' Color, Gender, Authority, and Other Problems in the History of Teaching the Freed People," 22 April 2003, unpublished paper in *The Freedmen's Teacher's Project*, http://www.coe.uga.edu/ftp, 4.

[63] Ibid., 5.

To these northern educational crusaders "the battle was not over, the victory not yet won"; it was imperative to educate the freedmen so that they could fully participate in their "hard won rights." Eager to introduce northern education and piety to blacks, and southern society, teachers enthusiastically responded to calls for help from the various freedmen's aid associations. Hannah Stevenson, secretary of the teacher's committee of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, declared, "we do not undertake that our teachers shall be instructors in theology," but she expected them to "lead aright and apply to daily life the religious sentiment, which is so emotionally strong in the Negro race; following thus the plan which has made our New England schools the backbone of the nation; as the war proved." This suggests southerners need not have applied. While hiring white southerners as teachers was not openly discouraged, educators preferred northern candidates whose skills in the better techniques of instruction were "essential to the completeness and intelligent direction of the work."[64] In essence, the New England orientation made northern teachers and administrators skeptical of southern-born teachers.

Teaching in Central Virginia demanded personal fortitude. Northern societies warned applicants to expect "scornful looks" and "scornful words" from the enemies of black education. Aside from good health necessary to endure insalubrious conditions, educators had to possess an abundance of energy, for "no person of the right disposition" could be "among the freedmen without feeling a constant temptation to overwork."[65] One society journal bluntly declared that teaching in the South was not a "hygienic" occupation

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[64] Letter from Hannah Stevenson, 18 October 1866, in *NF* 2 (November 1866): 195-196.

[65] "Our Teachers," in *FR* 1 (May 1865): 70; "Hopes and Plans," in Ibid 2 (October 1866): 174.

"to help invalids try a change of air, or travel at others' expense." Moreover, "none should go . . . who are influenced by romantic . . . motives; who go for poetry or the pay; who wish to go South because they have failed at the North."[66] Another society pamphlet cautioned: "No mere youthful enthusiasm, love of adventure, or desire of change, will sustain a teacher through the labors and hardship of her work." Applicants, then, needed to show a deep commitment to the cause of black education. Prospective teachers were told that the eyes of a nation would be upon them; their work would play an important role in the country's reconstruction, for the freedmen were "to influence very largely its future, for good or evil."[67] Bessie Canedy clearly discerned the stakes when she wrote her society: "I can't see that there is any other work so much needed now as this of educating the rising generation of the rising nation."[68]

Canedy's words are those of a seasoned, mature teacher. Contrary to what some historians have written, most teachers were not youthful idealists whose "immature and misguided" tendencies drove them South for mere love of adventure. The median age for white teachers in Richmond and Petersburg was thirty years, which shows that most had a decade or more of adult experience behind them. Enduring extreme conditions, then, demanded mature reflection rather than youthful inexperience. And while idealism certainly played a factor in what led educators to work among the freedpeople, some

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[66] "Qualifications," in *AM* 2 (July 1866)*:* 152.

[67] "Our Teachers," in *FR* 1 (May 1865): 70.

[68] Canedy to Cheney, 11 June 1868, in Ibid 4 (July 1868): 114.

historians have pointed out that given their median age this idealism "had been well-tempered by the time most of the teachers opened their school doors."[69]

The teacher corps sent south to instruct freedpeople were predominately female. Richmond and Petersburg were no exception. Women comprised roughly 79% of the teachers (81% were white and 19% were black). Men accounted for the remaining 21%, but unlike women teachers black men represented a larger proportion – 55% versus 45% for white men. Aside from the fact women were more inclined to answer appeals for service or missionary work, transforming gender roles in Nineteenth century America provides an important clue to explain why more women than men answered the call. [70] As northern society became more industrialized, men distanced themselves from traditional family, church, and community service obligations, liberating them to pursue the "siren call of the market." Consequently, seeking economic and material gains proved more lucrative and offered greater long-term rewards for individual men than teaching freed slaves. The gender ratio among white teachers reflected this social transformation. As more and more men abandoned social and religious responsibilities in favor of the marketplace, women assumed a greater role in charitable and benevolent work as a way to escape the straightjacket of gender norms. Leaving the safety and comfort of northern homes and schools, women ventured into a region desecrated by war. Abject poverty, disease,

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[69] Butchart and Rolleri, "Reconsidering the "Soldiers of Light and Love,' 8. See also Ronald Butchart, "Perspectives on Gender, Race, Calling and Commitment," *Vitae Scholasticae*, 13 (1994): 19-20.

[70] See Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

blistering heat, and bitter enmity manifested by southern whites, confronted teachers upon their arrival in Central Virginia. Despite these seemingly insurmountable challenges, women viewed their missionary work among freed men and women as an opportunity to not only do some good, but also to expand their geographic boundaries and experience a degree of independence and autonomy than was possible in the North.[71]

Benevolent associations recognized the important role women played in filling teacher rolls. Although some Bureau superintendents throughout the South preferred males, believing the hardships of the work "too great for women to encounter," northern charities quickly learned that few men possessed the requisite morals and teaching experience. Education philanthropists soon learned that northern men had little incentive to disrupt their livelihood and move south. The teacher's committee for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society averred: "Such men find the prizes of business too tempting, or their needs too imperative to devote two or three years of the best years of life to hard duty for a despised people, in dangerous climate, and for a small remuneration." On the other hand, New England women, "strong and brave . . . for any work," had responded in droves. Without hesitation, Freedmen's Aid societies sent female teachers south even where men were asked for, and soon learned women had "neither flinched from danger, nor been discouraged by toil." The teacher's committee, while extolling the selfless devotion of

[71] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 79-89; Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 39-40; Butchart, "Perspectives on Gender, Race, Calling and Commitment," 23.

women to the cause of black education, was, at the same time, questioning northern men's manhood and taunting them for their timidity and selfishness.[72]

Given the hostile environment, personal sacrifices, and periods of self-doubt, these philanthropic volunteers remained optimistic. Letters from teachers show an unwavering commitment to get the job done. Seeking an extension to her assignment in Richmond, one teacher wrote: "Send me where I am most needed, can do the most good," and "accomplish something for God and humanity, especially among the freedmen."[73] Lucy Haskell felt exhilaration each time she entered the classroom: "I do not know as I was ever more happy than when surrounded by these bright and happy children whose faces are radiant with joy because they can go to school."[74] William Coan thanked God for giving him "joy amid the darkness outside." Trusting in divine providence "to be earnest, zealous, wise, and prudent," Coan found personal satisfaction in his work: "My heart as well as my head is full, more than full, never was I more interested in this work."[75] From Petersburg, Emma Southwick, a veteran in the black education movement, expressed strong attachment to her school and pupils: "I am extremely interested in these people and love to work among them and do what I can to make them comfortable." Despite the obstacles she had confronted in many years of service, Southwick remained undeterred: "In nearly three

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[72] "Report of Committee on Teachers," in *FR* 2 (May 1866): 86-87.

[73] R. Coit to R. M. Manly, 13 August 1869, Unregistered Letters Received, Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referenced as BRFAL-VA-EDU).

[74] Lucy Haskell to M. E. Streiby, 26 June 1865, American Missionary Association Archives – Virginia, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referenced as AMA).

[75] Letter from William Coan, 16 June 1865, Ibid; William Coan to R. Streiby, 30 April 1865, Ibid.

years of Army life I have passed through too many conflicts to be discouraged here. And though I have encouraged many difficulties since coming to Petersburg, I have persevered in making a straight path through all the crooked way."[76]

The directors of the various benevolent associations believed northern white teachers had to assume the primary responsibility of educating emancipated slaves because blacks, recently freed from the harmful effects of slavery, lacked the necessary skills and training. In an 1866 annual report, the New York Freedmen's Union Commission deflected criticism that the agency discouraged the use of black teachers, arguing "good white teachers, on the whole, are the best will hardly be disputed." The work ahead was too important to place in the hands of unprepared teachers. "The object in a work like ours," the commission added, "should be to obtain the very best teachers our money will procure." Moreover, the Commission claimed southern blacks preferred northern white teachers because "the sympathy between the Northern and Southern blacks would not seem to be very strong; and the respect of Southern blacks for each other is hardly firm enough to rest a system or policy on."[77]

Another association journal thought blacks possessed many "vices and petty weaknesses" such as "thievery and lying," traits that threatened "social order" and obstructed their elevation.[78] The *Freedmen's Record* asserted that decades of bondage had instilled bad habits, but change was possible once the freedmen were brought under the

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[76] Letter from Emma Southwick, 7 April 1866, Ibid; Southwick to Cheney, 26 March 1866, Ibid.

[77] *NYFRA*, 21-22.

[78] "Negro Vices," in *AM* 9 (April 1865): 81.

tutelage of benevolent northern educators. With the shackles of slavery now removed, the editor argued blacks could benefit from the positive influences of northern culture, which was more civilized than the South: "Transplanting is as good for races as it is in plants. New experiences, new fields, without old restrictions on human energy, have, in the great majority of instances, been in the main advantageous."[79]

Such paternalistic attitudes reflected an unabashed belief in the superiority of northern civilization. The more advanced North would rescue blacks from a life of "barbarism" and regenerate southern society. In addition to exporting the benefits of education, the New York Freedmen's Association wanted northern white teachers to export "their race, their moral training, their faculty, their character, the influences of civilization, the ideas, sentiments, [and] principles" of northern society. "We want to introduce persons," the association added, "as well as pedagogues. We want, not schools merely, but Northern schools, Northern men and women, down South, teaching, mingling with the people, and instituting the North there among the old populations." In this respect, the association concluded: "We civilize all at once, by communicating simultaneously all the chief intellectual elements of civilization."[80] The editor of the Massachusetts *Daily Advertiser* approximated the New York association when he wrote: "We must plant a Yankee school in every Southern county, if we expect the rising generation of the recent slave states to march arm in arm with Massachusetts in the future."[81]

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[79] "Superiority of Race," in *FR* 1 (November 1865): 170-171.

[80] *NYFRA*, 22.

[81] *The Daily Advertiser*, in *FR* 2 (September 1866): 158.

Patronizing attitudes towards black capabilities also emanated from the Freedmen's Bureau. John W. Alvord, the National Superintendent of the Freedmen Schools, argued that black education not only required elementary teaching but "instruction in all departments of practical life." In an annual report, Alvord wrote: "We are dealing with a people to be *untaught* in habits of thinking, feeling, and acting" and who lacked any moral patterns good enough to imitate. Thus, Alvord declared, instilling a "moral culture" was "paramount in our plans; the constant practical aim in all our schools."[82] Ralza Manly concluded that because freedpeople had been recently removed from the pernicious effects of slavery and lacked the skills necessary to educate themselves, it seemed reasonable for whites to initially supervise their schooling. Before blacks assumed a more active role, they had to be taken "away from the depressing and degrading influences of their old associations." To achieve true uplift and self-reliance, blacks had to first learn propriety and what it meant to behave in a civilized manner. "It should be borne in mind," Manly wrote, "that the pupils are from the hovels of slavery and need civilization quite as much as they do educating in letters. In fact, if their personal habits, social morality and superstitious prejudices and modes of living . . . are not brought under an enlightened and thorough discipline, it is doubtful whether the value of more book learning" will have long-term benefits.[83]

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[82] John W. Alvord, "Eighth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, July 1, 1869," *Semi-Annual Report for Freedmen 1-10, January 1866 – July 1870* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868-1870; reprinted Robert C. Morris, ed., New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980), 82-83 (page citations are to the reprint edition; hereinafter referenced as Alvord, *Semi-Annual Report*).

[83] Manly to McKim, 11 September 1867, Letters Sent, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

Paternalism and racial stereotyping were common themes emanating from northern newspapers. A large number of freed slaves, the *New York Times* asserted, "are at the very bottom of the intellectual scale." These "jet black, wooly headed . . . specimens" were mere children and needed guidance and protection from southern white demagogues. The paper expected blacks, however, to eagerly submit to northern white oversight because the majority of them were "trained . . . in the habits of subordination" and "eminently disposed to render homage to whom homage is due." After introducing the freedpeople to superior northern schools, the *Times* opined, "no reason" existed "why there may not be raised out of the colored population a very desirable class of American citizens exercising all the . . . dignity of voters." At the same time, however, the paper vehemently opposed social integration between the races: "The mingling of bloods is one thing, the common enjoyment of civil privileges quite another. The first we abhor, the second we advocate and rejoice in."[84] The *Chicago Tribune* desperately wanted schools for freed slaves; otherwise millions of uneducated blacks posed a real threat to public safety. "No matter how well they may be disposed, naturally," the *Tribune* warned, the "large masses" of ignorant black people "constitute a dangerous element in the community." With freed slaves subject to manipulation by their former masters, "there can be no guarantee of order, or thrift, or progress, and no assurance of either peace or safety, to any part of the community till this ignorance shall be dispelled."[85]

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[84] *New York Times*, 30 April 1865.

[85] *Chicago Tribune*, 8 October 1867, in *AF* 2 (November 1867): 313.

From a twenty-first century perspective, the opinions expressed by many northerners are haughty and repugnant. However, when examined within the context of 1860's America, the views expressed were not unusual. In a sense, educators probably thought their approach was practical. They believed northern civilization was the remedy for black uplift and for reconstructing southern society. Their evangelical, humanitarian impulse was real, albeit paternalistic. Friends of black education were convinced slavery had made blacks incapable of taking care of themselves. Only with the guiding, gentle hand of altruistic northerners could former slaves take full advantage of the freedom guaranteed to them by a Union victory. Education, then, was seen as a stabilizing force to perpetuate northern free-labor ideology, inculcate civilized behavior, and prepare blacks with the intellectual and practical tools necessary to live independently side-by-side with their former masters.

Chapter 3

Building the Foundation for Black Education

Whether the education movement succeeded in Richmond and Petersburg was dependent, in part, on the reaction by southern blacks. Marching into the former bastion of the Confederacy, teachers, benevolent society leaders, and Bureau officials did not have to wait long for the answer. After learning northern missionaries had arrived to establish schools, thousands of ex-slaves inundated educators in Central Virginia, as they did throughout the South, with endless expressions of gratitude.[86] To many blacks, attending school was a "once in a lifetime" event, forever etched in their minds. Decades later, Arthur Greene, a former slave born near Petersburg, fondly remembered his first day at school, despite the crude surroundings: "Fer desks we had to set on old hard plain planks, plenty of splinters in dem things; but you know, baby, we was proud to git dat. No, us didn't keer, 'specially at de fust startin' of learnin."[87]

Never before had the federal government assumed the reins of a social agency on the scale of the Freedmen's Bureau. Aside from the work devoted to reuniting families,

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[86] DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 637; Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship*, 110-114; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 96; Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom*, 122-123.

[87] Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 126.

negotiating labor contracts, and organizing the medical bureau, the sheer magnitude of the tasks for the education project alone – procuring school buildings, organizing transportation and locating suitable housing for teachers, distributing supplies, and attempting to get the various benevolent societies to cooperate with each other – was overwhelming. Every step of the way Bureau officials had to navigate through a myriad of organizational and logistical challenges, each of which had the potential to derail the freedpeople's education movement. Needless to say, building black schools in Central Virginia was, at times, utter chaos. Although Manly and Brown were seasoned military veterans, accustomed to strict discipline, and good administrators, they lacked experience working with the numerous volunteer organizations, each with their own motives and agendas. Nevertheless, Manly pursued an aggressive agenda to build not only a cohesive, systemic primary school organization, but also a normal school to train blacks to become teachers for their own race.

Educators arriving in the once proud capital of the Confederacy in April 1865 witnessed a city in ruins. Large swaths of Richmond had been destroyed by fire, set by confederate officials fleeing the city in advance of the Union army. Both industry and residences had succumbed to the inferno. Hundreds of dismayed residents, white and black, wandered the streets seeking shelter and subsistence. Several days after Union forces occupied Richmond, a *New York Times* correspondent informed northern readers that providing aid and comfort to displaced citizens was exhausting work. "The general lack of material and personal comforts," he wrote, "owing to the wreck of the currency, the total prostration of business, and the painful exhaustion of a four-years' war, attended by a

strident blockade, makes immediate relief as expensive as it is in many cases impossible." In one busy day, government and northern aid agencies distributed over twenty thousand rations to both black and white refugees. Although Richmonders were grateful for the assistance, many still resented northern munificence. This humiliating experience prompted angry retorts: "You cut off our supplies by power, but feed us as a charity"; or, "Having deprived us of our resources as citizens, you feed us as beggars." These emotional outbursts from a proud Virginia citizenry were, according to the *Times* reporter, "a painful spectacle."[88]

C.T. Chase, an agent with the American Union Commission, arrived in the former Confederate capital astonished at the sight before his eyes. "We found Richmond a ruined city," he reported. Heaping scorn upon the former "pretended government," Chase lamented the wholesale destruction of warehouses, bridges, foundries, banks, stores, and mills. Equally distressing to him was the fact that scores of homes had been consumed, leaving much of the city's poor without a place to live. "What a legacy to leave this beautiful city! It was a fitting *finale* for a madman's dream," Chase ruefully concluded.[89]

Within days after the fall of Richmond, benevolent societies converged upon the smoldering ruins of the city, eager "to take immediate possession of the educational interests of the colored children."[90] Sisters Sarah and Lucy Chase, who had recently spent several months educating blacks on Craney Island, near Norfolk, were among the first to

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[88] *New York Times*, 30 April 1865

[89] Report from C. Thurston Chase, 31 August 1865, in Ibid, 17 September 1865.

[90] Letter from Cato, 3 July 1865, in *AM* 1 (September 1865): 198.

arrive. They immediately met with black church leaders, laying the groundwork for opening schools for Richmond's black community. On April 14, less than two weeks after Jefferson Davis fled the city, throngs of "children flocked to their churches" eager "to give their names as scholars." The overwhelming response thrilled the newly arrived teachers. "Oh I am so happy I don't know what to do," Sarah Chase wrote.[91] Treating them as if they were saviors, the "eager, hungering, and thirsty" crowds besieged the teachers. Grateful parents grasped the teacher's hands, Lucy Chase recalled, and "blessed us, prayed for us, loved us and thanked the lord."[92]

Four days later over one-thousand "scholars" packed the First African Church, which ironically had been a frequent meeting place for Confederate leaders, to begin their schooling. Teachers were astonished to discover that among the 1075 students, there were "eighty good readers, two hundred good spellers, and one hundred who had conquered the alphabet." More remarkable to them was the fact that although there had been laws proscribing blacks from obtaining an education, a fair number of black families in Richmond had one or more members who could read. Lucy Chase came across "two intelligent young girls" who had "studied Latin and mathematics."[93] While visiting a black school in City Point, an agent with the New England society expressed surprise at the superior hand writing of "one little colored boy, which was not the heavy, bold

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[91] Letter from Sarah Chase, 18 April 1865, cited in Henry L. Swint, ed., *Dear Ones at Home: Letters from Contraband Camps* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), 155.

[92] Lucy Chase to Hannah Stevenson, 18 April 1865, in *FR* 1 (June 1865): 95.

[93] Ibid.

penmanship of a man, but a delicate characteristic lady's hand." The boy explained to this curious northern visitor how he had learned to write as a slave because "he often carried notes for his mistress, and had always copied the address, or whatever of the writing was visible." Pointing to this story as an example of the freedpeople's learning ability, the agent rhetorically asked: "How many of us would, in his place, have shown an equal eagerness for self-improvement?"[94] This description was probably an attempt to prove to skeptical northerners that blacks did exhibit a desire to help themselves.

Other students recounted tales of secretly attending schools taught by their mothers or other black women. Lucy Haskell's pupils told her that prior to the war, many black children surreptitiously attended a school "taught by a colored person under the name of a Sewing School." When white citizens dropped by unannounced to inspect the school, students "instantly covered" their books under their clothing. Only in this manner, Haskell learned, had slaves "gained some knowledge of Reading, Arithmetic and Geography."[95] Another teacher, Jessie Armstrong, discovered that slave children had often bribed white children to trade "a nut or apple for a letter," ignoring the possible repercussions.[96] Over time teachers realized that instructing black children to read and write was no more demanding than teaching white children.

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[94] Jessie Armstrong to Wm. Hawkins, 3 June 1865, in *NF* 1 (June 1865): 155.

[95] Lucy Haskell to M. E. Streiby, 26 June 1865, in *AMA*; *FR* 1 (July 1865):110.

[96] Jessie Armstrong to Wm. Hawkins, 3 June 1865, in *NF* 1 (June 1865): 155.

Northern educators expressed wonder at the freedpeople's insatiable appetite for education, writing that the mental capacity of blacks was equal to that of whites. Since these missives reflected the viewpoint of northerners who generally transcribed black student's remarks, some in "Negro" dialect, it is likely that teachers elaborated many of their descriptions for propaganda purposes in the hope that northern benefactors would continue to donate money to help freedpeople become educated. Moreover, benevolent associations wanted northerners to read stories about uneducated ex-slaves expressing effusive praise for "Yankees" because it helped solidify financial and public support. Thus, editors were eager to publish letters from teachers in the various benevolent association's journals and pamphlets. This is not to suggest that teachers purposely misrepresented or elaborated their experiences; however, their descriptions are so consistently cheerful and positive that it is questionable whether their observations reflected the entire story.[97] The embellishment of freedpeople's reaction to education served, in part, to sway public opinion by presenting blacks and northern missionaries in more favorable terms and southern whites as ambivalent observers.

School children, who had seldom witnessed acts of kindness from whites, lauded the teachers as saviors. In a letter to the New England society, Emma Lawton described the reaction of one of her students: "The Yankees are teaching us to elevate our selves and to become men and women, not dumb brutes. Love the Yankees! Yes indeed! We cannot do anything that is good enough for them."[98] Bessie Canedy said black parents "took pains" to

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[97] Jones, *Soldiers of Light*, 116.

[98] Letter from Emma Lawton, 28 May 1866, in *FR* 2 (July 1866): 127.

send their children to school because "now they can do so with no fear of the whipping post or auction block." The mother of one student told Canedy she feared her overzealous daughter "would certainly . . . kill herself studying."[99] One teacher observed that because school was a new experience, most pupils expected to attend classes throughout the year and had no understanding of summer vacation. They were "already petitioning for a *shorter* one than they are threatened with," the teacher declared. "Oh, they (the colored children, not vacations) are *splendid*!"[100]

When Sullivan K. Whiting, superintendent of schools in Petersburg, told a gathering of freedpeople that his purpose in visiting the city was to establish schools, their reaction was euphoric. "They clasped me in their very arms," Whiting wrote, and shouted, "DE LORD bress ye! De Lord bress ye, . . . bress all de Yankees! Bress de Lord, I want to learn to read de Bible!" He reported pupils at one Petersburg school were overcome with excitement at having the chance to go to school: "They are *anxious* to learn, indeed *'anxious'* does not express the idea – they are *crazy* to learn; they have care to think that their very salvation depends on their learning to read." After witnessing this emotional display, and the indifferent reaction of southern whites, Whiting concluded that between southern whites and southern blacks, "the colored race is more intelligent."[101]

From her post in Richmond, Sarah Clark announced: "Every day confirms our first impressions of the superiority of the Richmond Negro over all others we have had under

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[99] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 1 June 1865, in Ibid 1 (July 1865): 114.

[100] Letter from B.L. Church, 7 June 1866, in Ibid 2 (June 1866): 136.

[101] Letter from S. K. Whiting, in *NF* 1 (December 1865): 349-350.

our observation."[102] Jessie Armstrong said her school room had raised the spirits of the pupils and given them a new lease on life: "There is a freshness, an earnestness which this sudden bursting into new life give the countenances . . . of these long down-trodden children of suffering."[103] Horace Hovey asserted confidently, "teachers of extensive experience are of the opinion that there is really no appreciable difference of capacity . . . in the two races."[104] Bessie Canedy echoed this sentiment when she told the New England Society: "I know that unlauded capacities are not more rare beneath the colored than the white clay; and that alike in both, the future man awaits only the Promethean fire of education."[105] A teacher at City Point, echoing Canedy's enthusiasm, informed his society that although "their lot is a hard one" the capacity of black boys and girls to learn far exceeded his expectations: "With some advantages, the poor black child will learn equally as well as the white one."[106] Another teacher at Poplar Grove, located on the outskirts of Petersburg, boasted that in just three months over fifty of her students, who had arrived at school ignorant of the alphabet, had advanced to the first reader.[107]

Numerous outside observers confirmed these opinions. After visiting several schools in central Virginia, a representative from the New England Society concluded:

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[102] Letter from Sarah E. Clark, 5 May 1865, in *FR* 1 (June 1865): 98.

[103] Jessie Armstrong to Wm. Hawkins, 3 June 1865, in *NF* 1 (June 1865): 155.

[104] Horace Hovey to Ednah Cheney, 16 March 1867, in *FR* 3 (April 1867): 63.

[105] Bessie Canedy to Ednah Cheney, 11 June 1868, in Ibid 4 (July 1868): 114.

[106] D. Edson Smith to Wm. Hawkins, 30 December 1865, in *NF* 2 (January 1866): 16.

[107] N. Coleman to Wm. Hawkins, in Ibid: 17.

"The freedmen evince a most earnest desire to be educated. Their belief that reading and writing are to bring unto them inestimable advantages, seems, in its universality and intensity, like a mysterious instinct."[108] A correspondent with the *New York Times* reported that the "colored people take in schools with an appetite whetted by a chronic hunger of them, a more exuberant people at the prospect of supply I ever saw." In the long term, the *Times* reporter felt confident that black community leaders would one day assume control of their schools and "were as worthy to be trusted" in the creation of school committees as white northern educators.[109] Joseph Simpson, an agent with the London chapter of the Friends Freedmen's Association, wrote home that although black children were "perfectly ignorant of the very rudiments of learning, . . . one is surprised to note how rapidly they advance." While observing a school room in Richmond, Simpson expressed delight at the exuberance manifested by blacks. Young girls, he recounted, frequently arrived at school with "large bouquets of flowers for their teachers."[110]

Blacks demonstrated their interest in the schools by helping pay for school supplies. While visiting central Virginia, William Coan, a representative of the Freedmen's Union Commission, lauded the willingness and industry of some students to lend financial support. When he asked a group of boys how they had raised funds to purchase their books, they unabashedly answered: "By holding de Ossifer's hos, toting de soger's

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[108] "Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society," in *FR* 1 (April 1865): 53.

[109] *New York Times*, 30 April 1865.

[110] Letter from Joseph Simpson, *Friends Central Committee for the Relief of the Emancipated Negroes*, 10, in *UNC*.

knaping sack, or shinin' up yer boots."[111] In Petersburg, J. B. Thayer of the New England Society observed several black families enticing military officials with "pies, tarts and lemonade," the proceeds of which were used, in part, to buy school supplies. The blacks, Thayer added, "had in their possession a very tolerable sum of Federal money, – many times the amount of that held by whites."[112] While Thayer's observations seem somewhat exaggerated, it suggests that freedpeople were eager to prove themselves independent of charity and white control.

In a letter to Bureau headquarters, Manly wrote that the freedmen considered education an inalienable right and an "element of power"; they discerned that schools were the first step in their advancement. "Education seems to be regarded by them as a long denied right," Manly declared, "and therefore they demand it because it is theirs without reference to the uses of it where it shall be attained . . . . Many see that without education their political and social positions, as well as their material interests will never be advanced."[113] Education commissioners in other states echoed Manly's observation. F.A. Fiske, Superintendent of Education in North Carolina, informed his superiors that "the interest felt in education among the colored people generally is constantly deepening and widening. The school, in the freedmen's estimation, stands next in importance to the church . . . and the teacher next to the preacher." In Alabama, C.W. Buckley wrote: "the

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[111] Letter from William Coan, 25 May 1865, in *AM* 9 (July 1865): 155.

[112] "What Shall We Do With the Freedmen, Now That They Have No Masters to Take Care of Them?" in *FR* 1 (July 1865): 108.

[113] R. M. Manly to O. Brown, 1 March 1868, Virginia School Report for February 1868, BRFAL – National.

colored people seem to appreciate as highly as ever the privileges brought within their reach. Parents exhibit no letting down of effort, and there is no abatement in the zeal of the students." [114] Florida assistant commissioner of education General J.T. Sprague observed: "the freedmen have everywhere displayed a remarkable zeal and self-denial in all things pertaining to education."[115]

W. E. B. DuBois described the education movement as a historic partnership between "the most eager of the emancipated blacks and that part of the North which believed in democracy." Indeed, he argued that schools were the first institutions in which contact between whites and blacks was "on terms of essential social equality and mutual respect."[116] It is no surprise, then, that parents visited the schools frequently to offer praise and support. Again, teacher letters are the primary sources used to describe interaction with parents. The father of one student told Miss J. W. Duncan, "Oh miss, we's monstrous pleased with your carryings on here . . ., we's all so mighty glad you's come to teach we all. We hope the Yankees will albers live in Richmond. I's felt so happy since the Yankees came, that I want to sing and cry for joy all the time, peers like I dun know as I's hungry or no." Other parents demanded their children receive no leniency or special treatment because of their previous servitude. After meeting with a group of parents, Duncan had one mother tell her to pay "ticular pains to our children, as we wish them to get all the learning they can, 'cause you know Miss, I's got no learning myself, consequently I know

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[114] Alvord, *4th Semi-Annual Report, July 1, 1867*, 22, 42.

[115] Alvord, *5th Semi-Annual Report, 1 January 1868*, 30.

[116] DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 190.

how much I loses without it, so Miss, please just be mighty strict and 'ticular with them."[117] When Lucy Chase summoned the parents of a recalcitrant student to her school, the father reproved his son's behavior: "I thought, my son, you had experienced religion! . . . You shall not go into the water young man, until you *show* that you have changed. Obey your teacher. Don't use your judgment."[118] The grandmother of another student walked over a mile to meet with Lizzie Parsons to apologize for her granddaughter's insubordinate behavior, and begged the teacher not to expel the troublesome girl.[119]

The enthusiasm manifested by the black community masked the severe logistical challenges Manly and the Bureau faced in creating viable school programs for freed slaves. Just convincing the various benevolent associations to adhere to a common strategy was a monumental challenge. Indeed, it was common for these diverse groups to flood Bureau headquarters with demands for Manly to arbitrate disputes between the various philanthropic societies. Because codified rules and regulations took time to develop and implement, at times, the Bureau was unable to provide clear direction, which exacerbated tensions and increased the level of frustration.[120]

In the summer of 1865, Brown alerted General O. O. Howard that several missionary society agents were anxious about securing school buildings and quarters for teachers in Richmond and Petersburg. He asked Howard to clarify whether he had

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[117] Letter from Miss J.W. Duncan, 9 June 1865, in *AM* 9 (August 1865): 171.

[118] Letter from Lucy Chase, June 1868, in *Dear Ones at Home*, 235.

[119] Letter from Lizzie Parsons, cited in *AF* 3 (April 1868): 390.

[120] William Hawkins to O. Brown, 31 May 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

authority to take possession of buildings for school purposes owned by men "not within the limits of the president's Amnesty Proclamation." In the meantime, Brown took steps to establish schools in black churches, but because some of these houses of worship were under the supervision of white trustees, he doubted whether church elders would permit schools for blacks in their buildings. The only means to counteract this obstruction, Brown concluded, was for churches to have "loyal and friendly" pastors who supported elevating the freedpeople. Although northern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Church had taken steps to assume control of local affiliates and replace perfidious ministers with "suitable pastors," Brown advocated government seizure of the buildings instead. In return the Bureau "could then return [the churches] to the colored trustees . . . to whom it justly belongs."[121]

Major J. R. Stone, sub-assistant commissioner for the Petersburg district, struggled to find suitable accommodations for teachers at reasonable terms. Owners of buildings were unwilling "to rent to the government except when paid in advance." Stone considered the offer insulting and bluntly told Manly: "If I cannot bargain for rooms without paying in advance I will take some and fight out the right of possession."[122] Rev. James Gloucester, a black Presbyterian clergyman, experienced similar difficulty after arriving in Petersburg with instructions to establish schools for the freedpeople. Following a series of meetings in

[121] O. Brown to O. O. Howard, 20 July 1865, ULR, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865 – 1869, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referenced as BRFAL-VA); Brown to Howard, 1 July 1865, Ibid.

[122] R. M. Manly to J. R. Stone, 19 October 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU; J. R. Stone to R. M. Manly, 24 October 1866, ULR, Ibid.

black churches, Gloucester received warm approbation from the congregations he visited to begin the schools at once. According to Gloucester, no sooner had he "received a unanimous request" to organize classrooms when "two whites and one colored, each professing to be Baptist ministers, made an onslaught upon me, charged me with being a Presbyterian, and misleading the people as to their true rights and interests." Moreover, the Petersburg clergymen accused their northern counterpart of only wanting to take Baptist funds to create schools under the guise of "Presbyterian dictum." Insulted by the treatment he had received from these "exceedingly . . . intemperate . . . leaders," Gloucester warned Colonel Orlando Brown that men manifesting such "unhappy, illiterate, unchristian spirit" ought to be disqualified "from serving the cause of the freedmen." Never, Gloucester lamented, "after forty years of public service . . . was I ever prohibited of entering a pulpit merely upon sectarian sins."[123] Gloucester's experience underscored the competitive and suspicious nature manifesting itself among the various sectarian groups as they jockeyed with each other to educate the freed slaves.

In the summer of 1865 William Coan arrived in Richmond with instructions to help coordinate the educational activities of the various benevolent associations. Frustrated at the lack of cooperation and contempt manifested towards him by representatives of the other aid societies, Coan ruefully admitted: "Having had no official recognition I have been embarrassed, and unable to carry out the plan proposed." He attributed the stalemate to the obstinacy of the "different associations" to relinquish control of their operations. Success, Coan bluntly wrote Orlando Brown, was impossible unless the Bureau interceded

[123] James Gloucester to O. Brown, June 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA.

and demanded "the cooperation of these irresponsible and individual parties."[124] William Hawkins of the New York Association penned a stern letter to Ralza Manly suggesting that better planning on the Bureau's part was necessary to ensure an oversupply of teachers was not sent to any one area. "Our teacher committee feels grieved and mortified," Hawkins scolded Manly, "that our noble association should have been apportioned to its care a district in which the principal town had already been given to other societies." He demanded Manly and Colonel Brown "repair any mistakes" by finding an alternative field of labor for the association to concentrate their "energies and means."[125]

Benevolent associations lambasted Bureau officials for their failure to secure adequate schools buildings and teacher housing. In a terse letter to Commissioner Brown, Hannah Stevenson of the New England Society wrote: "Our teachers have nothing that can be called accommodations." Considering "this society" had been one of first to enter Richmond, Stevenson pointed out, forcing her teachers to occupy dingy "cellar school rooms" with no "place to live properly" was an affront. She was reluctant to dispatch additional teachers to Richmond fearing the paucity of housing would force many to live in the streets and increase the risk of them being "arrested as vagrants." [126] When a group of teachers representing the New York Freedmen's Relief Association arrived in Petersburg only to discover the Bureau had not secured schools rooms, Crammond Kennedy demanded Manly explain the oversight. "That is because the proper steps have not been

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[124] William Coan to O. Brown, 1 June 1865, Ibid.

[125] William Hawkins to R. M. Manly, 18 October 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[126] Hannah Stevenson to O. Brown, 5 June 1865, ULR, Ibid.

taken to secure them," Manly replied. Reminding Kennedy that the Bureau took no action to find school buildings until the sponsoring association submitted a plan detailing the number of teachers it intended to send, Manly bluntly stated: "As the application was not made, no measures have been taken."[127]

Richmond	Petersburg
• New York Freedmen's Relief Association • New England Freedmen's Aid Society • American Baptist Home Mission Society • New York Friends Freedmen's Association • Soldier's Memorial Society • Protestant Episcopal Freedmen Commission	• New York Freedmen's Relief Association • American Baptist Home Mission Society • Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association • Protestant Episcopal Freedmen Commission

Figure 2.1 – Benevolent Associations Sponsoring Teachers in Richmond and Petersburg 1865-1869

The lack of clear communications and a viable plan to efficiently distribute the educational work exacerbated the sense of uncertainly among teachers and their adopted benevolent associations. "I must say I find matters in a rather confused state and it will take time and ingenuity to set matters right and have the work go on successfully," a teacher wrote from Petersburg.[128] After a protracted battle to assume control of the Chimborazo Schools from the American Missionary Society, William Hawkins, correspondent secretary with the New York society, described his uneasiness at the unsettled state of affairs not only in Richmond, but also across Virginia.[129] The situation had become intolerable and required new leadership, Hawkins concluded. Rather than

[127] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 11 October 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[128] S. K. Whiting to R. M. Manly, 29 October 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[129] G. Whipple to R. M. Manly, 25 September 1865, Ibid.

Manly dealing directly with each of the northern societies, Hawkins suggested the "misunderstandings between the Bureau and the various associations might be obviated by the appointment of a man who understood the southern field," the powers of the Bureau, and who had "the confidence of all the associations." Unless the Bureau restored order and took steps to lower tensions between the societies, Hawkins portended "trouble, perplexity, and a waste of money."[130]

Manly understood that the success of establishing a cohesive system of black schools, complete with adequate school rooms and housing for teachers, demanded firm action. During the summer of 1866, he informed philanthropic leaders of his plan to remove most of the schools from churches and create a districted, secular school system. Modeled after northern schools, with which Manly was well acquainted, the district system delineated clearly defined boundaries with students residing within a designated area obligated to attend that particular school. He assigned each association to a district, thus eliminating overlap.[131] Not only did his arrangement serve the interests of everyone involved in black education, but also districting, in Manly's view, allowed greater numbers of freed children to attend school. "It is safe to say that one third more children are in school than would be possible if the associations had not boundaries to their fields, and the increased good accomplished is beyond computation" he wrote.[132]

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[130] William Hawkins to R. M. Manly, 23 September 1865, Ibid.

[131] R. M. Manly to Robert Murray, 25 August 1866, LS, Ibid.

[132] R. M. Manly to Ada Smith, 25 January 1867, Ibid.

In Richmond, Manly assigned the largest secular agencies to one of three districts. The New York society had responsibility for the expansive school complex on Navy Hill, located at the confluence of Sixth and Duvall Streets. Capable of accommodating four hundred pupils, the schools had been built using funds from the association's treasury. The Friends Association occupied an area in the east end of the city encompassing Union Hill, Church Hill, and Rocketts Landing. Finally, the New England society, which was responsible for an area above Third Street, occupied several buildings commonly referred to as "Dills Bakery," capable of holding six hundred students.[133]

The arrangement did not sit well with the American Home Baptist Mission Society. Unwilling to relinquish control of their schools and adopt the district plan, Dr. Backus, Treasurer of the society, advised Manly of the Baptists' intention to discontinue "the work of secular education" in Richmond. The Baptist Home Mission Society claimed one of the largest networks of black schools in the city, with eight teachers giving instruction to "more than one third of all the children." Their departure left a large void for Manly to fill; he sent urgent appeals to the New York and New England associations, imploring them to send more teachers to make up the shortfall.[134]

By October 1866, everything was in place for the new school year. The Bakery, Navy Hill, and Chimborazo buildings stood ready to accept a fresh crop of students, and a

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[133] R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 24 August 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU; R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 27 September 1866, Ibid.

[134] R. M. Manly to J. Woolsey, 26 July 1866, Ibid; R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 24 August 1866, Ibid; R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 27 October 1866, Ibid.

new corps of teachers, feeling refreshed after a few months back home, were eager to begin their work. Manly felt optimistic that the districting plan he had implemented would have a salutary affect on the schools. What he had not anticipated was the sudden appearance of the teachers representing the Home Baptist Mission Society, which created an unwanted logistical nightmare. After expending significant sweat, toil, and money to prepare for the new school term, Manly resented this untimely intrusion. In a letter to Hannah Stevenson describing the fiasco, Manly wrote: "The day arrived for the schools to open, when, without a note of warning, or any instructions of a change of purpose, a full corps of teachers . . . make their appearance from that society – expecting to open their schools on the old programs without references to districts or expenses incurred, arrangements made, or their own declarations!" Clearly irritated, Manly called the precipitate action "a <u>big</u> blunder and nothing more," but he had little leverage to expel the Baptists because, in his words, "that society and its dictum is a power in Richmond." Seeing no choice but to permit the Baptist teachers to remain, Manly set firm ground rules: they had to submit to the "district and graded arrangement, and . . . fall into line and take such classes as I assign them." The entire matter, he lamented, had "led to a great deal of trouble."[135]

The New York and New England associations condemned the Baptists for their irresponsible actions, but empathizing with the uncomfortable position in which Manly had been placed, concurred with his decision. "Like yourself, I have been exceedingly inconvenienced by the action of the Baptist Home Mission Society," Crammond Kennedy

[135] R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 27 October 1866, Ibid.

wrote.[136] Ednah Cheney, who had succeeded Hannah Stevenson as chairwoman of the teacher's committee at the New England society, felt "grieved" at the steps Manly had been forced to render, especially "after the efforts and sacrifices" her association had taken. "It is exceedingly disagreeable," Cheney complained, "to have this intrusion by another society whose methods are so often so different from ours. But if there is no other remedy, we must submit as patiently as we can."[137]

Differences among freedmen's aid societies were not the only tensions Manly had to diffuse. He frequently butted heads with subordinates, teachers, and association officials over unfulfilled administrative duties, or to address accusations of mistreatment by the Bureau. Under pressure from Washington's "imperious demands" to submit a monthly account of school operations promptly, Manly waxed irritated when teachers repeatedly submitted their reports late and in many cases, incomplete. "There is no good reason why the teachers may not make up their reports on the last day of the month," Manly argued. Moreover, given the level of "aid and general protection" the Bureau was providing to the schools, Manly believed he had every right to demand the "prompt rendering" of monthly reports.[138] He was especially irked with the recalcitrance displayed by the teacher in charge of the Pocahontas school, Minnie Hill. Manly suggested Hill's actions were "a deliberate act on the ground she owes no allegiance to anybody but to her lady patron." Crammond Kennedy, correspondence secretary with the American Freedmen's Union Commission,

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[136] Crammond Kennedy to R. M. Manly, 29 October 1866, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[137] Ednah Cheney to R. M. Manly, 31 October 1866, Ibid..

[138] R. M. Manly to J. R. Stone, 11 December 1866, LS, Ibid.

responded to Manly, assuring him the matter had been addressed and promised prompt delivery of the monthly reports in the future.[139]

Countless pleas from Bureau sub-district superintendents for supplies and repairs to school buildings crossed Manly's desk daily. With limited funds at his disposal, he was unable to honor every request; thus, he had to carefully consider the merits of each case. Some of his decisions denying assistance were met with suspicion and consternation. When Major J. R. Stone, the assistant commissioner in Petersburg, accused the superintendent of education of unfair treatment towards the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Commission on the grounds he disapproved of the society's sectarian nature, Manly responded that the problem was not with him, but rather "that extraordinary lady, Miss Jones of Philadelphia," who had been a constant irritant. Her brazen overzealousness, Manly fulminated, "seems inclined to take possession of the Bureau itself, and if everything she asks is not conceded at once, without reference to our means or the rights [of] others, conclude . . . it is from unfriendliness to her society."[140]

At other times, teachers refused to accept decisions made at the local level and appealed directly to Manly, drawing the ire of the district superintendents. "With reference to Mrs. Fortune's application for benches," Major Stone wrote Manly complaining "that she has treated me with marked discourtesy in this and some other matters. She is the only one connected with any school here . . . who has refused to send communications . . .

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[139] Crammond Kennedy to R. M. Manly, 17 December 1866, ULR, Ibid; R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 14 December 1866, LS, Ibid.

[140] R. M. Manly to J. R. Stone, 27 April 1867, LS, Ibid.

through my office; and this because I did not make application to you . . . for the object in question."[141] Major Stone's experience with this one teacher shows how some women were willing to question the decisions of local bureau officials. Teachers such as Mrs. Fortune displayed real mettle and fortitude in fighting for what they thought was in the best interest of their schools, and in doing so challenged male authority.

Despite the amount of time Manly devoted to administrative duties, he frequently dropped by the schools to witness first hand how the students were progressing. This also allowed him to observe teachers at work and report back to their adoptive societies regarding whether they should be retained. With over one hundred educators working and living in the Richmond and Petersburg area by 1868, Manly had plenty of opportunity to reach conclusions about how teachers in the field were performing. Indeed, he offered blunt and unabashed assessments. A review of these letters reveals accolades for teachers who manifested unquestionable dedication and discipline to the cause. On the other hand, Manly castigated teachers who gave less than one hundred percent, or who lacked the skills necessary to achieve superior results. An opponent of mediocrity, Manly expected nothing less than well-educated, Christian teachers with endless energy and high moral standards.[142] At the same time, fully aware of the challenges benevolent associations encountered in recruiting top educators, Manly conceded: "I am willing to take my necessary proportion of mediocre teachers."[143]

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[141] J. R. Stone to R. M. Manly, 21 March 1868, ULR, Ibid.

[142] R. M. Manly to Edward Smith, 11 September 1868, AMA.

[143] R. M. Manly to J. M. McKim, 23 July 1867, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

However, most of the teachers in Central Virginia received high marks from Manly. He thought Bessie Canedy was "as good a teacher as N. E. can furnish . . . and her skill in the work of instruction preeminently excellent." He described her classroom management as "perfect and beautiful – a discipline of affection and reason. The scholars do not seem to have thought of anything but respectful obedience."[144] Manly rewarded Canedy's devotion to academic excellence when, in 1867, he appointed her principal of Richmond's first "Colored" Normal and High School. The education superintendent told the New England society that Zelma Renne possessed an "ample education, well disciplined mind," and was "laborious in her work."[145] Mary Knowles he considered a "teacher of superior merit . . . who ought not to be lost to this service." [146] Manly also recognized black teachers who exhibited high achievement. Following the exit of the American Home Baptist Society, he gave Rachael Thompson an unequivocal endorsement when she asked his assistance in finding another teaching post. Despite the fact she was only seventeen years old, Manly told Crammond Kennedy: "I cannot name one teacher in any primary school in Virginia who was more successful and useful than she . . . . It will be a great pity if some other association does not return this teacher to the field."[147]

Manly was equally quick to excoriate teachers with poor track records, or who seemed more interested in finding a suitable husband than with educating freed men and

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[144] R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 22 December 1866, Ibid.

[145] R. M. Manly to J. M. McKim, 23 July 1867, Ibid.

[146] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 24 September 1866, Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

women. In a confidential letter to James McKim of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, Manly wrote that Mary A. and Mary J. Cook were "pleasant ladies to look on and converse with," but they exhibited "no zeal in the work, going daily unwillingly to schools, and 'prospecting' for settled domestic relations." He concluded that the Cook sisters were unlikely "to be useful as teachers among the Freedmen." In a similar vein, Manly described Mary L. Rowell this way: "Her misfortune is her misfortune! – i.e. her physical infirmity, her homelessness and poverty make her peevish and querulous at home and in school and lead her beyond the bounds of propriety in her desire to secure 'anybody, anybody give Lord' for a husband. . . . She is not a very successful teacher – discipline poor."[148]

In one respect, Manly had every right to expect high teaching standards. Educating freed slaves demanded dedication and personal sacrifice, despite the inconveniences. On the other hand, his lack of compassion towards teachers suffering health or economic set-backs seems harsh. His vote of no confidence in the Cook sisters and Mary Rowell appears to be related more to their desire to find husbands than to their actual teaching. Who could blame them? Not only were the salaries teachers received meager, averaging $25 - $40 per month, but for many teaching freed slaves was a temporary occupation. Once their assignment ended women teachers faced limited options. They could return home to live and work alongside their parents and siblings, find employment in one of several northern industries, or they could find a suitable husband with whom to start a new life. Considering

[148] R. M. Manly to J. M. McKim, 23 July 1867, Ibid.

the limited opportunities for employment outside the home for women, it is not surprising that some teachers were interested in courtship and marriage.

Women were not the only ones Manly targeted for criticism; he found indolent male teachers particularly irksome. To Ednah Cheney, he complained: "Your teachers here think and I think with them, that in respect Mr. Woolfolk is not doing his duty. He gives but little personal attention to the night school sending in his little daughter as his substitute most of the time." Expressing his incredulity at Woolfolk's behavior, Manly wrote: "He is in perfect health and not overworked, and if the delicate ladies can do that night work, he certainly ought to."[149]

While Manly, for the most part, had good relations with teachers, one of his more challenging tasks was urging them to consistently ask students to contribute small sums of money towards the support of schools. In Virginia, annual expenditures for the Freedmen's schools ranged from seventy-five thousand to one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. Securing adequate money for teacher salaries and expenses, building rents, school supplies, fuel, wood and transportation was a constant challenge. Given the uncertainty of government funding and the inconsistency of northern fundraising efforts, it was only a matter of time before northern educators asked blacks to contribute more to the support of their schools.

Rather than spending most of their meager earnings on self-indulgence, the Bureau preferred blacks "be trained to spend something on self-culture." In the fall of 1866,

[149] R. M. Manly to Ednah Cheney, 29 November 1868, Ibid.

Manly, an outspoken advocate of blacks becoming "practically and pecuniarily" involved, suggested that when new pupils enrolled, they should publicly disclose, after consultation with their parents, how much they were willing to contribute each month towards the maintenance of their schools. To Manly, "this would be a direct appeal to the self-respect of pupil and parent, and would oppress no one." Furthermore, he feared that some missionary societies, and teachers, in Richmond and Petersburg were pampering blacks, "carrying them bodily upon their shoulders," which he thought had "worked immense harm" by teaching dependence and charity, rather than independence and self-help.[150]

Over the next several months Manly organized meetings enjoining freed men and women to do more. While the black community expressed enthusiasm, Manly became frustrated when repeated promises to supply manpower to maintain schools failed to materialize. "The labor . . . is more readily subscribed than rendered," he lamented. Moreover, he expressed little confidence in the ability of church leaders to effectively coordinate the activities among their congregations; thus, the success of organizing freedpeople to volunteer their time required real leadership, white leadership: "I predict that nothing can be done except by the active and continuous exertions of some white man who will bring them together without regard to church lines, and give symmetry and efficiency to the movement." Manly was a realist, however, and understood that the dearth of money in the black community prevented him from demanding mandatory compliance,

[150] R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 15 August 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

so he relied on the societies and the teachers to encourage students and families to voluntarily donate funds.[151]

Officials with the New England Freedmen's Aid Society agreed with Manly that success of the schools depended on the black community's contributing physical, as well as monetary support. Hannah Stevenson, worried that assistance from generous northern donors would abate if the freedmen were seen as ungrateful, told Manly: "I dread any action on the part of Societies at the North which shall tend to pauperize the blacks." The amount of financial aid was in jeopardy, she added, "unless it can be clearly proved that the gift of education is appreciated & becomes a means to self-help." Indeed, just west of Richmond, she learned that several families had complained about having to pay for books. Incredulous at this behavior, Stevenson warned, "We could not harm them more than to encourage such ideas." What she may have failed to comprehend is that as slaves, most blacks had not been asked to pay for anything. Nevertheless, Stevenson, too, thought any payment system had to be voluntary, in part because of Richmond's high cost of living. She was hopeful blacks would contribute something, for, in her words, the smallest gift was "better for them than merely to receive."[152]

The black community manifested a willingness to help. After discussing Manly's plan with her pupils and their parents, Bessie Canedy believed the "colored people" would ante-up and support their schools "long before the dominant race are ready to do the same." A black carpenter at Canedy's school asserted confidently: "We're bound to try this

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[151] Ibid.

[152] Hannah Stevenson to R. M. Manly, 18 August 1866, ULR, Ibid.

plan. Just you wait and let it get worked up into the minds of the people, and they'll never be without schools again."[153] During a Thanksgiving service at the Third Street Methodist Church, Horace Hovey, a teacher at Dill's Bakery, proudly announced that he had collected "*seventeen dollars and forty-five cents*" towards the school's fuel fund. One parishioner thought it better for students, rather than parents, to personally deliver contributions to teachers for it "would interest the children in the work, and the impressions and influence would be valuable to them." The plan worked. Several weeks later the fund had grown to twenty-five dollars, and by the following April the balance exceeded fifty dollars. Hovey noted that he did not have to pressure students to contribute; instead, they "manifested a willingness to cheerfully do what they could." The success of the fuel fund drive at Dill's Bakery surprised Manly, who at first thought the plan impracticable.[154]

Circumstances in Petersburg were less auspicious. The New York Association, alarmed with the recalcitrance of students, solicited Manly's help in finding a way for the freedpeople to do more. "Our schools," Josephine Lowell, Chairwoman of the Teachers Committee, complained, "are not even supplied with fuel by the pupils who on the contrary . . . go so far as to steal what we supply."[155] What Lowell apparently failed to acknowledge is what may have prompted students to steal fuel in the first place. In some

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[153] Bessie Canedy to Hannah Stevenson, 7 November 1866, in *FR* 2 (December 1866): 209.

[154] Horace Hovey to Hannah Stevenson, 5 December 1866, in Ibid 3 (February 1867): 21; Horace Hovey to Ednah Cheney, 16 March 1867, in Ibid (April 1867): 64.

[155] Lowell to Manly, 2 February 1868, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

ways it was a necessity. While benevolent associations preached independence and self-help, at times they appeared to have overlooked the fact that widespread destitution in the black community made this goal almost impossible to achieve. Many students probably either sold the fuel in order to have money to purchase food and clothing, or used the stolen material to heat their own homes. Thus, perhaps the theft of fuel was less about stealing than about survival.

Although freedpeople did their best, voluntary contributions were insufficient to keep up with escalating costs. By late 1867 and early 1868, the Bureau was supervising over 4,000 students and 110 teachers scattered across more than 45 schools in the Richmond and Petersburg area, straining the agency's money. Although several schools still met in local churches, others, such as Dill's Bakery and Navy Hill held classes in buildings owned by the Bureau or benevolent societies, which required additional resources to procure fuel and wood to heat the classrooms, as well as performing general maintenance. Assistance from the federal government was unreliable, recent fundraising efforts by the various associations had produced fewer contributions, and the frequency of payments from students had dropped. Consequently, Ednah Cheney suggested the time had come to begin threatening to close schools unless parents and students anted up. "Do you think we could in Richmond," she asked Manly, "only send teachers where rent, fuel, lights, and half the sum we have been paying for salary should be furnished by the people?"[156]

[156] Ednah Cheney to R. M. Manly, 5 June 1867, Ibid.

Josephine Lowell of the New York society complained that the repeated string of broken promises in Petersburg had made planning difficult because she relied on assurances of support to determine how many teachers to send to the city. “It is demoralizing to the people to let them break their promises in such as easy way,” she wrote. Lowell agreed with Cheney of the need to encourage greater involvement from black families, but she regretted “the necessity of collecting from the children,” preferring instead to exert pressure directly on the parents to contribute. “Nothing would help more towards improving the schools,” Lowell wrote to Manly, “than to throw part of the support of the schools on them.” She asked Manly to “devise some means of impressing on the people the importance and dignity of self-taxation.” The New York association, however, opposed the “strict payment of a per capita tax,” which would make attendance conditional on the payment of the tax. This arrangement too closely resembled a pay school structure, which the society, and the Bureau, viewed with anathema.[157]

Manly, who by 1868 had become an agent for the New York Branch of the American Freedmen’s Union Commission, sympathized with Cheney and Lowell, but had waxed frustrated by the lack of coordination between the various benevolent associations. Success of a mandatory payment plan, he declared, was impossible “without concert and uniformity of action with the other societies.” Furthermore, he demanded, “the societies . . . either agree upon the details of a plan,” or delegate him “or some other person on the ground” to get things moving. Pointing out that he “had to insist continually” that teachers

[157] J. S. Lowell to R. M. Manly, 12 April 1868, Ibid; J. S. Lowell to R. M. Manly, 2 February, 1868, Ibid.

"not yield to their sympathies and excuse payment, Manly called on the various associations to instruct teachers "to execute orders instead of following their sympathies or discretion. A less stringent rule would be good for nothing. The smallest exception is striking . . . . If they have any latitude . . . they will soon make a hole . . . large enough for 2000 children to go through."[158]

At the same time, Manly concluded it was also time to stop politely asking for contributions from students. Actions and deeds were needed, not words. In a letter to Reverend Kennedy of the New York society, Manly impatiently declared: "Words are of little account. I have used many of them and had universal and enthusiastic assent to the propriety and duty of paying and equally universal neglect to do it until it was 'leave the school or pay.'"[159] A uniform and consistent approach by all societies was essential and Manly suggested "ten cents per week from all scholars from second reader upward, and 25 cts. per month from all below that grade."[160]

Teachers did their best to collect payments, but because of abject poverty, many students could not comply and stayed away from school until they secured the necessary funds. One student in Lizzie Parson's class left school for a month because he had no means to purchase books. After he earned enough money, the pupil returned, his "eyes beaming with joy" at the prospect of acquiring books and rejoining his class. Parson's regretted asking for money from those families who could least afford it, conceding it was

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[158] R. M. Manly to J. S. Lowell, 2 May 1868, LS, Ibid.

[159] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 2 June 1868, Ibid.

[160] R. M. Manly to J. S. Lowell, 2 May 1868, Ibid.

"almost painful to take," yet she expressed "great pleasure to see the sacrifices they make so cheerfully."[161] Bessie Canedy announced she had received $10.50 towards the fuel fund, but a majority of students were unable to contribute citing, "no work" and "no pay," as reasons, a reality she admitted, "we know . . . to be too true." At the same time, unwilling to see her students leave school, Canedy took the initiative to raise money for books. Hoping to acquire copies of Worcester's School Dictionary for each of their pupils, Canedy and her assistant, Miss Howe, held a series of "concerts and exhibitions" to raise money. After three performances, the ladies had earned fifty-dollars, of which twenty-dollars had been donated by one gentleman.[162]

Still, other teachers complained bitterly about the mandatory payment plan. From her school near Petersburg, a despondent A. G. Burbank wrote Manly that despite exhaustive appeals to students and parents "urging the importance of sustaining the school . . . to the extent of ten cents per week," the results were disappointing. In one month Burbank collected only $3.75, which was "a small amount compared with the number attending school." To Burbank, the policy to "admit none," except those who paid, seemed harsh and insensitive. Worse, strict enforcement jeopardized the school simply because students, whose "real" circumstances precluded them from paying "much towards the support of the school," were excluded from attending.[163]

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[161] Letter from Lizzie Parsons, in *AF* 3 (April 1868): 390.

[162] Bessie Canedy to Ednah Cheney, 12 February 1868, in *FR* 4 (March 1868): 42-43.

[163] A. G. Burbank to R. M. Manly, 3 December 1868, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

Minnie Hill wrote her society that a combination of high unemployment and bad weather, which reduced crops yields, had a significantly impacted black families' ability to contribute to their schools. Enforcing mandatory payment when most could not afford it, Hill reported, had not only led to lower attendance rates, but also contributed to a doleful atmosphere in the classroom. Hill thought it awkward, and unfair, to threaten students with expulsion considering the amount of time, money, and effort parents had donated towards construction of her school building. It seemed cold-hearted to enforce a non-attendance policy when "the people had a claim on this school – many of them having by dint of great sacrifice paid something toward the purchase of the land on which the school house stands," she wrote.[164]

In spite of widespread apprehension from teachers to condition attendance on the payment of a monthly fee, Manly insisted the plan had a salutary effect. In a report to John Alvord, Inspector of Schools for the Freedmen's Bureau, Manly wrote: "Where the collection has been uniformly enforced it has elevated the character of the school" and eliminated "the worthless material." More important, the payment plan had instilled "a legitimate feeling of self-respect" among the freedpeople "in place of the debasing sense of entire dependence." Responding to criticism that his policy was insensitive and unwise, Manly asserted: "It is not a kindness to make schools entirely without expense to the people. On the contrary, it is a false and pernicious lesson, which must, some day be painfully unlearned."[165]

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[164] Letter from Minnie Hill, in *AF* 2 (December 1868): 333.

[165] R. M. Manly to J. Alvord, 12 April 1869, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

Manly's passionate defense of mandatory payments had been inspired, in part, by political considerations. Since his arrival in Richmond, he earnestly hoped the "Freedmen's Schools" would serve as the catalyst for a locally supported public education system. Keenly aware that Richmond officials were closely monitoring events, Manly wanted to prove that indigent blacks were capable of uplifting themselves through active support of their schools. "We ought to make it good," Manly declared, "so good that it cannot be sneered at, so good as to command approval from a people whose traditions and prejudices are against it."[166]

In the end, enforcement of the payment plan proved difficult and haphazard. A review of the Bureau's school reports for Richmond and Petersburg indicate that most of the contributions emanated from schools run by the New York Association, of which Manly was an agent, or from the Home Baptist Mission Society. This data is suspect, however, because monthly school reports were frequently inconsistent or incomplete. It is also unclear how many students were indeed turned away for failure to pay. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest most black families *did* demonstrate a desire to lend financial assistance. They were eager to prove not only to themselves, but also to the white community, that blacks as a people possessed the desire and skills necessary to support their own schools. At the same time, the payment plan illustrates an apparent lack of reflection by northern educators. On the surface, encouraging freedpeople to contribute small sums of money had merit, but the policy of mandatory compliance was impractical. External factors – scarce employment, poor wages, high rents, and endemic racism –

[166] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 2 June 1868, Ibid.

conspired to keep blacks in poverty. Manly and philanthropic leaders lauded education as the panacea for escaping poverty and dependence, yet requiring students to pay in order to attend school not only jeopardized that dream, it also placed an economic burden on black families that left them no less dependent on northern white generosity.

In many cases freedpeople, unwilling to cow-tow to demands emanating from northern white educators, took matters into their hands. Northern black ministers encouraged the Richmond and Petersburg black community to organize and demand a greater voice in the management of their schools. In a letter to Orlando Brown, the Rev. James N. Gloucester, who served as Superintendent of the black schools in Petersburg for several months, proudly pointed to the number of positive remarks gratuitously offered from visitors who hailed the schools "as successful as any . . . in the state." He attributed these glowing reports, in part, to the willingness of "intelligent and experienced" blacks such as himself to take proactive steps toward educating freed slaves. When Gloucester learned the New York Association planned to replace him with a white superintendent, he urged the Freedmen's Bureau to actively embrace the views of learned black educators because "colored men, Educated, Experienced, Intelligent" were "an indispensable element to the success of the Freedmen throughout the country." Although his services were no longer needed in Petersburg, the Bureau asked Gloucester to visit other parts of Virginia and make recommendations for the establishment of other freedmen schools.[167]

[167] James Gloucester to O. Brown, 26 July 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

William Harris, a black minister from Cleveland, together with other local clergymen, visited churches in Richmond and Manchester promoting the Union Educational Association. This organization, which by the end of 1866 boasted 125 members, wanted to awaken "an interest in the cause of education" in the black community. Harris discerned that any movement initiated by blacks to lend support and leadership towards maintenance of schools had tremendous public relations value: "It will show the friends and different associations of the North that the people themselves are anxious to do what they can for their own elevation and education."[168]

While most blacks attended schools established by the Bureau and benevolent societies, the freedpeople of Central Virginia did not always follow the script northern white educators had written. In Richmond and Petersburg many parents chose to send their children to one of dozens of private "pay schools," many taught by black instructors. In mid- 1868 the Bureau reported the existence of more than fifteen pay schools existed in Central Virginia, most of them in Richmond. Northern educators viewed these schools with derision, and the education received, when compared to the Freedmen's Bureau schools, wholly unsatisfactory. Moreover, some pay schools were short lived enterprises because if the tuition was not paid the school closed, disrupting the education routine of children and forcing parents to find a replacement.[169]

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[168] W. D. Harris to Geo. Whipple, 9 November 1866, AMA.

[169] C. Cook to Hambrick, 10 March 1868, Reports on Schools, Teachers, and Buildings Submitted in Response to Circulars and Circular Letters, BRFAL-VA-EDU; School Report, 3rd District, August 1868, Monthly Statistical School Reports of District Superintendents, BRFAL-VA-EDU (hereinafter referenced as Reports on Schools).

The *Freedmen's Record* questioned the overall quality of education received at pay schools, arguing that blacks who sent their children to these private institutions undercut efforts to establish "free" schools among the freedpeople. "Are not these schools generally established without much care of system, and the teachers ill qualified for their task?" the journal rhetorically asked. "If the influence and money among you is given to establish free schools, with able teachers, well organized and thoroughly sustained, you will soon have schools for all better than you now have for any."[170] The New England Freedmen's Aid Society charged that most of the teachers were incompetent, "that many . . . can read, but very imperfectly, and know nothing of writing and arithmetic."[171] An association agent in Petersburg objected to pay schools because they were not under the auspices of the Bureau; thus, in the agent's words, proprietors refused "to respond to calls made upon them for account of their operations." Not only were teachers "insufficient," but also the entire concept of pay schools was an "aristocratic one."[172] Manly thought the schools were "a silly notion of exclusiveness, copied from aristocratic white folks. With two or three exceptions, these schools are worse than worthless." Inducing parents to remove their children from pay schools, Manly argued, required a concerted effort on his part to highlight the quality of black schools run by the Bureau.[173]

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[170] "Pay Schools in Virginia," in *FR* 3 (November 1867): 168.

[171] "To the Colored Voters of the South," in Ibid (July 1867): 113.

[172] "Petersburg and Vicinity: Report of Freedmen's Schools"," in *NF* 1 (December 1865): 350.

[173] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 12 January 1866, in Ibid 2 (February 1866): 59.

In other cases, especially outside the Richmond and Petersburg city limits, freedpeople took the initiative to establish their own schools hoping their efforts resulted in the Bureau rendering financial assistance. A few miles from Petersburg blacks erected a school house on land offered to them by a local resident. The land was rent free, provided the freedpeople used the structure for school purposes. Because northern associations were unable to supply a teacher, the local Bureau agent reported that the freedpeople found a black candidate "who is qualified to teach them and will officiate in carrying on the day and night school."[174] In City Point, blacks approached Major Stone proposing to start a school with "a colored woman of education" to serve as the instructor. The enterprise could not get off the ground, however, without outside financial assistance. Describing the freedpeople in City Point as "the most poorest and most inept of any in my department," Stone urged Manly to appropriate a small sum for the school, which he agreed to do at the rate of twenty-five cents per month for each pupil "estimated on average attendance."[175]

North of Richmond, in Hanover County, Bureau Agent Ira Ayers reported that the schools started by blacks in his jurisdiction had received a paucity of support from the agency. In a September 1866 report, Ayers said the present condition of blacks made it impossible for them to "bear the entire expense of schooling their children"; thus, for education to take hold in the county required "encouragement from abroad."[176] A few

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[174] J. B. Clinton to J. R. Stone, 17 September 1866, Reports on Schools, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[175] J. R. Stone to R. M. Manly, 25 September 1868, ULR, Ibid; R. M. Manly to J. R. Stone, 27 September 1868, LS, Ibid.

[176] Ira Ayers to J. A. McDonnell, 20 September 1866, Reports of Operations and Conditions in Virginia, Monthly Narrative Reports, BRFAL-VA (hereinafter referenced as Reports of Operations).

months later, the Baptist Home Mission Society assumed control of one school, which Ayers said was well attended and "in a most prosperous condition."[177] By the end of 1867, parents started two additional schools, each taught by black teachers. Ayers again asked Manly to appropriate monies to help aid the schools, which he agreed to do at a rate of ten dollars per month.[178]

While Ayers expressed measured optimism with the progress thus far, his enthusiasm waned after learning the Baptists planned to close the "Shiloh Church" school at the end of the school year. After meeting with Manly in the fall of 1867 to discuss reopening the school, Ayers concluded: "The house is at present entirely unsuitable to receive a female teacher." Not only was the school house in disrepair, but also finding a "comfortable boarding place" to house a female teacher seemed unlikely. Thus, Ayers reluctantly agreed to have the Bureau take steps to "secure the services of some good colored man" because at present it was inexpedient to recruit a northern white teacher. "I deeply regret that we are not able to avail ourselves of the services of a thoroughly competent teacher, . . . but think our good northern women after making the sacrifices they do, . . . are entitled to a good house to teach in, a comfortable boarding place, and, if possible, to be associated together for mutual sympathy and support." [179] The conundrum Ayers faced was similar in other rural areas across Virginia, indeed, the entire South: how to recruit northern teachers to live and work in isolated, remote areas in which housing was

[177] Ira Ayers to James Bates, 28 December 1866, Ibid.

[178] Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 28 October 1867, Ibid.

[179] Ira Ayers to R. M. Manly, 12 November 1867, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

scarce and the local white population hostile. Consequently, in Hanover County at least, blacks took the initiative to start their own schools.

By 1868, the county boasted six day schools, all organized by black residents. There is "an increasing interest in the cause of education," Ayers proudly announced. This sentiment, he pointed out, was not shared among the white masses who manifested "little interest" in schooling. Even so, given the number of schools blacks established, it appears white residents offered grudging acceptance to the inevitability of educating freed slaves. Indeed, in places such as "Bethany Seats," "Union Seats," Fleming Mills," "Hanover Junction," and "Shiloh Church," blacks, through "energy and perseverance," took control of their own destiny.[180] In another area of the county freedpeople, with the enthusiastic support of the American Tract Society, began to construct a school building, but the enterprise was in jeopardy because promised financial aid had failed to materialize. H. E. Simmons, an agent with the American Tract Society, urged Manly to appropriate fifty dollars so "a good commodious log school house and chapel can be completed." Simmons told Manly he had already found an "eminent Christian" lady, who for the last two years had been teaching young black children to read, to serve as the teacher. Despite the fact the young woman was a native Virginia, Simmons vouched for her qualifications asserting: "I wish there were ten thousand with her spirit."[181]

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[180] Ira Ayers to R. M. Manly 19 February 1869, Ibid; Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 28 July 1868, Reports on Operations, BRFAL-VA.

[181] H. E. Simmons to R. M. Manly, 26 August 1868, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

A few local white property owners granted permission for blacks to construct buildings on their land provided the structure was "occupied for school and church purposes." When Bureau agent Lieutenant Hambrick doubted the good intentions of Hanover County resident Charles Morris in deeding a parcel of land to blacks for the purpose of building a school, Ayers assured the commissioner that Morris was "a gentleman of much influence" who had "been a true and kind friend to the colored people since their freedom."[182] The willingness of some white property owners to offer land on which to build black schools is noteworthy, but it is questionable their actions were the result of sincere benevolence. They may have reluctantly agreed to educate the freedpeople, but the fact that whites set conditions, such as demanding that only schools could be erected on their land, demonstrates an attempt to maintain control over the actions and movements of former slaves.

While Manly was eager to expand black education in Hanover County, the aid he offered was conditional on the teacher's ability to maintain minimum attendance thresholds. William P. Brown, a black teacher at the "Old Church" school, was a tireless, unabashed advocate of education for "his people." Known for peppering Manly with requests for books, slates, building supplies, and financial aid, Brown had struggled to convince parents why it was important for them to send their children to school on a regular basis.[183] After several meetings with students and parents, Brown proudly wrote

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[182] Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 1 December 1868, Register of Communications Received and Referred Letters and Telegrams Received, BRFAL-VA; Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 15 December ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[183] William P. Brown to R. M. Manly, 5 January 1870, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

Manly, "I am glad to inform you . . . that there is no doubt sir . . . as to my being able to make a report of 30 pupils and over agreeable to the established policy of the Bureau." Bluntly informing parents what the consequences were if their children failed to attend school seemed to do the trick, Brown told Manly: "The fact is that I have told the people they must give attendance of 30 scholars per day during the month or the School will not be supported in any shape or form and not wishing to shut their children out of school being sensible of it at the same time, they have finally determined to send the children to school."[184]

The circumstances in Hanover County illustrated a glaring gap regnant throughout the South: the demand for schools outstripped the supply of teachers available to provide instruction. Advanced teacher training programs beyond rudimentary schooling were necessary if blacks were to assume a greater role in instructing their own people. Historian Ronald Butchart has argued that training blacks to serve as teachers gave them an opportunity to achieve a semblance of independence away from the watchful eye of "paternalistic whites."[185] The Bureau endorsed the "endowment of normal schools" throughout the South, arguing their presence provided a "steady, elevating influence upon the whole mass of the people" by "introducing culture into home life" and "a pure morality into every circle."[186] Manly, an outspoken champion of providing superior teaching preparatory facilities, single-handedly led the effort to create a normal school in Richmond.

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[184] William P. Brown to R. M. Manly 15 January 1870, Ibid.

[185] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 164.

[186] Alvord, *5th Semi-Annual Report, 1 January 1868*, 2-3.

In his view the school "would inspire in the colored people hope and life and self-respect and a generous ambition, and would be in itself an educational force, continually operating upon every colored boy and girl as they pass it in the street, even before they are prepared to enter it as pupils."[187]

Although the ostensible purpose of normal schools was to train blacks to become teachers, there were practical, and selfish, reasons as well. For one thing northern educators realized it was less expensive to have local blacks act as teachers than it was for benevolent societies and the government to transport corps of volunteers to the south. As the number of freedpeople attending schools multiplied, so too did the difficulty of finding accommodations for northerners among recalcitrant citizens, especially in rural areas. As evidence of the demand, Manly pointed out that nearly three quarters of the applications from Bureau officers outside Virginia cities called for "colored teachers."[188] Another reason to train blacks was because of the deep-rooted prejudice southerners manifested towards the freedpeople. In other words, convincing large number of southern whites to teach in black schools was unlikely.

Manly thought Richmond was the perfect location to establish a normal school. He pointed to the success of the Bureau's primary and intermediate schools in the city, which, he declared, were already producing "intelligent and ambitious young people." In his mind there was no reason to doubt that with proper training, students manifesting high academic

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[187] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 12 January 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[188] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 1 January 1866, in *NF* 2 (February 1866): 58.

achievement could become "respectable teachers" themselves.[189] He concluded that while the primary education offered to blacks was adequate for some, the program did not emphasize the "higher elevation of ideas" that was necessary to prepare students for a teaching career. Supervised by northern white instructors manifesting "the best professional skill," Manly said normal schools were the only avenue open "to educate the better class of colored youth" to become teachers "among their own race."[190] However, to bring his dream to a reality required Manly to secure financial commitments from benevolent associations and the Bureau.

Lyman Abbott of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC) voiced support for the enterprise provided the Bureau assumed the lead in securing the lot and obtaining building supplies. After a meeting of the executive committee, the AFUC agreed to donate two thousand dollars, provided Manly obtained a similar commitment from the Freedmen's Bureau.[191] After reading Manly's detailed proposal, Commissioner Howard heartily endorsed the enterprise convinced that with active support from the black community it would yield propitious results. "If it can thus be made a movement of their energy," Howard wrote Manly, "it will be of much better value."[192] Howard's statement illustrates the self-help mentality northern educators demanded blacks embrace. He realized the Bureau's work was a temporary endeavor and that once the agency disbanded

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[189] R. M. Manly to Lyman Abbott, 25 September 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[190] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 1 January 1866, in *NF* 2 (February 1866): 58.

[191] Lyman Abbott to R. M. Manly, 7 August 1866, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[192] O. O. Howard to R. M. Manly, 23 August 1866, LR, Ibid; R. M. Manly to O. O. Howard, 11 August 1866, LS, Ibid.

black education faced an uncertain future. Thus, in order for the black education movement to move ahead required more freedpeople to become teachers.

The AFUC dispatched agents across New England hoping to convince auxiliary societies to donate money for the construction of the Richmond Normal School. A sense of urgency was the overarching theme: "Competent colored teachers are needed throughout the South. Whoever helps to meet this necessity does incalculable good. Let us rally round this enterprise, and carry it into successful operation."[193] Manly told friends and associates their investment not only served the immediate needs of the black community, but also was a down-payment for the creation of "one of the best of New England ideas – a complete system of free schools." Some teachers traveled from Richmond to make personal appeals in northern communities. Mercie Baker confidently told Manly she could raise a fair sum of money from personal and business acquaintances. He recognized that direct appeals by teachers such as Baker were extremely useful: "The special force this appeal would have from the lips of an earnest lady who had traveled all the way from Virginia to Maine to make it inspires in me some confidence of her sources."[194]

At the same time teachers and benevolent societies engaged in fundraising activities, Manly spearheaded efforts to place the school's operations under the auspices of the Richmond Educational Association (REA), which had recently received a charter from the Circuit Court, and in which Manly served as secretary. He took this step to ensure the school remained in friendly hands after the Bureau's departure. As stated in the by-laws,

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[193] "Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Franklin Counties," in *AF* 2 (July 1867): 250.

[194] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, 19 November 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

the REA committed itself to "the improvement of the people in virtue and knowledge, and specifically, to educate young persons in the science and art of teaching."[195] For the moment, however, the REA still relied on the Bureau and "gifts from well-wishers" to meet its operating expenses. Manly viewed this arrangement as temporary; he hoped that the management of the school could eventually be "safely and honorably" turned over to the city once it had developed a "thorough and efficient school system of its own."[196]

Following months of planning and construction, Manly's campaign paid off. In October 1867 the Richmond Normal & High School opened its doors for aspiring black teachers. Constructed primarily with black labor, the *Freedmen's Record* described it as "probably the best school building in Virginia, well furnished and supplied with a library" containing over 400 volumes. During an elaborate dedication ceremony held in the school's second floor lecture room, Manly, along with Governor Pierpont and Supreme Court Chief Justice Salmon Chase, delivered remarks to an enthusiastic audience filled with students, parents, teachers and Bureau officials. Governor Pierpont confidently asserted that the school represented an important step towards sectional reconciliation: "This house is one of the first monuments of love and mercy growing out of the fruits of the late rebellion." Moreover, the governor pointed out, the Richmond Normal School epitomized progress in which "the advancement of man's physical, mental and moral culture" had the chance to develop in a salutary learning environment. Chief Justice Chase

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[195] Minute Book of the Richmond Education Association, Manly Collection, 2.

[196] Manly to Howard, 10, July 1869, *Virginia School Report for the six-months ending 30 June 1869*, BRFAL-National; *FR* 3 (December 1868): 187-188.

told the audience the Normal School served as an important monument to all Virginians proving that training blacks to become teachers was in the public interest.[197]

Since the school was across the street from his residence, Manly spent a fair amount of time observing teachers and the progress of students. Bessie Canedy served as Principal and taught the most advanced students, while an assistant teacher instructed a second group of pupils. Despite his other pressing duties, Manly spent two days per week lecturing students on "scientific subjects."[198] Six months after admitting its first students, Manly felt confident the school's auspicious beginnings bode well for the future. "In all points that characterize a good school," he wrote to Crammond Kennedy, "studious habits, zeal, cheerfulness, neatness of person and dress, quietness, politeness, and finally, real advancement in intelligence and scholarship, I should not now where to look for a better school than this."[199]

The advent of the normal school was a milestone in Manly's long campaign to elevate blacks through education. Rather than relying on long-term benevolence from northern associations, blacks now had the means to begin transmitting knowledge to future generations of their own people. Indeed, W. E. B. DuBois suggested training blacks to become teachers was the most important aspect of freedpeople education: "The advance of

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[197] "Dedication of the Colored Normal School on Navy Hill," in *AF* 2 (December 1867): 323-324; "Normal Schools at the South," in *FR* 4 (December 1868): 187.

[198] "Normal Schools at the South," in *FR* 4 (December 1868): 187-188; "Normal Schools," in *AF* 2 (November 1867): 307.

[199] R. M. Manly to Crammond Kennedy, in *AF* 3 (June 1868): 425.

the Negro in education, helped by the Abolitionists, was phenomenal; but the greatest step was preparing his own teachers – the gift of New England to the black South."[200]

Freedpeople's thirst for primary and normal schools reflected their belief that education was the true measure of freedom. Their enthusiasm propelled the education movement in Richmond and Petersburg from just a handful schools in 1865 to nearly eighty by the end of 1868. And that was just the schools receiving support from the Bureau and outside agencies. Numerous "private" black schools dotted the landscape, manifesting a desire by many freed men and women to escape the rules and regulations associated with white oversight. Even so, teachers, benevolent associations, and the Bureau poured vast amount of resources into the area with the understanding success in the former confederate capital bode well for other movements across the south. It was arduous work, made more complicated by the abject poverty regnant in the black community. By no means was the system perfect. For the most part, the actors responsible for laying the groundwork for black schools maintained good relations with each other, albeit, at times the cooperative spirit experienced fissures. Nevertheless, together, blacks and northern educators pressed forward regardless of the financial and logistical roadblocks thrown at them.

[200] DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 637.

Chapter 4

Teacher's Work

While the Bureau went about creating a stable, structured learning environment under central authority, teachers focused their energies on the task of introducing the freedpeople to "civilized" education. Aside from literary instruction, however, teachers devoted considerable effort attending to the physical wants of students and their parents. In essence, teachers assumed the role of social worker as they confronted deplorable living conditions during home visits and "half naked" children arriving at school. Despite these challenges educators worked assiduously to foster a salutary learning environment based on northern institutions and ideals.

Educational missionaries believed the key to successfully educating freed slaves rested with transplanting the northern common school program: the curriculum, attendance and discipline rules, grading procedures, and the calendar. While the immediate aim was to instruct students in the basic literary skills, such as reading and writing, the long range goal was to prepare blacks for life and work in the South.[201] In Virginia, this included developing industrial education programs for black adults. Schooling, then, was seen as a

[201] Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 211-212; Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship*, 111-112.

means to inculcate blacks with "citizenship training" and "a distinctive brand of Victorian-Protestant moral instruction." In the words of one historian, the purpose of "New England" education was the "intellectual and moral growth of responsible individuals who recognized their duty to God, country, family, and self," traits northern educators viewed blacks must possess in order to compete in a democratic society.[202] At times, the methods employed to instill these ideals were unrealistic. Although it is difficult to draw an exact picture of educational exercises in specific schools, examination of teachers' letters, Bureau reports, benevolent society journals, government agent reports and various works published by historians, it is possible to provide a reasonable composite of what teachers experienced in and out of the classroom.

First and foremost, teachers sought to enforce a common routine and a semblance of order. For example, to ensure the school day began on time, northern educators demanded punctuality from students. Because teachers instructed their pupils using group rather than individual recitation, students arriving late disrupted classroom exercises, which usually resulted in a swift scolding. Manly, who thought punctuality was "a virtue equal to honesty and piety," instituted punitive measures to punish tardy students. Convinced tardiness was a sign of carelessness, Manly "compelled punctuality" by instructing teachers not to admit "scholars to the school room after nine." Once the bell had rung, he expected teachers to lock the doors so that "worship and work" could "proceed in quietness and order." He insisted the policy inculcated good habits in both students and

[202] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 109.

parents: "We make the parents and pupils subject their convenience to the necessity of the school . . . . Very few of those who attempt to come to school . . . fail to be there on time; and those who do fail are not likely to be careless again for some time." When properly and consistently enforced, Manly declared, the "schools are better attended, better disciplined, and better instructed."[203] It is unclear how teacher's reacted to Manly's dictum. Some may have enforced these rules without exception, but it seems likely many more exhibited leniency towards tardy students. Yes, arriving late interrupted the classroom routine, yet teachers preferred to admit tardy students than no students at all. The emphasis on punctuality, which was a northern concept created by the exigencies of an industrial society, was impractical in the South. First of all, in an agrarian society most southerner's concept of time had been dictated by the sun. Secondly, because few inhabitants, especially blacks, owned time pieces, the chances were slim that parents and students knew the exact hour to leave for school.[204]

Inside the classroom teachers worked to foster an enthusiastic and disciplined learning environment.[205] They expected pupils to exhibit good behavior and obey all the teacher's commands. Students were told that aside from punctuality, regular attendance was especially important because, as Bessie Canedy explained, it was "indispensable in securing the greatest good to the greatest number." She thought roll-call had a positive "moral affect" and was a good way to recognize students who had excellent attendance

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[203] "Annual Reports – Virginia," in *AF* 3 (May 1868): 415.

[204] Jones, *Soldiers of Light*, 124.

[205] Ibid, 113-115; Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 120.

records: “If fifty scholars are present, they feel well when answering their names, and consider it important to know why one is absent.”[206] To motivate his students to work hard, Peter Woolfolk frequently pointed to the Richmond Colored Normal School, reminding “his little children that their school is the first step leading to it.” Another teacher encouraged her students to “learn quickly and well” in order to debunk the sentiment prevalent in many northern communities that freedpeople “cannot learn.”[207] A student’s enthusiasm to learn, Bessie Canedy asserted, started with “good surroundings in the school room,” positive reinforcement, flexibility, and “self-discipline in the teacher.” She thought it was important “to tell scholars what to do, but undesirable to remind them what they must not to do, and best to have as few rules as possible. Teachers must try to be what they teach their scholars to be.”[208]

When it came to discipline, northern societies instructed teachers to refrain from using corporal punishment. Flogging, or whipping, was seen as condoning the brutal treatment blacks had received at the hands of insensitive slavemasters.[209] One educator suggested that “when children are naughty, it is better to deprive them of some pleasure . . . than it is to kick & cuff them.” Although teachers, in the case of recalcitrant classroom behavior, might be induced to exercise the rod, Bessie Canedy preached “time and patience” as the best approach to restore order. “Once principled against whipping, other

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[206] “Report of Teacher’s Committee Meeting, in *FR* 5 (November 1869): 44.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 119; Jones, *Soldiers of Light*, 125.

means can be found, better for the individual and for the scholar," she wrote. If this failed to bring about the desired result, as a last resort Canedy reserved the right to expel students from school.[210] A teacher near Petersburg refused to whip her students, not because it resurrected bad memories as slaves, but because it "was countenancing the ordinary mode of punishment in the families of the freedmen."[211]

The children who attended the Freedmen's schools occupied the same classroom and generally learned the same material. Although school reports were subject to errors and statistics varied from month to month, it is safe to conclude, on average, that girls outnumbered boys by a small margin. This held true in both the Richmond and Petersburg areas. As pupils entered the school room Union symbols adorned the walls. No classroom was without the "Stars and Stripes," and many teachers displayed pictures of Abraham Lincoln, Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens. Others proudly hung art work depicting the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. A typical day began with the singing of hymns or a reading from the scriptures; some classes included a raucous rendition of *"John Brown's Body"* or *"Hang Jeff. Davis on the Sour Apple Tree."* Bessie Canedy observed it was "almost impossible" to induce her pupils from raising their voices during reading exercises, making it difficult to hear them from across the room. But "when singing," she wrote, "the fear vanishes, and 'Stand up for Uncle Sam, my boys,' is sung as only these children, who have just found this dear old uncle, can sing his praises."[212] Most

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[210] "Report of Teacher's Meeting," in *FR* 5 (November 1869): 44.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Letter from Canedy, 1 June 1865, in *FR* 1 (July 1865): 114.

schools were in session four to six hours, the time equally divided between morning and afternoon sessions with recess in between. In some cases teachers spent the afternoon bringing education to the homes of students, instructing entire families.[213]

Teachers had a fairly good routine for introducing children to school structure. Because most blacks had never set foot inside a classroom, the first days were spent introducing students to the rules of proper decorum: "honesty, politeness, temperance in speech, consideration for others, and respect for authority."[214] These traits, educators declared, not only served students well in the classroom, but also in society. Beyond this, the curriculum was similar to that of northern schools: reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and grammar. All students learned the alphabet before moving on to reading and writing. More advanced students received lessons in history and geography.[215]

In letters describing the interaction with students, teachers often embellished their stories for propaganda purposes. For example, Bessie Canedy recounted a geography exercise in which she asked her students to name the largest state in the Union. A young boy proudly answered, "I think Massachusetts is." Although he understood this was incorrect, he added: "It ought to be, for it's the *best*."[216] In another episode, Lucy Chase described the reaction of a pupil who had discovered a picture of freedmen dancing in honor of liberty in his Lincoln Primer. He "made merry, from his wooly crown to his

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[213] Swint, *Northern Teacher*, 80.

[214] Jones, *Soldier's of Light*, 110.

[215] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 135; Swint, *Northern Teacher*, 81.

[216] Letter from Bessie Canedy, in *FR* 2 (February 1866): 27.

shambling shoes," Chase wrote, "crying out, '*So* glad they're free, dun gone and put it in a book."[217]

Given the sensitive relationship between southerners and northern educators, the Bureau discouraged teachers from introducing political instruction into their lesson plans.[218] In fact, Manly admonished Hannah Stevenson to "always be careful to send teachers who will know no work but their own, and not dispute political matters."[219] But as one historian has pointed out, "the distinction between civics instruction and political indoctrination was not always clear."[220] This was a real dilemma. On the one hand, teachers wanted students to understand the United States government. That explains why portraits of presidents and congressional leaders who fought for emancipation were found in many classrooms. Teachers had pupils read the Constitution and spell the words contained in several of the verses. Sometimes teachers exposed students to the workings of Congress by having them read published records of Congressional proceedings.[221] At other times, however, teachers found it tempting to inject political discourse, such as having students sing Union songs denigrating Confederate leaders. Carrie Blood wanted her scholars to remember the northern military heroes who had helped secure their freedom, so

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[217] Lucy Chase to J. Lowell, June 1868, in *Dear Ones at Home*, 237.

[218] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 157-158.

[219] R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, 27 September 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[220] Morris, *Reading, 'Riting and Reconstruction*, 180.

[221] W. D. Harris to Geo. Whipple, 9 April 1866, AMA.

she named her reading classes after Union generals. In a letter to her adopted society Blood wrote: "The ABC classes we have termed the 'McClellan'; the tablet reading in words of two and three letters, the 'Sheridan'; while 'Sherman' is applied to those who are beginners in the Primer; and the best readers glory in being subject to 'Grant.'"[222] During the contentious Johnson administration years, northern teachers directed their wrath towards the despised Tennessee president, especially after he vetoed the 1866 Civil Rights Bill. A lesson plan designed to teach the names of American presidents ended with the following stanzas:

> Then came Buchanan to execute the law
> Who plunged the country into civil war
> Then Abraham Lincoln, the honored & brave
> Who passed through the Red Sea his country to save
> Then Johnson came in martyred Lincoln's place
> The promised Moses of the colored race
> A traitor he, a curse to our free land
> Soon in his place brave Grant shall stand[223]

The biblical, and political, overtones of this passage are striking. Lincoln is viewed as the "chosen one" who rescued blacks from centuries of bondage, while Johnson is seen as the authoritative, diabolical "Pharaoh" determined to inhibit black freedom. Only the Union military hero Grant could save the country from Johnson's misdeeds.

Aside from creating their own lessons, teachers had access to numerous textbooks in which to use in the classroom. The more common book titles included *The National Series of Readers and Spellers, The Union Readers, Clarke's First Lessons in Grammar,*

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[222] Letter from Carrie Blood, 30 April 1866, in *NF* 2 (May 1866): 145.

[223] Swint, *Dear Ones at Home*, 253; For more about teachers and political instruction see Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction*, 177-185.

and *Wilson's Readers and Spellers*. One of the more popular textbooks created specifically for the freedpeople was the multi-volume *Freedmen's Spellers and Reader Series*, published by the American Tract Society (ATS). Founded in 1825 as a nondenominational evangelical organization to promote "the interests of vital godliness and sound morality" through the distribution of religious tracts, the ATS entered the textbook business shortly after the Civil War began. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the ATS had assumed an ambiguous anti-slavery stance; in fact, it was not until the war that the organization began publishing "antislavery works."[224] As such, many lessons in the *Freedmen's Series* manifest a paternalistic sentiment. And because this series was written especially for ex-slaves, the fact that some benevolent associations promoted its use provides important clues regarding the educational philosophy, and prejudice, of northern pedagogues.[225] The *Freedmen Spellers'* primary objective was to teach freedpeople how to read and write, but the publisher, Israel Perkins Warner, explained that the books also sought to "communicate . . . religious and moral truth, and such instruction in civil and social duties as is needed by them in their new circumstances in which they are placed." Put another way, the *Freedmen's Series* amalgamated secular and religious instruction in order to erase the corrupting influences of slavery.[226] Needless to say, many lessons emphasized industry, piety, self-help, obedience, and moral rectitude.

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[224] Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction*, 188-189.

[225] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 136.

[226] Introduction to Robert Morris, ed., *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks* (New York: AMS Press, 1980).

The editor of the *American Freedmen* described the *Freedmen's Spelling* books as "excellent little volumes, well adapted to their purpose."[227] Ralza Manly echoed this sentiment to the Rev. William Childs, Secretary of the American Tract Society: "I consider them excellent books, . . . written with professional skill . . . and adapted well . . . to the simple listening nature of the colored people. At the same time they are preeminently fitted to . . . teaching correct morals and pure Christianity."[228] Many teachers and associations preferred using northern school texts, reflecting a desire to treat black children the same as white students. And while Manly probably endorsed these books as well, the fact that he openly encouraged using the ATS series because it was well *adapted* to the educational needs of freedpeople suggests he endorsed the paternalistic content.

Despite these accolades, however, both the *American Freedmen* and Manly expressed concerns over the title of the series. "But why have a *Freedmen's* Primer any more than a Dutchmen's Primer or an Irishmen's Primer?," the editor of the *American Freedmen* rhetorically asked. "Are not the so-called Freedmen to learn the same language, spell the same words, and read the same literature as the rest of us? . . . If we wish to abolish these odious caste distinctions from our laws, why ingrain it in our educational systems by the very titles of our books?"[229] Manly objected because the name suggested their use was restricted to black children. He reminded Reverend Childs that the Bureau was serving the needs of both white and black students; he worried that members of the

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[227] "Book Notices," in *AF* 1 (May 1866): 32.

[228] R. M. Manly to William Childs, 25 June 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[229] "Book Notices," in *AF* 1 (May 1866): 32.

"dominant class" would find the title repugnant, making it more difficult for him to recruit more whites to attend school. "Now I think your book would be offensive to both classes – exceedingly so to the whites, and hardly less so to those whose pride it is that though colored they were always free."[230] Manly's attitude underscored less a concern for black pique than the precarious nature of his relationship with the white community. In his mind, successfully expanding educational opportunities to both races required taking steps to prevent bruising white egos. The constructive criticism, however, seemed to have struck a nerve with the publisher, because the word "Lincoln" replaced "Freedmen" in later issues. This illustrates the unsolvable dilemma educators confronted: "Lincoln" was surely no more acceptable to whites than "Freedmen," but in their attempt to placate southern whites, educators had to make sure they did not alienate their northern benefactors, or blacks.

The *Freedmen* or *Lincoln Primers and Spellers* introduced pupils to the alphabet and words, elementary instruction in history and government, and the principles of good morals and behavior. Reading lessons emphasized duty to God and the evil consequences of bad behavior. One chapter warned pupils: "Do not rebel at the Law of God. If you do not submit, it is a sin. You are forbid to do a bad act . . . . Never say or act a lie. It is a sin and can not be hid."[231] Idleness was especially discouraged. In one lesson slothful behavior is compared to life under slavery:

> Wake up! wake up! you sleepy fellow. If you waste your days in idle slumbers, you will be good for nothing when you grow to manhood. So wake up, my lad, and go to work or studies with hearty good will.

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[230] R. M. Manly to William Childs, 25 June 1866, LS, BFFAL-VA-EDU.

[231] Morris, "The Freedmen's [1st]Spelling Book," *Freedmen's Textbooks*, 18, 19.

> You don't want to wake up? I never knew an idler who did, unless he was hungry; and then, after eating his fill, he would fall asleep again. But you must wake up, or be a poor wretched drone all your days.
>
> If you don't conquer this idle spirit soon, it will find that idleness is a bad master. It will feed you on husks, clothe you with rags, lodge you in a hovel, or send you to the poorhouse.
>
> You don't like such a prospect? Very well: then wake up, open your eyes, and go to work. Hang the clothes in that closet; pick up those books; be off to school bright and early; learn your lessons; do your duty.
>
> Work hard, and idleness will let you go its grasp: you will be somebody by and by, and make your mark on the world for good. What say you, idlers, to this advice? Will you take it? Good! Sargeant Worthy, enlist those penitent idlers into the 'Try Company."[232]

Smoking and drinking were strongly discouraged: "Harry has a cigar. He has put it to the snout of the pig, but the pig does not like it. No creature but man likes the smoke of this vile weed. Boys and girls, let it alone. We must account to God for all we do."[233] Another lesson admonished: "O little boy! don't smoke; now don't. It is a foolish habit. It will injure your health, waste your money, and make you hateful to the wise and good . . . . O little boy! don't smoke. Smoking is very apt to lead to drinking. Almost every drunkard is a smoker. Throw away that cigar . . . and promise yourself and God that you will never touch your lips to one again."[234] Another lesson admonished: "Strong drink not only stimulates, it stupefies the sense and mind, and leads one to violate duty . . . and

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[232] "The Freedmen's Second Reader," Ibid, 93-94.

[233] "The Freedmen's [1st] Spelling Book," Ibid, 40.

[234] "The Freedmen's Second Reader," Ibid, 50-51.

perpetuate horrid crimes."[235] The following poem illustrated how intemperance had a baneful impact on children:

> Poor Allen Benton's little Will,
> In tattered garments clad,
> Whose blue eyes oft are full of tears,
> Whose heart is seldom glad,
> Has learned, through fear of angry blows,
> His father's face to shun.
> It must be very, very hard
> To be a drunkard's son![236]

Other lessons extolled the virtues of republican government and reminded freedpeople that northern perseverance had set them free: "Ours is a democratical government; one in which the people rule. An aristocracy is that form of government in which few have all the power . . . . Let us be joyful that the war is at an end. It was sad to see men die in battle, but it was to make us free; the Proclamation of Emancipation was a notification of freedom to millions. The administration of President Lincoln will always be remembered by it."[237]

Missing from the lessons was any reference to equality; instead, unconscious bigotry and paternalism characterized the treatment of blacks.[238] There are, for example, many references to the superiority of white European civilization over African backwardness:

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[235] "The Freedmen's [1st] Spelling Book," Ibid,79.

[236] "The Freedmen's Second Reader," Ibid,58-59.

[237] "The Freedmen's [1st] Spelling Book," Ibid, 87,89.

[238] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 135-143.

> Europe is the smallest of the four quarters of the globe, . . . and is much superior to Asia . . . and Africa . . . in civilization. It abounds in fine cities, fine roads, good houses, useful manufactures, and most other things that are necessary to the comfort and happiness of mankind.
>
> . . . If you were to travel in Asia or Africa you would meet with no churches, or only now and then one, where the true God is worshipped. . . . In all parts of the world where you find churches, you find that the people are more or less advanced in civilization and the arts which render mankind happy.
>
> Africa is less known than any other portion of the globe. . . . The greater part of the inhabitants are either in a savage or barbarous state. The climate being warm, they need little shelter or clothing. Their houses are therefore poor mud huts, or slight tenements made of leaves or branches or trees. . . .They are, however, a cheerful race, and spend much of their time in various amusements[239]

It is difficult to know with any certainty how students reacted to the *Freedmen's Series* with its haughty, righteous, and paternalistic lessons. In this regard blacks faced a quandary: they desperately wanted an education but were dependent on northern educators who controlled the teaching methods and curriculum. Perhaps they put up with the material because the ultimate benefits of education outweighed the racist content. What is clear, however, is that the books say much about Manly, the publisher, and northern benevolent societies.

Teaching reading and writing was not the only strategy northern educators employed to help freed slaves become more independent. Industrial education played an equally important role.[240] Industrial schools catered to adults and emphasized "education

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[239] Ibid, "The Freedmen's Third Reader,"226, 235.

[240] Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, Reconstruction*, 157-158.

for economic independence" and "work for relief."[241] Northern educators lauded the schools as a means to instill the value of economic self-sufficiency through manual labor, and whenever possible, encouraged their development. After visiting City Point and Petersburg, William Hawkins, corresponding secretary of the New York Association, urged Ralza Manly to help secure suitable buildings and supplies so that "an industrial school under right management" could be provided "to the colored people there resident."[242] Other societies joined the chorus supporting the spread of industrial education. "Although reference to the subject has been made from time to time, too much importance cannot be attached to the establishment of industrial schools in the South," the Pennsylvania Branch of the AFUC declared. The New England Society pleaded with northern benefactors to support the Richmond Industrial School: "It is extremely desirable that the principal of industrial education should be maintained among these people, and we hope the friends of these people will continue to give gratuitously."[243]

At the same time these schools opened avenues for blacks to become more independent, industrial education expanded opportunities for white women to assume greater responsibilities as principals. In essence, women educators assumed the role of independent businesswomen, negotiating contracts with government agencies and private

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[241] Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 136.

[242] William Hawkins to R. M. Manly, 16 August 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU; William Hawkins to R. M. Manly, 2 September 1865, ULR, Ibid; William Hawkins to R. M. Manly, 23 September 1865, ULR, Ibid.

[243] "Report of the Teacher's Committee," in *FR* 5 (April 1870): 78; "Industrial Schools," in *AF* 3 (June 1868): 429.

enterprises, supervising the work of students, managing inventory, and frequently engaging in fundraising efforts. Historian Carol Faulkner has argued that industrial school teachers achieved greater status for themselves because they had direct access to "government power and policy."[244] Indeed, seeking to influence political decisions directly impacting freed slaves, as well as families of northern soldiers, women involved in benevolent work during Reconstruction formed important alliances with the federal government and many northern state charity boards.[245]

Although industrial schools were open to both sexes, women comprised the vast majority of students. In southern urban areas such as Richmond and Petersburg black female heads of household represented a large proportion of the population. Unable to sustain themselves in rural areas dominated by field labor, freedwomen flocked to southern cities seeking employment for themselves and their children.[246] With so many freedwomen living alone, left without husbands to care for children, white teachers saw industrial sewing schools as fulfilling a critical void: securing employment for black women to help support their families. Economic hardships gripped both sexes in the black community, but southern freedwomen's labor was even more "scantily and poorly paid" than that of men, one benevolent society declared. Discerning a wide gender gap in economic opportunities

[244] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, 136.

[245] Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 174-181.

[246] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 73-74.

among freedwomen, northern educators admonished: "We can ill afford to neglect any opportunity to teach how she may use her labor to provide for herself and her family."[247]

Scores of white women, many working under extreme conditions, dedicated themselves to industrial education. Charlotte McKay commenced a school at Poplar Grove, outside Petersburg. She proudly recounted that despite "bitter cold" over two dozen black women daily made their way to the school, some walking "three or four miles, delighted at the prospect of earning something." As the women went quietly about the business of sewing garments into clothing, McKay spent time reading from the bible and other books designed to "furnish the text for moral instruction."[248] Emma Southwick arrived in Petersburg in the winter of 1866 "in the midst of about 18,000 blacks, destitute of all things." Eager to provide a means of aiding the "pleading multitude . . . of men and women" who traveled great distances hoping to secure "some occupation," Southwick, with the assistance of local clergymen, established an industrial school in a church basement. Despite numerous pleas for help to the Bureau and her adopted society, Southwick labored "alone for two months doing . . . the work of three or four persons . . . and suffering considerably from nervous prostration." She worried that unless help arrived soon she would be forced to suspend operations.[249]

Indeed, the work of eliciting support for industrial schools proved taxing. Northern philanthropists wanted these enterprises to "grow and flourish" provided the schools could

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[247] "Report of the Teacher's Committee," in *FR* 5 (June 1869): 15.

[248] Letter from C. E. McKay, in *NF* 2 (February 1866): 59.

[249] Emma Southwick to Ednah Cheney, 26 March 1866, AMA.

be sustained "without drawing on the means pledged to other schools." In other words, benevolent societies were unwilling to redirect financial resources dedicated to "academic" schools. Industrial schools depended on private generosity and the sale of goods made to help pay for material, labor, fuel, and other incidental expenses. The largest customer was the Freedmen's Bureau, which purchased clothing made at the schools for "gratuitous" distribution to hospitals and destitute families.[250]

During times of economic hardship, as well as reductions in Bureau's appropriations resulting in few orders, receipts were unable to keep pace with running expenses. A hostile white populace avoided purchasing clothing made by freedwomen, which left only the poor and underprivileged as the main source of revenue. The combination placed additional strain on the school's budget and the teachers. Abby Francis, a principal at the Richmond Lincoln Industrial School, grew tired of the incessant task of seeking outside help. Francis was "grateful" for the "generous kindness" and gratuitous aid from "personal friends," but she ruefully admitted, "I do not feel that I could personally do it again" for another year. Rather than asking for "donations of money" to keep the school afloat, Francis urged branch societies to assume a more prominent role in encouraging northerners to not only provide the material needed to make clothing, but also to increase their purchases of goods made at the schools.[251]

Sarah Foster was sure that if northerners knew how the schools placed black women "in a better position to take care of themselves," increased aid would follow. She

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[250] "Richmond Industrial Schools," in *FR* 4 (August 1868): 126.

[251] Letter from Abby Francis, in Ibid 5 (April 1870): 78.

urged northern societies to spread the word about the salutary benefit industrial schools had on southern blacks: "I wish that some rich man or woman wishing to do noble work, could look upon with my eyes upon the industrial enterprise, they, I think, see how much employment was need for this people."[252] A former teacher and associate of Foster's at the Lincoln Industrial School published this urgent appeal:

> Can you not arouse some interest in the Industrial School, which shall bring some orders for goods, so the women may be employed and Misses Francis and Hancock encouraged? People interested in the Christmas fairs might buy articles from the school here to donate to the fairs, and so do a double charity. The withdrawal of aid to the infirm and half-sick makes the Industrial School, in good working order, with plenty of orders, a greater necessity than every before.[253]

Freedwomen expressed gratitude towards their teachers, convinced the industrial education they were receiving had not only strengthened their self-esteem and self-confidence, but also had opened avenues for them to become independent women. Fanny Jackson, expressing adulation for her teachers, proudly exclaimed: "I am highly animated to think . . . I am my own woman, and hope . . . to remain a free woman until I die."[254] Ellen Ellis wrote that had it not been for "this kind and benevolent institute" she would have had no means of support for her family: "Since the commence of this school I have received great advantage, receiving wages for myself and family, which, as a general thing,

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[252] Letter from Sarah Foster, in Ibid 3 (August 1867): 134.

[253] Letter from Harriette Carter, 25 October 1869, in Ibid 5 (November 1869): 51.

[254] Letter from Fanny Jackson, 22 March 1867, in Ibid 3 (June 1867): 106.

I have been supporting entirely by my own exertions."[255] Jackson's and Ellis's reference to remaining free and independent underscores the fervid desire by black women across the south to take control of their own destiny and not have their lives dictated by oppressive white masters. According to historian Noralee Frankel, black women "did not want to work only for the material betterment of white people but also for their own households."[256]

While these testimonials reflect a sense of optimism, the future for black women to move beyond a subordinate role within a highly segregated labor market dominated by men was difficult. During the Reconstruction period, supporters touted industrial schools as ideal models for instilling economic self-sufficiency in the black community, while detractors considered the work performed by women demeaning. In the end, rather than elevating freedwomen and encouraging economic independence, industrial schools, in the words of one historian, "endorsed freedwomen's dependence on white women."[257]

Industrial instruction may have helped women become more independent, but it did not completely alleviate the abject poverty regnant in the black community. Aside from classroom duties, teachers had to juggle a multitude of ancillary tasks all in the name of easing black poverty. From distributing food and clothing to caring for the infirm, teachers patiently attended to the wants of black families and dispensed sage advice. All of these

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[255] Letter from Ellen Ellis, 25 March 1867, in Ibid.

[256] Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 71.

[257] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, 136; For information regarding freedwomen's work in the post-civil war South see Jones, *Labor of Love*; Frankel, *Freedom's Women.*

chores, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society admonished, "taxes the mind and heart as well as the body."[258]

Heart wrenching tales of poverty and the unwillingness of local authorities to help filled the pages of letters sent home from teachers. L. E. Williams, after a long day visiting the homes of freed men and women, had uncovered countless scenes of "utter destitution that are painful to witness." When teachers from the Chimborazo School visited the home of a family to deliver food and clothing, they were shocked at the deplorable conditions. An elderly woman, clothed in rags, "had eaten nothing but a few cabbage leaves for two days." In another home, they found a destitute mother cradling a dying child in her arms while four other "hungry children" wandered about in rags.[259] Sarah Clark found the suffering experienced by black women without husbands almost unbearable to witness. Worse, the stigma of being labeled a beggar kept some freedwomen from seeking help. "De Lord and de good North people have been so good to us we musn't be any more trouble to them," a destitute woman explained to Clark. When blacks did summon the courage to approach local white officials for assistance, Clark noticed they were summarily dismissed and told: "You must work for your living. Now niggers, go and take care of yourselves."[260] William Harris, a black minister from Cleveland, walked "all day and half the night" attempting to procure food and clothing for the dozens of desperate freedpeople

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[258] "Our Teachers," in *FR* 1 (May 1865): 70.

[259] L. E. Williams to Rev. Geo. Hawkins, 30 December 1865, in *NF* 2 (January 1866): 15.

[260] Letter from Sarah E. Clark, in *FR* 1 (June 1865): 98-99.

who visited his church daily. The "suffering and destitution" was "appalling," Harris ruefully wrote.[261]

Widespread cases of destitution, homelessness, and disease in Richmond and Petersburg led a local Richmond physician to call for a comprehensive plan to address the health needs of blacks. Dr. D. H. Smith wrote Bureau headquarters: "the anomalous condition of the colored population" called for "the exercise of the highest faculties of the human mind . . . to perfect some plan to prevent the boon of freedom . . . from becoming a calamity to them and ruinous to the white inhabitants." Homeless black laborers and their families, Smith pointed out, were prone to "sickness and suffering," and would "languish and die" in abject poverty unless local officials took steps to establish "infirmaries . . . for colored people." While Smith's ostensible purpose was to provide a means of sheltering sick and infirm freed men and women, his primary aim was to protect white citizens. Although an infirmary was sure to "bless the poor and suffering, he wrote, "it would protect the community from liability of contagious diseases . . . which might otherwise be introduced into all families in which these laborers serve."[262]

Want of clothing was especially glaring and contributed to school absenteeism. Shortly after assuming his duties in 1865, Ralza Manly penned an urgent appeal to Francis George Shaw explaining that because the government had appropriated no funding for the Bureau, he desperately needed the New York Association to send clothing for "dependent

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[261] Letter from W. D. Harris, 1 February 1867, in *AM* 11 (March 1867): 50; W. D. Harris to S. Whiting, 26 July 1867, AMA.

[262] Letter from E. H. Smith, 20 June 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA.

women and children."[263] An agent with the American Tract Society reported "the fearful condition of poverty" regnant in Petersburg had caused many "colored" children to wander the city "half-naked."[264] Charlotte McKay could not walk the streets of Petersburg without witnessing "men with very large families . . . straining every nerve to 'make bread'" and leaving little left to purchase clothing.[265] The mother of two students confided to Mary E. Clark how she had planned to sell a pig and use the proceeds to clothe her children, but the animal was stolen by a group of white boys. A distressed Clark wrote: "I can put the children in condition to attend school; but I cannot cure the heart-aches for want of justice."[266] Bessie Canedy echoed Clark's sadness: "I have many heartaches over their bitter present and uncertain future."[267]

The freedpeople's poverty distressed northern philanthropists. Fearful that precious financial resources would get diverted in order to meet the physical needs of the freedpeople, benevolent societies implored northerners to send clothing to the south. To get this message across, the *National Freedmen* published "A Cry for Help," which described the dire condition of southern blacks. The editor warned unless northerners did more to help clothe and feed blacks, societies dedicated to educating the freedmen would have "to suspend our noble work." Diverting resources away from schooling had dire

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[263] R. M. Manly to Francis George Shaw, 1 November 1865, in *NF* 1 (October 1865): 292.

[264] L. Woodhill to O. Brown, 25 October 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA.

[265] C. E. McKay to E. C. Estes, 18 April 1867, in *AF* 2 (May 1867): 217.

[266] Letter from Mary E. Clark, in *FR* 2 (February 1866): 26.

[267] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 6 January 1866, in Ibid (March 1866): 57.

repercussions. “Must we do so?”, the editor thundered. “Must we hold back our teachers all ready and eager; close, or forbear to open our schools . . . and let the children and adults remain uncivilized; lose the opportunity to planting our civilization . . . in order that the people . . . may not die of frost and starvation.”[268]

Teachers expressed impatience, and consternation, toward northern attitudes and polices they viewed as contributing to an already deplorable situation. L.H. Burbank struggled to comprehend the apathy displayed by many northerners who, she believed, were reluctant to send aid on the assumption that acts of altruism only led to perpetual pauperism. It was obvious to Burbank that these insular sentiments reflected a general lack of understanding about conditions in Central Virginia. “I really wish that those North, who urge as an excuse the plea of making paupers of those whom they should send aid, could for a few weeks be here, and see what we see of their wants,” she wrote.[269] When the federal government, in 1866, ceased issuing rations to able-bodied blacks, Bessie Canedy immediately noticed the widespread anxiety manifested among the freedpeople. She lambasted the policy, blaming insensitive bureaucrats for contributing to a sense of forlornness in the black community: “There seems to be a settled policy (I wish I could think it confined to the South) to make existence impossible to the freed-people.”[270]

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[268] “A Cry for Help,” in *NF* 1 (October 1865): 303.

[269] Letter from L. H. Burbank, 24 August 1867, in *AF* (September 1867): 285.

[270] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 2 April 1866, in *FR* 2 (June 1866): 116. For more about the Bureau’s ration policies and gender see Mary J. Farmer, “Because They Are Women: Gender and the Virginia Freedmen’s Bureau’s ‘War on Dependency,’” in Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller, eds., *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 161-192 and Mary Farmer-Keiser, “‘With a Weight of Circumstances Like Millstones About Their Necks’: Freedwomen,

Enduring such scenes of hardship required a strong constitution and self-motivation, for unlike northern schools with their strong network of community support, teachers in Richmond and Petersburg had to rely upon themselves to make independent decisions, in and out of the classroom. Emphasizing this contrast between southern and northern community support of schools, a society journal averred: "More than at the North should the teacher have resources in himself, on which he can fall back in the absence of these helps, which school laws and a correct public sentiment here affords."[271]

Although government and benevolent associations blamed racism, unequal employment opportunities, and low wages for the rampant poverty in the black community, another factor they cited was overindulgence in alcoholic beverages. Just north of Richmond, Bureau agent Ira Ayers traveled through Hanover County admonishing blacks for wasting "time and earnings for intoxicating drink" when "education and support of their families" should have been their first priority. "The parents earn money and spend it at the groggeries paying their teacher in promises," Ayers lamented. Their behavior Ayers blamed, in part, on the influence of some white pastors who condoned "these evil practices."[272] In the Petersburg area Bureau commissioner Lieutenant Kimball regarded intemperance as the "most fearful character that exists among the freedmen." The prevalence of this attitude he blamed squarely on the behavior of local whites who goaded

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Federal Relief, and the Benevolent Guardianship of the Freedmen's Bureau," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 115, no. 3 (2007): 412-442.

[271] "Qualifications," in *AM* 10 (July 1866): 152.

[272] Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 28 July 1868, Reports of Operations, BRFAL-VA; Ira Ayers to P. R. Hambrick, 28 October 1867, Ibid.

blacks into consuming alcohol: “It will be a matter of almost utter impossibility” to perfect radical reform “so long as full nine-tenths of the white race are addicted to habits of intemperance, and encourage it in the freedmen by precept and example.”[273]

To combat this trend, friends of the freedpeople devoted significant time preaching temperance. Convincing blacks to curb their use of alcoholic beverages was a direct manifestation of northern education strategy: teach freed men and women to conduct themselves in a morally righteous manner, which was necessary if blacks were to become productive members of society. Upon hearing reports of an increase in public drunkenness in the black community, Commissioner O. O. Howard instructed Bureau officials to make a concerted effort to organize temperance societies. While Howard preferred to partner with the well-established “Sons of Temperance,” he concluded this was impossible because the association had retained “the old bigotry” and refused to “send their order to save men of dark skins from drunkenness,” unless there was “complete and forced segregation” of the races. Instead, Howard preferred to create an independent organization under the name, “Lincoln Temperance Society.”[274] Responding to Howard’s appeal, the American Missionary Society created a “Temperance” pledge specifically for the freedpeople. Adorned with patriotic symbols blacks were sure to recognize, the pledge, as described in the *American Missionary*, “was placed over a vignette, containing a group of men, women and children, white and colored, around a table, on which a colored man is

[273] Letter from F.M. Kimball, 31 December 1867, in *AF* 2 (February 1868): 363.

[274] Circular from O. O. Howard, 15 May 1867, in *AF* 2 (June 1867): 226.

signing the pledge. Over the center . . . hangs the Proclamation of Emancipation . . . and a likeness of Abraham Lincoln."[275]

Armed with the pledge, Ralza Manly often visited schools reminding students young and old why "strict temperance" was a sign of moral rectitude; he lamented the fact that large numbers of freedmen "were spending more than half their scanty wages for . . . whiskey, imbruting themselves, or rather degrading themselves lower than brutes, for brutes knew to let whiskey alone."[276] Manly's temperance haranguing fit well into his preference for using the *Freedmen Series* text-books.

Local black churches, with the ardent support of the Bureau, took the lead in organizing public temperance forums in which guest speakers harangued about the evils of drinking. One lecture at the Richmond Old African Church featured Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, who warned the black audience that intemperance was a direct threat to their new found freedom. Wilson suggested northern support and respect for the freedpeople was contingent upon blacks adhering to "honest, industrious, economical and temperate means." Indeed, the senator argued intemperance was a greater threat to American society than involuntary servitude had been: "Intemperance is worse than slavery, for slavery never brought upon our country half so much sin as intemperance." He attributed most public disturbances to citizens under the influence of "intoxicating beverages." Imbibing alcohol had economic repercussions as well, Wilson asserted, when hard earned wages were spent on liquor rather than saving towards the purchase of a plot

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[275] "Circulating the Pledge," in *AM* 11 (July 1867): 155.

[276] Letter from Horace Hovey, in *FR* 3 (August 1867): 133.

of land. If freedpeople wanted land and "good houses," Wilson concluded, "then keep sober and save your money."[277]

This incessant preaching against intemperance had, by 1868, produced auspicious results. The Bureau's sub-assistant commissioner in Richmond reported a "radical conversion" to the cause of temperance among a large number of freedpersons, and more important, he described "a growing desire on the part of the most influential of their race to crush out intemperance."[278] On the one hand, the temperance movement in Central Virginia illustrated a sincere effort by educational missionaries to convince freedpeople of the evils of alcohol consumption. At the same time, it seems educators also worried about the public relations impact intemperance had on northern fundraising activities. In other words, unless freedpeople behaved in accordance with Christian principles – sobriety, economy, and industry – northern support for black schools would dissipate. Instead of wasting wages on alcohol, the Bureau and northern associations expected blacks to spend money towards support of their schools.

The temperance movement underscored the overarching educational philosophy pushed by northern pedagogues: that is, a curriculum emphasizing order, obedience, morality, piety, cleanliness, and respect for authority. The content espoused in textbooks and the management of classrooms manifested a desire by teachers to instill in black pupils the skills necessary for them to become good workers and citizens in a drastically altered

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[277] *Daily New Nation*, 7 April 1868.

[278] C. Cook to Paul Hambrick, 30 June 1868, Reports of Operations & Conditions in Virginia, BRFAL-VA.

southern society. In essence, it was a white middle-class program adapted from northern schools. Whether this approach served the long-term interests of blacks is debatable. On the one hand, never before had there been as concerted an effort to address the educational needs of black people. Yet, as one historian has argued, the program offered was nothing more than "cultural imperialism" and did little to prepare blacks for life among recalcitrant white southerners.[279] Nevertheless, teachers valiantly went about their work serving the educational and physical needs of students and families, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. At the same time, their efforts to uplift freedpeople through "civilized education" aroused the curiosity and enmity of local whites.

[279] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 168; see also Morris, *Reading,'Riting, and Reconstruction*, 211-212.

Chapter 5

White Reaction to Black Education

Northern educators converging on Central Virginia were part of a historic movement that challenged time-honored southern racial and social boundaries. Each day southern whites were not only forced to witness the sight of former slaves meandering about the streets of Richmond and Petersburg, but also northern teachers assiduously working to educate them. The new order reminded southern whites of the world Union armies had destroyed, a world in which decades of carefully orchestrated racial boundaries between whites and blacks had been dismantled with the fall of the Confederacy. In essence, white southerners' hostile reaction to black education was, in part, an attack on the "symbols of defeat – the freed race and northern whites."[280] Reconstruction historians have pointed out that southern education was no longer a white dominated affair; blacks used their school house as the "fortress of freedom" determined to participate in an endeavor denied to them by white masters. In the aftermath of war it was freedpeople, not southern whites, who first rushed forward to demand access to education. In the minds of

[280] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 188.

vanquished southerners, then, literate freedpeople threatened the very foundation of southern society: white superiority over blacks.[281]

Southern men in particular viewed the disruption of the traditional southern social hierarchy with trepidation. White men worried that their loss of paternalistic domination over slaves also threatened their "patriarchal power" at home.[282] In fact, the war had already contributed to the disruption of traditional southern gender roles. Many women had been forced to assume a greater role in caring for the home front, including "managing human property" while their sons and husbands were away. In some cases economic necessity drove women to seek outside employment in various industries and as teachers, drawing criticism from some who considered the work demeaning for "southern ladies." Wartime conditions produced unintentional consequences; that is, it allowed Confederate women to temporarily achieve a semblance of authority and autonomy to care for themselves, which "controverted deep-seeded assumptions about female dependence."[283]

The presence of northern teachers exacerbated the uncertainty over the evolving shift in gender and racial roles. These spirited, mostly women, educators traveled hundreds of miles from home to instruct freed slaves and, in doing so, challenged the legitimacy of

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[281] Ronald E. Butchart, "Remapping Racial Boundaries: Teachers as Border Police and Boundary Transgressors in Post-Emancipation Black Education USA, 1861-1876," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 1 (February 2007): 62; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 304; Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom*, 130; Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 185-186.

[282] LeeAnn Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender," in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 10.

[283] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South In The American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 52, 80-88.

southern spatial, gender, and racial boundaries. In some respects, it can be said that the cool reaction by white men to black freedom was in response to this "remapping" of traditional boundaries at the hands of outsiders.[284] Southerners not only questioned the propriety of Yankee "school marms" working and living among blacks; they also offered harsh criticism about the methods used to educate freedpeople. Over time, some local whites, seeking to wrestle control from northern occupiers, voiced support for black schools as long as the instructors, curriculum, and text books were distinctly southern.[285]

Upset that former slaves were now free, whites took every opportunity to make life difficult for the black community. Freedpeople migrating to Richmond were summarily "thrown into prison and almost starved," Bureau agent J. S. Fullerton reported. Richmond police accosted blacks on the street, demanding to see passes. If no pass was forthcoming, police arrested the offenders on the spot and incarcerated them in Libby Prison.[286] Albert Davis, a Richmond black resident who had been free before the war, told Bureau Commissioner Brown about the excessive abuse "police and guards" manifested towards "colored men." The heavy-handed tactics had one ostensible purpose, Davis concluded: "to place a class of our citizens in a state of anarchy and conduce more than any other measure to injure the cause of freedom and union."[287] John Mayo, Richmond's firebrand Mayor,

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[284] Butchart, "Remapping Racial Boundaries," 61.

[285] Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 32-33, 48.

[286] J. S. Fullerton to O. Brown, 15 June 1865, Unregistered Letters Received, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1870, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referenced as BRFAL-VA).

[287] Statement from Albert Davis, Statements Relating to Abuses of Freedmen in Richmond, 1865, BRFAL-VA.

found the new social order unbearable and longed for a return to the days when whites had their way with black servants. Fullerton overheard Mayo make bold threats, not only close the black schools, but to "revive the old whipping post and slave laws."[288]

Indeed, acts of violence resulting in bodily injury and death were common methods used to intimidate the freedpeople. D. Edson Smith, a teacher at City Point, reported that relations between whites and blacks were tense and antagonistic. He recounted an episode in which a young black boy, on his way home from school, had been strangled outside Petersburg "by the son or sons of a white man." Shocked at the sheer heinousness of the crime, Smith asserted it was proof of a concerted effort to annihilate the black race. "The spirit that would kill an innocent boy of twelve years . . . simply because he was free, and has a black skin, would, if it had the power, exterminate the race," Smith lamented.[289] W. D. Harris described the midnight invasion at the home of one of his students. Armed white marauders stole several hundred dollars and shot the father several times. Sadly, Harris wrote, the perpetrators "had taken away everything" the man had "toiled for, and had not left him enough to buy a half a loaf of bread "for he and his family."[290]

Outside observers noticed similar episodes of white enmity towards freed slaves. After arriving in Richmond, John Dudley voiced surprise at the "gusto former masters used to describe blacks as *lazy, thieves, lying, ignorant*, [and] *brutish*." After touring the city, he found there was no "proper appreciation of the Negro" and a "general feeling of repulsion

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[288] J. S. Fullerton to O. Brown, 15 June 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA.

[289] D. Edson Smith to Wm. Hawkins, 20 December 1865, in *NF* 2 (January 1866): 16.

[290] Letter from W. D. Harris, in *AM* 10 (March 1866): 52.

to his education."[291] While walking the streets of Richmond, Whitelaw Reid engaged in a conversation with a former Confederate Army colonel who told the visiting correspondent how he had been vehemently opposed to extending education and suffrage to freedpeople. "This is a white man's government, and must be kept so till the end of time," the colonel proclaimed. Granted, a large number of ignorant whites had the right to vote, the colonel explained, which is why it was imperative to stop "further addition to the ignorant vote." In Reid's words, the proud confederate colonel wanted no advantages extended to blacks because "educated or ignorant, rich or poor, the niggers must be kept down." In fact, the colonel's fulminations were not veiled threats, Reid concluded; blacks who manifested the slightest "disposition to assert obtrusively his independence" courted "grave danger."[292]

Dr. Bacon of the American Missionary Society attributed negative public sentiment to the fact that Richmond had been the heart and sole of the defeated Confederacy. Richmond, Bacon asserted, was "perhaps the proudest city in the South. All the pride of the old Dominion is concentrated there." Although its citizens may have been "humiliated" they were not "humbled." Their revulsion of Yankees had not abated, Bacon added: "they do not love us or our ways any better than in 1860." Richmonders, moreover, were unwilling "to accept our cooperation in any charitable or Christian undertaking"; thus, "the war must hereafter be carried on with ignorance and prejudice."[293] Ralza Manly corroborated Bacon's assessment declaring: "the feelings of the community, with very few

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[291] Letter from John Dudley, 1 July 1866, in *NF* 1 (August 1866): 224.

[292] Reid, *After the War*, 318.

[293] Letter from Dr. Bacon, in *AM* (December 1865): 283.

exceptions, are hostile. . . . No appreciable amount of sympathy or assistance from citizens is looked for in the work of educating the freedmen."[294]

It is important to place Bacon's and Manly's observations within a broader historical context in which southerners, despite having been defeated on the battlefield, remained unwilling to alter their opinion about outside agitators, or the inferiority of the black race. For decades southern society had been on the defensive about slavery and the abilities of blacks, causing an almost bunker-like mentality among pro-slavery advocates who hunkered down to repel a barrage of attacks emanating from northern abolitionists determined to eradicate the "peculiar institution." Slave owners lauded bondage, under the guardianship of caring masters, as the only way blacks could attain moral and intellectual advancement. To them slavery had been the cornerstone of the Confederacy; thus freedom for slaves, the argument went, was not only immoral and inexpedient, but cruel.[295] During the Civil War die-hard defenders of slavery became increasingly paranoid about home-grown attempts by Confederate government and military officials to introduce moderate emancipation schemes, even if such a strategy might lead to a Confederate victory. As historian Robert Durden has pointed out, the overwhelming majority of slaveowners preferred to see the Confederacy go down in flames rather than empower black slaves by

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[294] R. M. Manly to G. Terry, 13 July 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU; R. M. Manly to Lyman Abbott, 13 April 1866, in *AF* 1 (August 1866): 75.

[295] For recent studies on the southern defense of slavery see, William W. Freehling's multi-volume work, *The Road to Disunion,* Vol. 1, *Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) and *The Road to Disunion,* Vol. 2, *Secessionists Triumph, 1854-1861 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).* Also see David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) and James McPherson, "Central to the War," *North & South* 10, no. 4 (January 2008): 56-60.

arming them for military service and in return offering them emancipation.[296] Now, with the war over, southern reactionaries clung to their familiar mindset and looked askance at northern attempts to reshape southern race relations. Bitter enmity towards outsiders, who southerners identified with New England agitators, hampered the work of educational philanthropists.

Some northern newspapers blamed black impudence and demagogues for inciting white animosity, especially after blacks began exercising their right to vote. In 1867 a reporter with the *New York Times* observed that "the disturbed political relations of the people" had produced "real antagonism between the white and colored races." The contentious atmosphere was not the result of white misbehavior, the reported concluded, but rather of "negroes" who were "growing insolent, unruly, domineering; are seeking dominance instead of equality." This behavior the *Times* correspondent attributed to "the teachings of lunatics who came down here from the North." Rather than espousing cooperation, adherence to the rule of law, social responsibility, and, more important, deference to whites, "hatred, malice and all uncharitableness of and towards the 'rebels' is preached by day and night." As a general rule the reporter thought blacks were "kindly and charitable," but he warned "fanatics" were causing freedpeople to become impertinent. Such observations manifested a nagging concern in the North that radical "carpetbaggers" and educators were openly challenging the southern racial norms of white superiority and black subordination. The concern, then, was not necessarily whether blacks should be

[296] Robert F. Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972),xi-xii.

educated or receive the right of franchise, but rather how they conducted themselves in exercising these new responsibilities. What southerners in Central Virginia most objected to, according to the *New York Times*, was the fact that blacks used whiteness as a "license for insult."[297]

Southern newspapers echoed these concerns. *The Southern Opinion* vilified negroes and their scalawag and carpetbagger allies for using Richmond's Capital Square as the backdrop for speeches, "which advocated murder, pillage and arson." These "atrocious" and "foulmouthed . . . wretches," editor Rives Pollard wrote, "have uttered sentiments which should have conducted them straight to the whipping post and the pillory." Pollard accused northern incendiaries, who he described as the "vilest reptiles ever brought to the surface by the throes of civil war," of teaching blacks "the religion of hate." Warning that the enduring patience of a proud and vanquished southern people was limited, Pollard encouraged local whites to fight back. "When the negro provokes collision with the white man, he should be taught a lesson so sharp, savage, stern, and severe that the very recollection of his punishment should make him howl and shiver a dozen years after the proper chastisement was administered." Negro insolence, Pollard lamented, was "fast becoming intolerable." Unless checked, he predicted "acts of violence so monstrous as to demand the most terrible measures of retaliation and vengeance."[298]

This tense atmosphere required Manly and teachers to walk a precarious tightrope. These courageous advocates of black education experienced periods of trepidation, but

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[297] *New York Times*, 5 May 1867.

[298] *Southern Opinion*, 15 August 1868.

threats did not prevent them from pushing forward. Moreover, freedpeople, regardless of white intimidation, flooded the schools much to the displeasure of their former masters. By December 1865, the Richmond and Petersburg areas combined had just over 3500 students enrolled in twenty-one schools.[299]

New pupils arrived daily, placing additional strain on existing accommodations and drawing the ire of some white church deacons, who wanted to confine black students to the basements and were "aghast" that dozens now occupied the main sanctuaries, drawing a host of unwelcome curiosity seekers who congregated outside. "Gray coats and rebel ladies gather at our windows . . . all curious and interested," Lucy Chase observed. Upon arriving at school one day she overheard a conversation between two "rebel" women. One snorted derisively: "the idea of darkey's going to school!" Her companion responded that she saw no harm in educating blacks, provided they were taught by "nigger teachers; but to see white folks teaching 'em, that's awful."[300] The fierce animosity southern women displayed towards anything northern – military officials, government bureaucrats, or educational missionaries – was all too common. In many respects, the "intransigence of southern women" towards northern teachers was greater than that of southern men. One historian has suggested that "ingrained Southern chivalry on the part of the men" precluded them from displaying outward acts of disrespect.[301]

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[299] *Monthly Statistical School Reports of District Superintendents, July 1865 – April 1869*, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[300] Letter from Lucy Chase, 29 April 1865, in *FR* 1 (June 1865): 97-98.

[301] Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, *All Things Altered: Women in the Wake of Civil War and Reconstruction* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 158; See also Nina Silber,

The sight of former slaves walking to school infuriated "former aristocrats and slave managers." According to William Coan, their "wrath and hatred" towards black school houses was vicious and incessant. Near Petersburg whites went out of their way to make life difficult and miserable for black students and their instructors. One teacher wrote that she had been forced to vacate her school by "ignorant, rebellious, and heathenish" white owners who refused to renew the lease.[302]

Former masters frequently prevented blacks from attending school by threatening eviction and forcing children to work in the fields to help pay exorbitant rents. Families reluctantly stayed where they were, only to suffer, as one woman lamented, "more than she ever did by being whipped, in hearing the master abuse you Yankees." In some cases, children were driven from their homes and entire families displaced "because they were represented in the schoolroom," but others defied their master's orders and went to school anyway. Lucy Chase described the day when a "gentle, fair and beautiful" girl arrived at school with tears in her eyes. When she asked the young pupil the reason for her forlorn countenance, the girl answered, "my master said if I come to school this morning I should never go into his house again. He would not have any of his niggers going to school; pretty soon they'd know more than he did; but I wanted to get a book so I came." Bessie Canedy

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"Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis," in Clinton, ed., *Divided Houses*, 292-295; Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 31-33.

[302] S. K. Whiting to R. M. Manly, 1 December 1865, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU; Letter from William Coan, in *AF* 2 (September 1867): 285.

lamented: "This is the Richmond we have taken; this is the peace we have conquered; this is the emancipation for which Abraham Lincoln died."[303]

The observations by Chase and Canedy underscored the uneasiness southern planters manifested about losing control over their former slaves. Under the Freedmen's Bureau southerners had been forced to negotiate labor contracts with blacks, a process whites found extremely distasteful. However, as long as freedpeople remained illiterate, it was possible for whites to dictate employment terms to their advantage and retain a semblance of authority. Thus, fearing that an educated black work force disrupted the traditional labor hierarchy in which whites ruled with an iron fist, some southerners sought to make it difficult for freedpeople to attend school.

Black students were not the only targets of white intimidation and harassment. Teachers were subject to gibes, stares, derisive remarks, and pillory. The local press was quick to publish columns about teacher misbehavior. The editor of the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* considered the site of a "Yankee schoolmarm . . . arm-in-arm with a black buck Negro" odious and demanded that Washington investigate the matter immediately. It is possible the paper invented this story about a white woman and black man exhibiting outward signs of public affection. Nevertheless, what it does demonstrate is the apprehension southerners had about the shifting paradigm in traditional racial and gender boundaries. In another edition, the *Dispatch* described how a former "Yankee

[303] Letter from Lucy Chase, 29 April 1865, in *FR* 1 (June 1865): 98; Letter from Bessie Canedy, 27 May 1865, in Ibid (July 1865): 116.

schoolmarm" had been arrested for "being drunk and disorderly in the street." According to the paper, police found the woman in the street causing such a "scene of impropriety as to be taunted by a group of white boys."[304]

The *Dispatch* did, on occasion, repudiate the offensive behavior of some of its citizens, but the paper took umbrage at "schoolmarms" openly assailing their harassers in public. When two "Yankee" teachers screamed "at the top of their lungs," hurling invective and abusive "epithets insulting to the Southern people," the editor of the paper considered such behavior repugnant. Obviously, these persons were "deficient in sense, in prudence, in refinement" and were unfit to "perform the duties of the delicate and responsible office committed to their care." The editor demanded the two "aggressors" be sent home immediately. Two weeks later the principal of the school contacted the paper to say that the assistant teachers "were not white persons, but mullatoes." Upon hearing of their misconduct, the principal had taken immediate steps to dismiss the women and apologized to the editor for their "scandalous conduct." [305] This episode illustrates how gender and race were used to exacerbate as well as diffuse public tensions. While the *Dispatch* condemned northern women for brutish public behavior, suggesting southern women were more refined, the school's principal said gender was not the issue, but rather race that had played a factor in why the women behaved the way they did. In other words, persons with black blood were prone to act in an impudent and precipitate manner. The

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[304] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 10 September 1866, 25 January 1867.

[305] Ibid, 22 January 1867, 6 February 1867.

principal's very public condemnation may have been an act of diplomacy designed to help calm public outcry, but it lent credibility to racist ideas. Placating the white community was not always successful, however.

In some cases teachers were hauled before local courts to face charges for alleged misconduct against local whites. Horace Hovey, an instructor at the Dill's Bakery school, faced interrogation before the Mayor's Court for supposedly whipping a white boy without provocation. Hovey told the court that when a teacher attempted to mediate an altercation between a white boy and a black student, the former rushed towards the teacher with a knife "threatening to kill her." Hovey, who testified the white lad had been a nuisance for some time, using offensive language at the teachers and throwing "stones at the school," said he intervened and proceeded to inflict a severe punishment upon the boy. When the young boy's older brother learned of this impudent act of disrespect by a Yankee school teacher, he accosted Hovey on the street and "assailed" him with "a cowhide." After hearing testimony from all the parties involved, the Mayor admonished Hovey for his conduct, finding him "guilty of breach of peace in whipping the boy." At the same time, the Mayor lectured the brother of the young lad, saying he "had no right to attack Hovey in retaliation." Despite the fact numerous witnesses had corroborated Hovey's story, no action was taken against the white boy; instead, Hovey, the teacher of black children, had been condemned for protecting the physical safety of others.[306]

[306] Ibid, 22, 23 April 1867.

While the press and courts mocked teacher behavior, white church leaders expressed dismay at the efforts of northern missionary societies to usurp local authority. The Virginia Baptist Association, which expressed grave doubts about the expediency of northerners teaching and proselytizing to freed slaves, objected to attempts by the American Baptist Home Mission Society to "take possession of church buildings and appoint ministers to officiate them." During an 1865 state Baptist convention, delegates feared the presence of northern Baptists "could prove detrimental rather than useful . . . and foster jealousies and dissension" between the races. Southern clergymen were willing to permit northern brethren, "conservative in principle, kind in spirit, and evangelical in teaching," to teach in Central Virginia, but those who preached "discord and collision" were unwelcome. The convention passed a resolution emphasizing these points: "If only kind, conciliatory, healing men are sent among us, their influence would be good; but if extreme, violent and impulsive men come among us to preach politics, . . . to insist on equal suffrage rather than repentance, and to excite the colored peopled to consider their former masters . . . as enemies, then their influence will be mischievous, and the promising fruits of many years of self-denying, disinterested toil will be blighted."[307]

At the Baptist state convention a year later members expressed horror at the political and social upheaval engulfing the South. No longer were white masters considered superior and no longer were blacks expected to show deference and obedience to whites, they lamented. If freedpeople were to be educated, the Baptists believed it

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[307] *Minutes of the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, 1 June 1865* (Richmond: Baptist General Association of Virginia, 1866): 11, 17, 21.

should be in classrooms taught by southern whites, who were more familiar with the distinct habits and behaviors of blacks: "Wherever practicable and agreeable," the convention resolved, "common schools taught by white persons of the south, for their special and *separate* instruction, should be favored. Believing that the people of the south are the best friends, and from their intimate knowledge of the character and instincts of the colored people, their most competent instructors, we should be ready to afford them both literacy and religious instruction."[308] The convention's resolution reflected a common, paternalistic refrain heard throughout the South: southerners were the natural and historic guardians of the freedpeople. For decades they had protected and nurtured blacks, providing them food, shelter, and clothing and treating them as if they were helpless children. Because northern pedagogues had no experience "raising" blacks, southerners thought the educational program advocated by northerners would have no practical impact on improving the lives of freedpeople. Predictably, there was one overriding reason for demanding that southerners assume the role of teaching blacks: to maintain white hegemony.

If public haranguing failed to dissuade northerners from teaching blacks, southerners resorted to more violent means of intimidation. Brazen acts of intolerance led to the destruction of churches and buildings housing school rooms. Across the South, in large cities and small towns, black education was under attack by white reactionaries. Mobs destroyed school buildings in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and South

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[308] *Minutes of the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, 7-11 June 1866* (Richmond: Baptist General Association of Virginia, 1866): 25-26.

Carolina, displacing hundreds of students and teachers.[309] In April 1866, Bessie Canedy recounted that a group of white Richmond citizens, "in their malignity, hatred and fear," burned the Second African Church to the ground. The next day, as the congregation and students gathered outside the ruins, Canedy said two "chivalrous sons of the South" passed by, with one of the boys loudly exclaiming: "I'm only sorry it hadn't burned today when it would have been full of the ---- niggers." Clearly she was mocking the gallantry of southern males. Rather than exhibiting courtesy and politeness, attributes associated with chivalry, Canedy wrote her northern friends that pejorative remarks from angry citizens were commonplace, explaining: "One hears wishes and threats that would bring a blush of shame to the cheek of a Nero or a Herod."[310] Considering the lack of suitable buildings in Richmond to accommodate the displaced students, Ralza Manly regretfully informed the teachers that the Bureau could only locate enough rooms "for the best of them."[311]

In Petersburg, mobs torched Freedmen Schools located in the Union Street Methodist Church and the Harrison Street Baptist Church. Unlike the public reaction in Richmond, however, many in the Petersburg community voiced outrage at the perpetrators. The editor of the *Index* noted that white citizens were "profoundly agitated and incensed" and boldly asserted: "if the guilty parties imagine they would find the faintest shadow of approval of their villainy in the sympathy of the community, they have been woefully

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[309] Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation*, 113; Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom*, 131-132; James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 395; Alvord, *3rd Semi-Annual Report*, 2-3.

[310] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 2 April 1866, in *FR* 2 (June 1866): 115-116.

[311] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 4 April 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

deceived."[312] While the paper's condemnation is notable, it appears the editor was probably more upset with the burning of churches than he was about the disruption to black education.

The destruction of schools distressed Manly. The sentiment of Richmond's white community had grown so intolerable by the summer of 1866 that Manly feared for the Bureau's survival. "Matters look very blue here for the Bureau and for schools," he wrote. "The best informed think the stay of the military will be brief. If they leave, I think the position of a 'nigger' teacher will be exceedingly uninviting in Richmond. The people are already irate and insolent. They wax worse and worse."[313]

Newspapers played a critical role in shaping public opinion against "Yankee schoolmarms"; they used propaganda to mock northern pedagogy, from poor classroom management to deficiencies in the curriculum.[314] In one spirited article the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* ridiculed northerners' obsession with cost efficiency, arguing their emphasis on "cheapness" had resulted in overcrowded classrooms to "such a degree that renders absurd all idea of proper attention" to the students. After observing first hand the operations at several freedpeople schools, the editor claimed this situation made "a mockery of instruction" that "would not be tolerated" in southern schools. It is questionable whether the editor was in a position to make such a claim. Considering the South had little experience managing a large-scale school system, rendering it difficult for the editor to

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[312] *Petersburg Index*, cited in *NF* 2 (May 1866): 149.

[313] R. M. Manly to Wm. Hawkins, 4 August 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[314] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 79-80; McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 396.

draw comparative conclusions, his diatribe seems instead to be an attempt to sway public sentiment. The paper went on say that because of high student/teacher ratios instructors were unable to devote "proper personal attention" to pupils. Instead, teachers devoted more time having the students sing, which the editor opined was a device used to help "an overcrowded teacher to while away the school house with greater comfort." Rather than instructing "a half-dozen" scholars "their ABC's," the paper added, northern teachers led the children in songs deriding Jefferson Davis and other Confederate heroes.[315]

While the *Dispatch* voiced measured support for providing "general education" to ex-slaves, it made sure the public was not lulled into believing northern pedagogy was superior. This was a delusion, the editor averred, and as evidence he pointed to the lack of cognitive skills seen in missives from Union soldiers. "The defectiveness of the education these obtained is notorious to everyone at all familiar with the late battlefield letters," the editor declared. "The mere penmanship of the Northern soldiers was generally good . . . but leaving the mechanical and passing to the mental, the southern letters were generally greatly superior." This proved that the education systems "such as now are elevating the freedmen" were woefully inadequate, the paper concluded.[316]

Rives Pollard of the *Southern Opinion* argued that educating freed slaves before they were able to independently take care of themselves was an ingredient for disaster. Rather than teaching blacks to "read Bacon . . . it would be much more desirable" for all freedpeople "to be able to *eat* Bacon," he wrote. Did it make sense, Pollard asked, for

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[315] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 30 April 1866.

[316] Ibid.

"negroes" to "know how to spell *Baker*" when they "cannot buy the baker's bread?" A better approach was for "these philanthropick Yankees" to show "their black pupils how to be honest, industrious, economical and thrifty." Society gained nothing, Pollard added, when large numbers of impecunious, educated blacks wandered the streets; in fact, their presence threatened public safety. "Educated paupers are the most miserable as well as the most dangerous class of individuals," Pollard fulminated. "Increase of knowledge but adds to their discontent . . . and profligacy." Continue down the path of inculcating black minds with Yankee education, he warned, and "the negroes of the South will but furnish fresh and emphatick proofs of these propositions by a stimulated depravity and a consequent accumulation of misfortune and misery." If northern schools were so good, then why were cases of "crime and punishment" among New England blacks much greater than in Richmond? Pollard asked rhetorically. Comparing prison and poverty statistics between Richmond and Boston, which suggested more blacks in the Massachusetts capital were either incarcerated or living in alms houses than in Richmond, Pollard claimed this proved "negroes in Richmond . . . are nearly three times as moral as the free blacks of that city." Unless Richmonders devised "measures to avert the calamity which threatens the negroes . . . impregnated with . . . New England vices," Pollard wrote, the city was certain to experience an increase in crime and mischievous behavior.[317] To Pollard, it seemed northern industrialized society had produced excessive corruption and increased levels of pauperism. What he feared most was having corrupt northern influences defile southern society, resulting in greater numbers of poor blacks challenging white authority.

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[317] *Southern Opinion*, 23 November 1867.

The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* offered its own contemptuous opinion of northern teaching, arguing the methods and curriculum offered to blacks was impracticable. The editor chastised "the crophead Roundheads" who, in their haughty manner, thought northerners "were mentally . . . superior to the degenerate scions of . . . luckless cavaliers." Mocking the physical comportment and teaching ideology of northern teachers, the paper wrote: "The Yankee schoolmarm, with nervous glance, triangular visage, and feet which deal destruction to the crawling caterpillar and harmless creeping insect" had landed in the city ready to regenerate "the negro" in the "poverty of new fangled ideas."[318] This derisive sketch probably derived from the character Ichabod Crane, the hapless, homely, and clumsy teacher in Washington Irving's, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. In the story blacks admired Crane, which explains why newspapers frequently referred to Irving's tale when describing northern pedagogues.[319] In this particular article, the editor wanted to point out how the unsavory and uncaring educational missionaries were taking advantage of a defeated foe, trampling upon southern society and disregarding deep-rooted traditions in their quest to transplant New England institutions. As a result, through the introduction of "refined phraseology which changed the unadulterated Negro into the colored gentleman" blacks, the paper pointed out, had begun to address whites in a condescending and pedant manner.[320]

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[318] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 8 May 1866.

[319] Ted Tunnell, "Creating 'the Propaganda of History': Southern Editors and the Origins of *Carpetbagger* and *Scalawag*, *Journal of Southern History* 72 (November 2006): 804.

[320] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 8 May 1866.

More alarming, the paper warned, was the fact northern education missionaries hoped to use blacks as the first step towards indoctrinating southern whites with New England pedagogy. “This is the species of mongrel refinement and progress which the ‘schoolmarm’ wishes to introduce among negroes and through them amongst us,” the editor thundered. Declaring that southerners better understood the educational needs of blacks, the paper favored more practical subject matters: “Hoeing, ploughing, spinning, and sewing are more necessary now to the Negro than the singing of emancipation hymns or the study of that multiplication table and alphabet. The Negro must *work or starve*, and this he will eventually find out in spite of all the strong-minded females in Yankeedom.”[321] The *Richmond Times*, which echoed the opinions of their cross-town competitor, offered this caustic description of northern educators: “White cravated gentlemen from Andover, with nasal twang, and pretty Yankee girls, with the smallest of hands and feet, have flocked to the South as missionary ground, and are communicating a healthy moral tone to the colored folks, besides instructing them to speak French, sing Italian, and walk Spanish. So that in time we are bound to have intelligent, and, probably, intellectual labor.” Not that a more intelligent labor pool lacked advantages; it made blacks “more serviceable and valuable,” the *Times* added. The paper concluded: “we have not the slightest doubt that a Negro who understands the parallax of the sun and can explain the polarization of light, will make a more efficient hand in the cotton field, and plant tobacco better.”[322]

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[321] Ibid.

[322] *Richmond Times*, 16 January 1866.

Not all of Richmond's white citizens viewed the schools with trepidation. A few leaders recognized educating blacks was advantageous, but only if southerners controlled the schools. The *Richmond Commercial Bulletin* dismissed assertions by those who thought educating blacks a waste of time. On the contrary, the paper argued, they should be educated, "not only by mere books, but by every mental and moral influence that can fit them for judgment rightly of their real position and true merit." The *Bulletin* reminded its readers that prior to the war, many in Richmond had condoned "Negro" education and the paper scoffed at suggestions that a learned black was a danger to the community. Alluding to the ante-bellum period in which masters had selfishly protected slaves through acts of patriarchal benevolence, the editor declared: "Even before emancipation" slaveholders "recognized the value of education for Negroes . . . Real intelligence never made a servant refractory or dangerous, especially when he got his knowledge through the agency, or by the consent of his master."[323] This observation shows how editors used sentimental memories as a form of propaganda to advance what was to become "The Lost Cause" ideology. Here the paper pointed to a pre-war society marked by order and tranquility, where race relations were friendly and blacks showed faithful deference towards whites.[324]

The paper rejected, however, suggestions that local tax dollars be used to support the freedmen. Requiring the "impoverished residents" of Richmond to "take the bread out of the mouths of themselves and of their children, to establish schools, where gratuitous

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[323] *Richmond Commercial Bulletin,* 28 October 1865.

[324] For more on the Lost Cause and memory see, David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

instruction may be given to blacks" was absurd. A better alternative, the *Bulletin* argued, was to "let the Negroes learn industry, economy and thrift," so that they could "gradually learn to pay for their education as whites do." Convinced that Yankee schoolmarms were instilling hatred of former masters and whites, the *Bulletin* warned "such persons do incalculable injury to the Negroes and the cause of humanity and good government." It was preferable, the editor declared, "for blacks to remain in total ignorance, than to come into contact with these blind leaders of the blind, who may plunge, not only themselves and their disciples, but the whole community into remediless ruin." The widespread antipathy towards black education the paper blamed on the Bureau and northern societies because their fulsome schools "have been . . . thrust down our throat." Educating blacks required a cautious and gradual approach, the paper concluded. [325]

Southern attitudes toward black schools were diverse, but one thing bound them together: deep enmity towards northern educators. On the one hand, criticism of the Freedmen's Schools manifested a growing anxiety among southerners that they were losing hegemony over the freedpeople. Introducing blacks to literacy, exposing them to new ideas, and instilling in them a sense of self-respect meant that whites would find it harder to enforce a social order based on white supremacy and continued domination of black labor. Other southern whites, however, supported educating freed slaves for economic and practical reasons. Not only were educated black laborers "more serviceable and valuable," this camp argued, but as long as native southerners taught at black schools,

[325] *Richmond Commercial Bulletin*, 28 October 1865.

whites could maintain their paternalistic domination.[326] In other words, schools presented a golden opportunity to enforce black subordination and deference to whites. As one historian wrote: "It was education designed to bind rather than liberate."[327]

[326] Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 48-49.

[327] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 194-195.

Chapter 6

Schools for Whites and Free Public Schools for All

Sustaining black schools with the help of benevolent societies and the federal government had limitations. The most pressing issue was the fact that the Bureau and northern educators were not in the position to remain the sole stewards of black schools indefinitely. By 1869 dwindling government resources as well as fundraising difficulties had significantly reduced the financial resources available to sustain freedpeople schools.[328] Itinerant northern philanthropists could build the foundation for black schools, but education policy in the long term was the responsibility of state and local governments. This reliance on local control fit neatly into northern education ideology, which assumed towns and cities were accountable for sustaining their own schools. In other words, southern communities had to "become self-educative."[329] Needless to say, northerners did not expect southern aristocrats to fill the void once the Bureau disbanded and northern teachers returned home. In order for black schools to have a reasonable chance of continuing after northern munificence dissipated, friends of black education needed to take the lead in developing comprehensive public school systems throughout the south.

[328] McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 403-404; Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 203-204.

[329] Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 164.

Although northern largesse played a key role in creating the foundation for black schools, former slaves' insatiable hunger for education helped precipitate the expansion of public schools on southern soil during Reconstruction. Earlier in the twentieth century, W. E. B. DuBois bluntly stated that "public education for all at public expense, was, in the South, a Negro idea**.**"[330] More recently historian James D. Anderson has argued that freedpeople played a significant role in challenging southerner's "long-standing resistance" to free public education.[331] Determined to permanently discard the vestiges of slavery in which many masters frowned upon literacy for their slaves, freedpeople in Central Virginia, in full view of whites, demonstrated an unwavering commitment to support their schools, which they viewed as a key measure of freedom.

Black enthusiasm for education prompted some northern philanthropists to call for a similar commitment to meet the needs of ignorant whites, most of whom had never attended school. Many educators believed reconstructing southern society was incomplete unless all classes of citizens had access to education. Before the war most southern state constitutions included provisions for public schools, but aside from New Orleans and North Carolina, the effort to expand education to white children was haphazard and irregular. Virginia's wartime constitution contained no provision for public schools.[332] In Richmond, efforts to educate whites received encouragement from Ralza Manly who

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[330] W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935; reprint Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1963), 638, 641 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[331] Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 4-6.

[332] Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 50-53.

firmly believed a comprehensive free public school system depended on both blacks and whites having access to education. In other words, black support alone was not enough. And because the city lacked the financial resources and commitment, responsibility for introducing schooling to the masses rested on the shoulders of northern benevolence and the Bureau.

Expanding schools among the southern white populace began during the last year of the war. While visiting war ravaged Tennessee in 1864, two delegates representing the Christian Commission, Rev. Joseph P. Thompson and Rev. William T. Buddington, voiced dismay at the "desolate conditions of the country." Entire communities stood in ruins with industry destroyed and "school houses standing idle." With the ardent support of wartime Governor Andrew Johnson and President Lincoln, the clergymen gathered together northern civic and philanthropic leaders to establish a "nucleus of an organization" dedicated to aiding the "thousands of wretched refugees" in the southern states. Aside from meeting physical wants, the American Union Commission (AUC), with the active cooperation of local political leaders, began establishing schools for white children. In the fall of 1865, the American Freedmen's Aid Union, which served as an umbrella organization coordinating the efforts of several secular aid societies serving the educational needs of the freedpeople, approached the AUC and proposed the two entities combine their efforts. After several meetings the two organizations, in 1866, agreed to merge creating a

new national organization known as the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC).[333]

No longer was the education movement dedicated solely to blacks. Now, philanthropic leaders sought to "cooperate with the people of the South, without distinction of race or color, in the improvement of their condition, upon the basis of industry, education, freedom, and Christian morality." The AFUC's constitution specifically stated, "no schools . . . shall be maintained . . . of which any person shall be excluded because of color."[334] Although this provision advocated integrated schools, in practice few whites voluntarily attended black schools and few blacks voluntarily attended white schools.[335] Nevertheless, the cooperation of these two national organizations served as a springboard to expand schools to all southerners, regardless of race, in hopes it led to "establishing permanent systems of public education."[336]

Needless to say, some leaders in the freedpeople's education movement objected to the new arrangement and resigned their positions in protest. Hannah Stevenson, who had been a pioneer in the New England Freedmen's Aid Commission, quit her post as chairwoman of the Teacher's Committee calling the entire affair "clear bosh" that had

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[333] *The American Union Commission, Its Origins, Operations and Purposes* (New York: Sanford, Harroun & Co., 1865), 1-3 (hereinafter referenced as AUC); Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, 33-34.

[334] "The Cleveland Meeting," in *AF* 1 (June 1866): 38-39.

[335] Sandra E. Small, "The Yankee Schoolmarm in Freedmen's Schools: An Analysis of Attitudes," *The Journal of Southern History* 45 (August 1979): 388; Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 19-21; McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 399-400.

[336] AUC, 3.

been "rushed through with indecent haste." She expressed grave doubts whether the new organization really served the interests of both races.[337]

Despite opposition within the freedmen's aid movement, many northerners were in favor of expanding educational opportunities to both whites and blacks. For example, the *New York Times* expressed concern about the social repercussions should blacks become better educated than "the great mass of whites." Because schools for freedpeople had been the primary recipient of massive northern largesse, the paper argued, southern whites were left with fewer educational resources. In this respect, blacks received a disproportionate share of financial and human support, making them realize the "value of mental culture" much faster "than the poor class of southern whites." While opening schools for the freedpeople had been a national priority, and rightly so, the paper declared, it seemed shortsighted to limit the movement to one class of citizens. Vast social transformations underway in the South directly impacted a new generation of white and black people, the *Times* pointed out. Thus, to guarantee that one group did not have a greater advantage over another the education of both races was "a matter of public importance."[338]

The Freedmen's Bureau offered a strong endorsement for creating schools for southern whites. Commissioner Howard thought "the work of elevating the poor people of the south of all classes" was "the duty of all true men" engaged in the transition to a unified country. He wrote to Lyman Abbott, correspondent secretary of the AFUC, offering his "hearty sympathy and support" for broadening school access "amongst the

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[337] Swint, *Dear Ones From Home*, 198.

[338] *New York Times* in *FR* 1 (September 1865): 269.

poor white people denigrated by years of slavery."[339] The testimonials from Howard and the *New York Times* underscored a Bureau concern and many northern educators, too, that unless whites received the same educational benefits as blacks, convincing southerners to endorse free public schools at taxpayer expense had little chance of succeeding. On a more sinister level, the desire to expand education to all races belied a deep mistrust within the northern white community about allowing blacks to outpace whites in the quest for literacy.

Efforts to open white schools in the Richmond-Petersburg area began immediately after the fall of the Confederacy. Three weeks after Appomattox, the editor of the *Richmond Whig* called for reopening the city schools: "Among the many moral blessings which we hope to see flow from the new order of things . . . is the resumption of the functions of the public . . . schools of the city, and the imparting of instruction with something like regularity and system."[340] Before 1860 Richmond had established free primary schools in each of the city's wards, while Petersburg supported two small ward schools. The schools had received support from the state's Literary Fund as well as annual appropriations from the city government. During the civil war, however, Confederate leaders had diverted the Literary Fund toward the military effort, leaving the cities, and state, without the means to keep schools open.[341]

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[339] Letter from O. O. Howard to Lyman Abbott, 28 August 1865, in *AUC*.

[340] *Richmond Whig*, 29 April 1865.

[341] Margaret Meagher, *History of Education in Richmond* (Richmond: State Library of Virginia, 1939), 108-109.

In April 1865, the AUC negotiated with several Richmond clergymen to open schools for white children in their churches. The Commission organized two schools on Belvidere Hill, but the demand soon overwhelmed the available space forcing the AUC to relocate the schools into the former confederate Naval Laboratory complex located in the working-class Oregon Hill neighborhood. The city of Petersburg, on the other hand, dismissed outside assistance and decided to restart their two ward schools without help from northern benevolent societies.[342]

Anticipating a larger enrollment during the next school year, the AUC realized they needed an experienced administrator to manage the schools in Richmond. Over the summer of 1865, the Commission recruited Andrew Washburn, a former principal at the Massachusetts Normal School, to become superintendent of the Richmond schools for white children. Ten days after the start of the new school year Washburn reported: "The one school had grown into three" with 235 students packed into the classrooms.[343]

This response pleased AUC board members who argued the high enrollment statistics proved southern whites were just as eager as blacks to receive an education. "These facts sufficiently demonstrate," the commission opined in an annual report, "the falsity of the oft repeated statement that the children of the poorer classes of the non-slaveholding whites of the south, have no desire to learn. They are exceedingly eager for

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[342] *Petersburg Common Council Minutes*, Clerk's Office, City of Petersburg, 1, 8 May 1865; Letter from C. Thurston Chase, 31 August 1865 in *AUC*, 7-8.

[343] *AUC*, 8.

instruction."[344] After visiting the Laboratory schools, representatives from the American Missionary Society extolled the school's positive influence on the "barefooted and poorly clad indigent whites." The AMA insisted that the schools remain under the supervision of northern educators, not local demagogues who spewed venomous attacks against "Yankee" invaders.

As the schools' reputation improved, more parents sought to have their children enrolled. By the spring of 1866 Washburn reported that over six hundred white children, "cursed by a system for which we are in part responsible, and by the treason of political leaders whose selfish wickedness has so long perpetuated this curse," had been the recipients of "northern philanthropy." A steady stream of curiosity seekers dropped by the Laboratory schools; one teacher said she had counted over one hundred and forty-four visitors during the spring term. Inside the school boys who had once belonged to gangs known as the "Oregon Bulldogs" and the "Sidney Smashers," whose daily activity had consisted of pitched "rock battles" and loitering the streets of Richmond, now sat in desks learning to read and write. "They were naked and we clothed them; ignorant, and by us, have been educated," Washburn wrote.[345]

The Laboratory complex also housed a separate school for black children. Washburn admitted there had been "a little friction" between the races, but he was cautiously optimistic that if blacks and whites could attend school in the same compound

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[344] Ibid.

[345] *Soldiers Memorial Society: Reports on the Free White Schools at Richmond* (Boston, 1866), 2-4. (hereinafter referenced as *Free White Schools*).

without significant disruption, then perhaps one day, in his words, "we may hope sometime for mixed . . . schools."[346] Two years later this private admission almost derailed efforts to establish a free public school system in Richmond.

The auspicious beginnings, however, were threatened in May 1866 when the AUC announced plans to suspend its support for the schools, forcing Washburne to find another sponsor. It is unclear why the Commission made this decision, but in any event, caught off guard by the AUC's precipitate action, Washburn lamented: "It will be very sad for our cause to be obliged to give up so suddenly." Manly was equally distressed. Both he and Washburn sent urgent missives to George Whipple describing the situation as an "emergency" and imploring the AMA to assume control of the Laboratory schools.[347]

Richmond clergymen told Washburn that continuing the white schools was of utmost importance. "Education, reconstruction, religion demand" that some society "take up the work immediately," Rev. Florence McCarthy declared. At Washburn's urging, Rev. McCarthy, who had been a leading spokesman advocating expanding education to poor whites, appealed directly to the AMA for help. A Richmond native, McCarthy admitted that he had "participated in the wicked war against the Union" but was now an avowed "Union man." His congregation, moreover, had "recanted and reformed" and now contained "the most conspicuous loyal southern people in Virginia, if not in the whole country." Renouncing the Confederacy was a perilous undertaking and frequently led to

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[346] Andrew Washburn to G. Whipple, 18 June 1866, AMA.

[347] Andrew Washburn to G. Whipple, 25 May 1866, Ibid; R. M. Manly to Lyman Abbott, 9 June 1866, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

social ostracism. McCarthy said that operating the Laboratory schools had brought him much comfort and saved him "from unmerciful persecution." He lamented that if the schools closed the affect on the community "would be disastrous in the extreme." McCarthy also worried about white reaction to the "appearance of having been deserted by our northern friends." The impact, he warned the AMA, "will be so bad that I assure you my heart and a good many more hearts will firmly bleed."[348]

Washburn told the AMA that support of white schools helped blacks because it manifested the Bureau's commitment to provide education to all races. Writing to Reverend Hunt in New York, Washburn argued: "The same amount of monies will do more good to the colored people if it is used to some extent to educating the equally poor and degraded white people." Once the South learned to "know and have her schools . . . the work of all our educational societies is accomplished."[349] Military officials also lobbied the AMA. General Turner opined that political reconstruction was impossible without social reconstruction and support of white schools more than "any other one thing would bring about this . . . object." Richmond had a unique opportunity to show the rest of Virginia that social reconstruction was possible, but only if it took the lead. "I feel that much ground would be lost in our reconstruction," Turner told the AMA, "if the schools were discontinued."[350]

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[348] Letter from Rev. F.C. McCarthy, 11 May 1866, AMA.

[349] Andrew Washburn to G. Whipple, 22 May 1866, Ibid.

[350] Turner to S. Hunt, 12 May 1866, Ibid.

Local white educators applauded efforts to keep the Hollywood schools open but remonstrated against outside influences to educate local whites. During a Richmond City Council meeting, the trustees of the Lancasterian School exhorted: "If the free school system of the North" was to take hold in the city, "it should be done by our own council and citizens." Furthermore, the New England model, the trustees argued, required "modifications" to ensure it conformed to "our views of education, and secure it from the evils which seem to be inherent in the system." They expected the city council not to "yield the education of the youth . . . to those who are not under our control of our people," and portended disastrous results if steps were not taken to curb the "philanthropic efforts now proposed." In their minds, keeping whites ignorant was "preferable to wrong education."[351]

Officials at the AMA, which had earlier exited Richmond to focus its educational efforts in the Norfolk area, were eager to offer assistance but only if classrooms were open to both races. Washburn, on the other hand, believed that whites would never accept mixed schools and pleaded for a more measured approach, one that would reduce the chance of violence. "You propose to commence the mixed school at once. This is impossible," Washburn wrote. He preferred to allow black and white students to "follow their own wishes" and decide for themselves whether they desired integrated classes. Because both races viewed each other with suspicion, Washburn argued, it was doubtful blacks wanted to share classroom space with white students, and vice versa: "The colored people would require as much forcing into a white school as the white into a colored one." A frustrated

[351] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 13 June 1866.

Washburn told Reverend Whipple: "I wish you could fully appreciate how much I offer when I propose to run a white school and a black school in the same yard with all the labor in mind of preventing outbreak of trouble at school and on the way to it, and getting gradually a power over all to bring them into better and nearer relations." Aside from the educational benefits, Washburn believed supporting schools for whites had long-term political benefits. The schools promised to "give us influence with the poor whites of the South," he argued, "who are the voters, and through whom the colored people can be helped to some purpose. We can do something to aid blacks directly, and should do so, but if they ever occupy the place we wish them to, it must . . . be through the votes of these same poor whites."[352]

Ultimately the AMA did not send a corps of teachers to Richmond to teach whites; instead, the Soldiers Memorial Society (SMS) of Boston assumed control of the white schools. Established in 1865 to honor the sacrifices of Union soldiers from Massachusetts, the society dedicated itself "in any work of benevolence in those regions" desecrated by war. At first the Soldier's Memorial Society exerted their energy towards feeding and clothing the "suffering loyal families," preferring to leave the work of education to other associations. In Richmond the SMS had been connected with the Laboratory Schools through the distribution of clothing to destitute students. Then, when the call came asking the society to sponsor the Laboratory Schools, the board of directors unanimously consented. In view of the political and social revolution spreading across the South, the

[352] Andrew Washburn to G. Whipple, 22 May 1866, AMA.

directors wanted the Richmond schools to remain open in order to expand education to all classes and "interest the people . . . in a free school system." Educating the white masses, then, was not only propitious for Richmond, but also for the entire South. Abandoning the schools at this critical juncture, the society asserted, "would be a direct and complete compliance with the fondish wish of the Southern aristocracy." Like Washburn, the SMS was reluctant to endorse an open door policy in which black and white students shared the same classroom: "Under the present condition of opinion and sentiment, through the greater part of the country, this position is tantamount to saying we will keep schools only for blacks." A better approach, the Society declared, was for maintaining separate graded schools for the races.[353]

Ralza Manly was particularly relieved to learn the white schools had a new sponsor. In a letter to Edward Hale, President of the Soldiers Memorial Society, Manly wrote that the schools had done much to gain "respectful attention" from the traditional enemies of northern benevolence. More important, the Laboratory Schools had not only advanced educational egalitarianism among the white masses, but also silenced critics who accused the Bureau and other aid societies for pursuing a one dimensional strategy; that is, educating blacks and not whites:

> The school is needed for what it will do practically in the work of reconstruction, but substituting liberal knowledge for narrow prejudices; it is needed as our perpetual protest against the spirit of caste that prevails here among whites, especially in their education system, and as an unanswerable proof that Boston and New England are not what they so generally believed to be in this

[353] *Reports of the Soldiers Memorial Society, 2nd Annual Meeting 5 June 1866* (Boston: Soldiers Memorial Society, 1866), 2, 10-11; *Reports of the Soldiers Memorial Society, 3rd Annual Meeting* (Boston: Soldiers Memorial Society, 1867), 7 (hereinafter referenced as SMS).

> latitude, *mere* negropholists. We can point to that school, and shut the mouths of rebel cavaliers.[354]

Over the next two years, the number of schools for whites expanded. In addition to the Laboratory Schools, the Lowell Free School occupied a prime location in downtown Richmond across from Capital Square while another school, built on the bluffs of Church Hill, served students on the east end of the city. Throughout the city parents overwhelmed the schools pushing the enrollment beyond capacity. Washburn received reports daily from teachers who reluctantly turned away dozens of students because no desks or seats were available.[355] Fathers and mothers pleaded with teachers to allow their children, who had "not known a day's schooling since the war," to enter the classroom. One teacher said girls carried bouquets of flowers expecting this outward display of affection to guarantee them a space. The parents of one boy, when told there was no more room, responded, "Oh he shall bring a seat."[356]

Northern teachers at first expressed anxiety about instructing southern white children, but over time found the work rewarding. "I was a little astonished that I should become so much attached to these children," Jennie Howard wrote, "but there is such a warmth of feeling, such an eager, earnest desire to comply with the requirements, that one cannot help feeling intensely interested in them." To Howard, her white pupil's willingness to learn was a pleasant surprise because, in her words, "I had been led to indulge in

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[354] R. M. Manly to Edward. Hale, 19 July 1866, in *Free White Schools*, 7.

[355] Letters from Andrew Washburn, 1 December 1866, 10 January 1867, 1 February 1867, in Ibid, 19-20.

[356] Letter from E. G. Stanwood, 1 June 1867, in Ibid, 26.

expectations far to the contrary."[357] Sarah E. Foster concluded that white children's eagerness to receive an education as well as their strong affinity for her were no different from the reception other teachers had received from black children. She recounted a story of the exuberance her students displayed when learning she had returned to the city in preparation for the new school year. One little girl had "tears rolling down her cheeks, and sobbing out her words of welcome." As word spread "that teacher had come," scores of white students swarmed around Foster's home leaving her "hardly . . . any time to unpack" her trunk. "I could hardly believe they had waited and watched so anxiously for my return," Foster wrote.[358]

After spending several months in Richmond, some teachers began to express a more positive opinion of the South. Mary S. Watkins of Lowell, Massachusetts told the Soldiers Memorial Society: "I become more attached to the people of the south . . . and more & more attached to my pupils, whom I find in general faithful and obedient." Watkins, who expressed a sense of national pride for having the opportunity to educate "these American-born citizens," declared: "We are . . . I hope helping make the future citizens of Virginia less ignorant and more true and loyal than their fathers were."[359]

Even though white schools were sponsored by a New England benevolent society, supervised by a Massachusetts educator, and employed northern teachers, their reputation

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[357] Letter from Jennie Howard, 30 January 1867, in Ibid, 25.

[358] Letter from Sarah E. Foster, 3 November 1866, in Ibid, 23.

[359] Letter from Mary S. Watkins, 14 March 1868, in *Reports of the Soldiers Memorial Society, 4th Annual Meeting* (Boston: Calkins & Goodwin, 1868), 30-31.

received an important endorsement from the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*. In a generally positive article, the editor wrote that although teachers "made no secret of their Union sentiments, their allegiances had no negative consequences on the children." Indeed instructors encouraged "the utmost freedom of opinion . . . and with good effect," the paper declared. The strong bond teachers and students had developed, the *Dispatch* observed, was evident when school closed for the season: "Girls were all in tears, and boys acknowledge they felt as badly as the girls." Moreover, the editor wrote, the schools had improved the character of poor white children who were now receiving the "rudiments of an English education" rather than idling their time away "engaged in vicious habits." The *Dispatch* understood it was important to maintain the white schools because their continued presence bode well for the creation of a "system of free school education" for all. This article suggests the Richmond newspaper was willing to distance itself from the caste-based education system that had prevailed in the ante-bellum South and offer measured support to having northern teachers *temporarily* instruct white children. Put another way, to counter-balance the black education movement, the *Dispatch* thought it was better to educate the poor white masses with northern teachers than to offer no education at all.[360]

Other newspapers, however, were less enthusiastic. The *Southern Opinion* endorsed educating Richmond's youth and advocated that "steps at once be taken" to erect a school "in every neighborhood," but the paper vehemently opposed "Yankee" teachers serving as instructors. Astonished that white Richmonders enrolled their children in the

[360] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 30 June 1866 in *Free White Schools*, 6-7.

schools, editor Rives Pollard asserted that the curriculum taught in the classrooms was not designed "to diffuse knowledge and inculcate truth, but to propagate error and teach falsehood." Lambasting the ambivalence of parents who had succumbed to the lies of "Yankee schoolmarms," Pollard thundered: "We surely are a lazy, careless, thoughtless, good natured people to permit this pestilent fellow to impress upon himself and his isms on the tender and retentive minds our young descendents." Unless whites circled the wagons and demanded only southerners serve as teachers, Pollard warned, white society risked "seeing the rising generation perverted and regenerate." Worse, he claimed, was the insidious misrepresentations printed in northern textbooks, which extolled the virtues of Union military leaders while denigrating not only the heroic sacrifices of confederate soldiers, but also labeled as treasonous the actions of southern political leaders. "Are we ready to have all we cherish in memory, possession and hope, dishallowed and condemned in the minds of those who our sprung from our loins?" Pollard asked.[361]

Many citizens supported Pollard's diatribe against northern educators and shared his concerns about the school curriculum. Although the Confederacy had been defeated, this did not mean whites had severed their allegiance to the southern way of life. In other words, large numbers of whites had no desire to tinker with prevailing customs related to caste and class. Pollard believed it was better for southern whites to "embrace ignorance" than to allow "Yankee civilization" to become "the standard of education in the South."[362]

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[361] *Southern Opinion*, 22 June 1867, 14 March 1868.

[362] Ibid.

Despite Pollard's ranting, Richmond's white community generally embraced the schools. Ralza Manly wrote the schools "are of the best character" and have begun "to attract public attention, and elicit the most favorable comments from the people."[363] According to Washburn, the groundswell of support influenced the political scene with party leaders espousing the creation of public schools as a primary strategy.[364] After visiting the schools in the spring of 1868, Richmond resident W. H. Reed described them as "in splendid condition, a credit to any community." Arguing that "it would be a great calamity" if the schools were closed, Reed considered it imperative for the city to move forward with instituting a public school system. "My own judgment leads me to say that the moment is a vital one. We are in the culmination of victory, as we used to say in the last few months of the war; can we afford to lay down our arms?"[365] And so, through the assiduous work of the Soldiers Memorial Society, the Bureau, and Andrew Washburn, Richmond public opinion began warming to the idea of expanding educational opportunities for whites**.** Together with black schools, the foundation had been laid for a free public school system.

Unlike its sister city to the north, Petersburg refrained from cooperating with northern benevolent societies in teaching white children. The city did have two ward schools, but these received limited support from the Common Council. Appalled at the

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[363] R. M. Manly to O. O. Howard, *Synopsis of School Reports for the six-months ending 30 June 1867*, BRFAL-National

[364] *SMS, 4th Annual Meeting* 7, 28.

[365] Letter from W. H. Reed in *SMS, 4th Annual Meeting*, 32.

city's intransigence, the *Petersburg Daily Express* lamented: "Children of the poor are growing up without even a chance of learning their letters." The paper warned that because large numbers of Petersburg's youth were unable to read or write the very foundation of a political democracy was in peril. "A Republican form of government depended on the intellectual and moral culture of the masses," the editor proclaimed. Editors, like some northern educators, feared whites were becoming less educated than blacks. Indeed, the editor of the *Daily Express* warned that blacks would soon have a better grasp "in the elementary branches of education" than white children. Quoting a prominent Petersburg citizen who predicted that black voters "in thirty years . . . would be able to exercise the right of suffrage more intelligently than whites," the paper called for the city Common Council to address the deficiency as soon as practicable.[366]

Two key events prodded Petersburg and Richmond education reformers: the creation of the Peabody Fund and the Underwood convention. In 1867 George Peabody, a wealthy northern banker who made his fortune overseas, donated one million dollars for public education in the South. The investment income was to be used to promote and encourage "the intellectual, moral, or industrial education among the young of the more destitute portions of the Southern and Southwestern states." To serve as agent for the Peabody Fund, the board of trustees chose Barnas Sears, president of Brown University and former secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. In a letter to the *Baltimore Gazette* Sears explained the primary purpose of the fund was to give "the benefits of

[366] *Petersburg Daily Express* in *AF* 1 (March 1867): 190.

rudimentary education to the greatest number of children through the agency of common and normal schools."[367]

Towns and cities meeting certain criteria received grants from the Fund. Obtaining aid was contingent on citizens controlling and supporting the system, which included local governments appropriating money in excess of what the Fund provided. In this way, rather than legislating or forcing schools upon people, localities had to show a genuine interest in expanding education to all children. The Peabody Fund also required school systems to institute universal access, meaning classrooms must serve the needs of both white and black students. The Fund, however, took an ambiguous stand regarding integrated schools. Sears was willing to support either mixed or separate facilities, but wishing to avoid controversy he deferred those decisions to local officials. One reason Sears refrained from demanding mixed schools was the fear of white parents abandoning the public system in favor of private schools.[368]

In 1867-1868, universal education was an important issue in the Underwood Convention. Indeed, one of more important provisions adopted during the convention was the institution of public schools. The measure called for creating a centralized State Board of Education, comprised of the governor, a superintendent of public instruction, and the attorney general. The Board was to have general administrative and financial oversight

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[367] *Baltimore Gazette* in the *New York Times*, 12 January 1869; Vaughn, *Education for All*, 143; *Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund From Their Original Organization On the 8th of February 1867*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Trustees of the Peabody Fund, 1875), 2-3, 16.

[368] Earle H. West, "The Peabody Education Fund and Negro Education, 1867-1880," *History of Education Quarterly* 6 (Summer 1966): 4-7, 16.

while the superintendent was responsible for overall supervision of the new system. A key sticking point during the debate involved the expediency of integrated schools. Mixed classrooms were impossible, conservatives warned. They attempted to insert specific guarantees for segregated schools but their efforts failed. Black delegates, keenly aware that separate schools did not mean equal schools, were adamantly opposed to segregation. Dr. Thomas Bayne, a local dentist who had received his education in the North, introduced an amendment calling for the schools to admit everyone "without distinction of color." Despite vehement protests from black members, white radicals, realizing mixed schools doomed any hope for establishing free public schools in the state, joined with the conservative block to defeat Bayne's amendment. Thus, the constitution presented to voters in 1869 contained no specifics regarding integrated schools. Two years passed before the Virginia legislature passed a fully funded public school law providing for universal, but segregated, education.[369] In the meantime, Petersburg and Richmond did not wait for state lawmakers to act.

Spurred by debates in the Underwood Convention, the Petersburg Common Council began debating the merits of creating free public schools. In the summer of 1868 a committee led by Massachusetts educator R.G. Greene presented a public school ordinance before the full council. Some members voiced skepticism about the plan. Councilman Donnan objected to the measure not because he opposed education for the masses, but rather because the deplorable state of the city treasury precluded the appropriation of

[369] James Douglas Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1960), 93-95; Hamilton James Eckenrode, *The Political History of Virginia During The Reconstruction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1904), 93-94; Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 72-73.

"money to build schoolhouses throughout the city." Donnan, who wanted more time to examine the details of the measure, convinced the council to defer the matter for several weeks.[370]

The *Petersburg Daily Index* shared Donnan's skepticism and after perusing the proposed school ordinance, discovered several defects. The paper's criticism illustrated southerner's long held suspicion towards tax-payer supported public education. For one thing, the editor pointed out that because many residents already "liberally supported" private institutions with excellent reputations, it was unlikely white parents wanted to send their children to public schools: "The chief difficulty in building an effective 'free school' system is the reluctance of parents to accept gratis worthless teaching for their children, when useful education could be procured with comparatively a small annual outlay." Moreover, the ordinance failed to include specific proposals to address the issue of poor attendance rates, which, the paper pointed out, had plagued the city's "free schools" in the past.[371]

According to the paper, a second weakness related to the school's organizational structure and curriculum. A graded system in which students of equal learning capacity occupied the same classroom was essential, but here the ordinance was silent. Instead, the *Index* envisioned hundreds of students crowding into one of eight schools with "all ages, sexes, capacities and degree of advancement, huddled together beyond the possibility of proper classification." The resulting chaos, the editor asserted, would make a mockery of

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[370] *Petersburg Daily Index*, 17 June 1868.

[371] Ibid, 18 June 1868.

the system. A better approach, the editor suggested, was to emulate private schools. For a public school system to become truly efficient required "practical instruction" and "opportunities for advancement" that were "preparatory to a collegiate course." As proposed, the school system only offered primary education, leaving children unprepared to explore "fields of literature and science" and with little incentive to pursue advanced careers in "engineering or medicine." In effect, the *Index* strongly inferred the new system was no more advanced than the black schools run by the Bureau and northern benevolent societies. "Unless there is more held out as an inducement than mere . . . rudimentary instruction," the editor wrote, "we shall find that, except as regards the Negroes, not only will our system not have improved, but that it will not be taken advantage of by any but the very destitute people." Calling the school ordinance a half-measure devoid of comprehensive details, the paper concluded that no system was preferable to moving forward with the proposed measure.[372]

The editorial prompted letters from angry whites condemning the school ordinance as an attempt by "Yankee" occupiers to force a defective measure down the throats of Petersburg's citizens. One Petersburg resident, while questioning the overall efficacy of the ordinance, was particularly distressed about the method employed to select members of the proposed Board of Education, some of whom were northern educators. The concerned citizen pointed out that of the five councilmen on the nominating committee responsible for recommending candidates for the Board, three were actually chosen to serve on the

[372] Ibid.

Board. The entire process, in his view, smelled of political favoritism. Not only was the propriety of the school law questionable, but it also suggested some council members were more concerned with the spoils of office than what was best for the city schools. For the common council to select members of the School Board from "their body, when there existed in a city of 25,000 residents" scores of well-educated and qualified men was absurd. "What possible qualifications for being a useful member of the Board of Education can a membership of the Council confer?" the Petersburg resident asked. "Away with politics and every specimen of partisanship and depraved prurience of office. This is a great and glorious cause; and let it be committed to the best and ablest men of the city."[373]

Over the next six weeks Greene worked with allies on the Common Council to iron out weaknesses. At the same time he and the Board surreptitiously met with Manly and other Bureau officials to make arrangements for having teachers employed by the various benevolent associations in the Richmond/Petersburg area to serve as instructors for the black schools. The ordinance Greene presented before the full Common Council called for eight schools, three primary schools and one High School for whites, and four primary schools for blacks. More important, at least according to the *Index*, was that the Board had the power to choose "native white" southerners from the "local population" to teach white students. As for black schools, the Board of Education had the authority to hire up to eleven teachers. In his negotiations with the Bureau, Greene gave Manly the power to recruit eight of the eleven teachers claiming this arrangement was done for financial

[373] *Petersburg Daily Index*, 26 June 1868.

reasons.[374] In reality, however, this move reflected Greene's apprehension about relinquishing complete control of black schools to local whites.

When the *Index* learned about the "private arrangement" between Greene and Manly, the deal with the Bureau began to unravel. Voicing outrage over the secret pact, the editor savagely attacked Manly. In their quest to save "a few thousand dollars" the paper accused Board members of delegating control of the black schools to impudent New England outsiders. Here, the editor went for the jugular, vilifying Manly's character and impartiality: "The Bureau's Superintendent of Educational matters is a certain fanatical, narrow-minded, spindle-shanked, nasal twanged specimen of the carpet-bag radical." He called Manly a "speculator in philanthropical humbugs," who was "nothing more than a Republican agent working under the cover of his sacred garb . . . for the success of Jacobinism and the perpetuation of its abominable tyranny." Giving this "anointed wolf" the authority to select teachers for black schools, the paper warned, would turn classrooms into "nothing but beds of schism and discontent" rather than places of learning. "Negro schools," the editor concluded, "will be a nuisance if conducted by Radical disciples."[375] Incensed that the press had learned about the arrangement with the Board, Manly predicted that the resulting public outcry portended defeat of the plan.[376]

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[374] *Petersburg Daily Index*, 17 August 1868; R. G. Greene to O. Brown, 11 August 1868, ULR, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[375] *Petersburg Daily Index*, 14 August 1868.

[376] R. M. Manly to M. E. Streiby, 15 August 1868, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU; R. Stone to R. M. Manly, 13 August 1868, ULR, Ibid; R. M. Manly to R. Stone, 14 August, 1868, LS, Ibid; R. Stone to Manly, 15 August 1868, ULR, Ibid.

Manly's prediction proved to be correct. The *Index's* expose forced the Board of Education to reconsider its plan of cooperation with the Bureau. Thus, rather than selecting teachers, Manly agreed to have the Bureau pay rent on the buildings designated for black schools, with conditions. Before authorizing payment he demanded the Bureau have the authority to inspect the schools and ensure the educational program met his approbation.[377] Needless to say, securing willing participants from surrounding communities to instruct freed slaves was difficult. One month before the start of school, Major Stone told Manly that of the four dozen or so applicants, "not three percent . . . would consent to teach colored schools." When Stone learned the city planned to place advertisements in local papers he urged Commissioner Brown to encourage northern teachers in Richmond to make application in the belief the city had no choice but to hire some of them.[378]

When Petersburg's public schools opened on October 1, 1868, the city employed twelve teachers for blacks; nearly two-thirds were southern white women who, in Manly's opinion, hailed from "the most respectable families." After touring the black schools with Andrew Washburn, Manly voiced cautious optimism. While the teachers appeared to be genuinely qualified, the physical surroundings were less sanguine and in need of repair. R. G. Greene, who by this time had been elected superintendent of the Petersburg schools, approached the Bureau requesting the agency expend more aid on general maintenance of black classrooms. Without additional Bureau appropriations, Greene bluntly told General

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[377] R. M. Manly to R. Stone, 7 September 1868, LS, Ibid.

[378] R. Stone to O. Brown, 4 September 1868, ULR, Ibid; Stone to Manly, 1 September 1868, ULR, Ibid.

Brown, the Board had no choice but to shutter the schools temporarily. Such a move, Greene said, promised to cause "injury to the schools and the system."[379] Major Stone told Manly that the Board of Education was reluctant to "make further demands on the city treasury"; thus the only avenue open to keep black schools from languishing was for the Bureau to step forward with one thousand dollars to "aid in fitting" the buildings. "I respectfully submit that it is for the best interests of the colored race here and I candidly believe it will be for the interest of the Bureau to render this assistance," Stone wrote.[380] Although Manly was eager to help, the Bureau declined his request citing more pressing needs in other parts of the state. In justifying the decision, Manly pointed out that given the "limited funds at the disposal of the Bureau" it was impracticable "to grant the request without grave injustice" to areas in which "the freedmen had few school advantages" when compared to Petersburg.[381]

The Bureau's inability to devote more resources to the struggling black schools in Petersburg threatened their survival. Nonetheless, after weeks of tortuous negotiations and false starts Petersburg became the first city in post-Civil War Virginia to establish a free school system for both races. The *Petersburg Index* boasted this fact and extolled the schools for expanding educational opportunities "to all classes, . . . rich and poor, . . . on

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[379] R. G. Greene to O. Brown, 25 November 1868, ULR, Ibid.

[380] R. Stone to R. M. Manly, 1 December 1868, ULR, Ibid.

[381] R. M. Manly to R. Stone, 3 December 1868, LS, Ibid; R. M. Manly to R. Stone, 30 November 1868, Ibid.

terms of perfect equality."[382] Well not exactly. As seen from the correspondence from Greene and Stone, the city did support black schools, yet the buildings were woefully lacking in general upkeep. Yes, the city had endorsed the creation of separate schools for the freedpeople, but the commitment from political and civic leaders to allocate an equal amount of resources to white and black education was ambiguous at best. All that mattered to city leaders was that the Bureau and northern educators no longer had direct oversight over the management of black education. Local whites held the purse strings and controlled education policy, just as they had prior to the civil war.

About the same time Petersburg politicos were debating the merits of public schools, Richmond city officials engaged in their own tug-of-war between advocates and critics of free schools. While the arguments for and against covered similar territory, the outcome in Richmond differed from Petersburg in one important respect: northern teachers and educators played a more active role in Richmond during the formative years of the new public school system than in Petersburg. By the time the city politicians began to debate the issue, Andrew Washburn, who had been instrumental in creating a city-wide network of schools for white students, received an appointment from General Schofield to serve on the Common Council. It was Washburn – a Massachusetts educator – who first introduced the resolution calling for a select committee to investigate the expediency of establishing free public schools for white and black students. Washburn served on the committee and was the one who, on June 26, 1868, presented a report to the full Council recommending the city take immediate steps to adopt such a system. The outline called for

[382] *Petersburg Daily Index*, 5 October 1868.

an initial appropriation of thirty thousand dollars to cover teacher salaries, rent on school buildings, and general maintenance. Several council members expressed concerns about the size of the appropriation, calling it "an extraordinary expense" for the city to incur. Following a lively debate, the Council adopted the general outline but referred the matter back to the special committee with instructions to address concerns raised by skeptical lawmakers. The amount of the proposed appropriation also caught the attention of General Stoneman, commander of the 1st military district in Virginia, who agreed a closer examination of the funding plan was necessary before moving forward. Several days later, before a formal ordinance had been submitted and over the objections of several members, the Common Council elected Washburn as Superintendent of Schools. Efforts to implement a public school system moved apace.[383]

It appears Washburn hoped he could push the measure through the Common Council without serious debate and before any serious public opposition surfaced. In this he miscalculated. Reaction to the proposed school plan was swift and pejorative. The *Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner* fired the first salvo, accusing Washburn and his band of "nefarious raiding carpetbaggers" of duplicity. Washburn was plotting to exercise "complete and autocratic" power over the city treasury for the sole purpose of importing "Vermont 'school-marms' in green spectacles, and of Massachusetts pedagogues of the nasal and codfish type," the paper declared. Had General Stoneman not intervened, the editor asserted, public money would have been "invested in a damaged lot of Yankee

[383] *Richmond City Council Minutes*, 12, 26 June 1868, 1, 7 July 1868, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 8 July 1868.

ignoramuses . . . and in a ship load of incendiary spelling books . . . and cartloads of mendacious and libelous histories of the late war." Equally alarming to the paper was that Washburn's depredation of the city treasury diverted money away from aiding indigent women and children, manifesting his lack of concern for destitute white Richmonders. "How many poor widow and orphans would have wept and suffered the agony of want if the voracious 'schoolmarms' had been escorted to the treasury and politely invited by the noble Washburn to 'help themselves' to the money which has been allocated for 'rebel' widows and orphans."[384] Here the editor hit a propaganda home run. Nothing was more effective at arousing public outrage than accusing northern "carpetbaggers" of lining their pockets with local tax dollars at the expense of dependent southern women and children. This strategy not only reflected the paper's willingness to use demagoguery as a tool to sway popular opinion, but was also designed to conspicuously point out the dangers of allowing northerners unbridled access to city funds.

What offended the paper more than anything else, however, was the thought of "Yankee" teachers invading the city treasury for the purpose of instructing Richmond's children. Once Washburn grabbed control, the *Enquirer* warned, "the mosquito from Maine" would encourage "educational Ichabods" across New England to "pack their black carpet-bags" and head to Richmond. The editor shivered to think of the consequences: "A cloud of unemployed carpet-baggers and 'school marms' . . . will flock in like hungry cormorants and gulls around a 'rest of mackerel' to snap up the white fund." Declaring

[384] *Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner*, 9 July 1868.

Washburn's actions made him unfit to be "entrusted with the protection of the interests" of Richmond property owners, the paper demanded the Common Council remove him; if they refused, at the very least, the editor suggested General Stoneman "detail a guard for the city treasury."[385]

Undeterred by the *Enquirer's* libelous attack, Washburn, on July 14, submitted the school ordinance before the full Council. His plan called for creating a Board of Education composed of five members – the Mayor, a Superintendent of Education, and three Richmond citizens – whose primary responsibilities included procuring "suitable schoolrooms," interviewing, hiring, and fixing the salaries of teachers, and establishing "rules and regulations . . . as they may deem necessary." Washburn offered a spirited defense of the ordinance arguing now was the time for Richmond to assume the responsibility for eradicating widespread ignorance that gripped large numbers of children in the city. Although northern munificence had accomplished a great deal in expanding schools to white and black children, he acknowledged financial constraints no longer permitted the societies to act alone. What northern associations looked for, then, was cooperation from the city to further education opportunities for Richmond's youth. During the ensuing debate Councilman MacFarland conceded the ordinance had merit, but in his view, "there were other more pressing wants soliciting our attention."[386]

More alarming to the Councilman was section four of the provision calling for integrated schools. "This innovation," MacFarland cautioned, "was dangerous." He

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[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid, 15 July 1868.

recommended revising the offensive section to read: "That the public schools herein provided for shall be kept separate and apart for white and colored children, and that the two races shall not be admitted or educated in the same school." Sensing the integration provision was a potential deal-breaker, Washburn backpedaled and informed "the Council it was not the intention to have mixed schools." With this admission, the Common Council approved MacFarland's amendment. After several hours of debate, however, it was apparent that without further revisions, the ordinance would not pass. Several councilmen, who pointed out that the proposal contained some legal flaws, "insisted upon the postponement" of the measure, arguing they needed more time to consider "so important a matter." By a 13 to 2 vote, the Common Council moved to have the ordinance "laid upon the table" for later consideration, effectively killing the measure. This action drew an immediate condemnation from Washburn who warned that "further delay would be ruinous" to the cause.[387]

Following the heated discussions in Council chambers Richmond's press resumed their vituperative attacks against Washburn. Rives Pollard, editor of the *Southern Opinion*, vilified the Massachusetts educator for his "impudent aspersions upon the intelligence of Richmond and Virginia," an insult "for which somebody should have slapped his jaws."[388] The *Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner* condemned Washburn's election as Superintendent of Schools, arguing his appointment was merely a power grab designed to preclude southerners from holding teaching positions in the schools. "We are outraged that

[387] Ibid.

[388] *Southern Opinion*, 16, 18 July 1868.

the great cause of education should be used as a cloak to cover the designs of men with a canine appetite for office . . . . We object to the control of this important subject being taken out of our hands by greedy adventurers." Allow Washburn and his "impecunious squatters" to gain control of the city treasury to "pay the salaries of Yankee teachers, and no impoverished Southern lady or maimed confederate soldier will ever be permitted to teach the youth of the South," the editor declared.[389]

The public relations blitz had the desired effect. Unable to overcome objections from the vocal opposition on the Common Council and the Richmond press, Washburn reluctantly conceded defeat. For Manly, the sudden turn of events created logistical problems. In anticipation of the ordinance passing, which included a provision authorizing the city to set aside money for payment of northern teachers' salaries, Manly had instructed northern societies to budget less for the upcoming school year. Now with the public school system on hold, Manly frantically wrote a series of letters imploring teachers and philanthropic leaders to secure additional funding. "The newspapers [have] made furious war upon the measure and . . . there is no prospect of help" from the city, he wrote to Mattie Birge. "In this light what are your prospects? What is the most you can expect from your auxiliary?"[390] To Zelma Renne he wrote, "our expectations of help from the city are likely to fail . . . Please tell me how much can be raised for you at home, and if there is a deficiency I will see what can be done about it. I hope there is no deficiency."[391] In other

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[389] *Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner*, 17 July 1868.

[390] R. M. Manly to Mattie Birge, 18 August 1868, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

[391] R. M. Manly to Zelma Renne, 15 August 1868, Ibid.

correspondence Manly suggested that the outcome of the upcoming state and presidential elections would directly impact whether resurrecting the ordinance at some point down the road was possible. “The necessity of holding our position here in full force until after the elections . . . is most imperative,” he declared, “and then if Grant is elected we can take care of ourselves; if he is not we shall have to get out of here.”[392] In a letter to Ellen Collins, Manly opined, “if Grant is elected . . . we shall have the city council in our own hands and will work our own sweet (righteous) will and help the schools.”[393]

Another eleven months passed before the Common Council reconsidered the public school ordinance. During the interregnum Grant had been elected, some new members joined the Council, and Washburn had resigned his seat to take a position as clerk in the Hastings Court, removing a potential obstacle and lightening rod for criticism.[394] Thus, not only had the raw emotions from the earlier acrimonious debate subsided, but by the spring of 1869 Manly sensed a noticeable shift in public opinion. “The social Bourbonism which opposes public education is breaking down,” Manly wrote to Bureau headquarters. Black schools continued to elicit grudging respect from the public; as evidence of this change in public sentiment, Manly noticed that “violence to schoolhouses, insults to the teachers, and ribald jests in the newspaper press” had practically disappeared. Furthermore, white support for schools operated by the Soldiers Memorial Society remained strong and had “done much to reconcile the people to the introduction of the public school system,” Manly

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[392] R. M. Manly to J. R. Heaves, 15 August 1868, Ibid.

[393] R. M. Manly to Ellen Collins, 12 August 1868, Ibid.

[394] *Richmond City Council Minutes*, 9 February 1869.

opined.[395] It seems probable, then, that the shift in the political landscape and public opinion caused the Council to move forward. Consequently, on June 9, 1869 Richmond became the second major city in post-civil war Virginia, behind Petersburg, to establish a system of free public schools for both races.[396]

Most of the provisions from the original ordinance debated a year earlier remained intact, including the stipulation "that the public schools herein provided for shall be kept separate and apart for white and colored children."[397] Financing for the new system was a collective effort involving the city, the Freedmen's Bureau, benevolent societies and the Peabody Fund. The city appropriated fifteen thousand dollars, which included paying one-half of the teacher salaries; northern associations picked up the other half and also selected teachers for the black schools. The Bureau committed four thousand dollars to pay rents on school buildings, while the Peabody Fund donated two thousand dollars. In all, the city expected to employ sixty teachers for nearly three thousand students, resulting in an average class size of fifty pupils. The seven man Board of Education consisted of Manly, Washburn, Mayor Cahoon, S. H. James, an agent with the New York Society of Friends, and three Richmond residents. Manly expressed measured respect for the three Virginians. He described them as "conservative in politics but temperate, conciliatory gentlemen, full

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[395] R. M. Manly to O. O. Howard, 10 July 1869, *Virginia Schools Reports for the six-months ending 30 June 1869*, BRFAL-National.

[396] *Richmond City Council Minutes*, 9 June 1869.

[397] *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Richmond* (Richmond: Common Council of the City of Richmond, 1869), 250-251.

believers in the Northern system of education and deeply interested and earnest to make that system a success in this city." Although comprehensive, Manly and the other Board members discerned that wealthier citizens still looked upon public schools with askance. And so, to induce parents of all classes to enroll their children in free schools, the Board approved a regulation to set "the grade of instruction . . . equal to that of the private schools" in the city.[398]

By the end of 1869, Richmond and Petersburg stood alone as the only municipalities in Virginia boasting established public schools for both races. Manly described the systems as "imperfect and incomplete," yet they were in the forefront compared to many other southern states. Although the sentiment among white southerners towards education for the white and black masses had improved somewhat, and despite the fact that state constitutions under the reconstruction governments contained provisions authorizing the creation of public schools, most legislatures, including Virginia's, still had not drafted laws to organize state funded school systems.[399] It seems clear that black enthusiasm for education, efforts by Manly and northern benevolent societies to encourage schools for the white masses, and sagacious political maneuvering, led the Richmond and Petersburg city governments to create an education system for all classes, albeit in

[398] R. M. Manly to E. Cheney, 20 July 1869, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU; E. Cheney to R. M. Manly, 5 August 1869, ULR, Ibid.

[399] Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 57-77; Alvord, *9th Semi-Annual School Report, January 1, 1870*, 4-59; R. M. Manly to Garrick Mallory, 1 February 1870, LS, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

segregated schools. Nevertheless, it was an important first step towards cementing the foundation for black and white public education in the South.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

"The future has never looked so hopeful for the poor and ignorant of both races in Virginia as at the present time." Ralza Manly made this remark in July 1869, a few weeks after the Richmond City Council passed the school ordinance. It reflected his unbridled optimism about the future of public education in Virginia. "It is almost impossible to estimate the good already accomplished by the Bureau and the co-operating societies," he wrote. Not only had the schools "been the principal cause of the hopefulness and patience" among the black community, but also their presence had a "powerful reflex influence upon the white population," with many, especially the lower classes, viewing education as the only hope to escape poverty and perpetual ignorance.[400]

However, given the capriciousness of civic leaders' commitment towards public schools in general and black education specifically, Manly did not rest on his laurels. Even though Virginia's new constitution included a provision for free public education, he was well aware many native whites remained lukewarm to the idea. Black schools in Petersburg continued to receive assistance from the Bureau in the form of monthly rent payments. In Richmond, the Bureau provided direct aid to black schools while the New

[400] Alvord, *Eighth Semi-Annual Report, July 1, 1869*, 24.

England Freedmen's Aid Society donated money and teachers. These activities suggested that getting political leaders to allocate large sums of money to build school houses and convincing whites to serve as teachers in black schools was improbable. "The low condition of the public finances will . . . forbid liberal expenditures for some years," Manly warned. At the same time "the prejudice against a respectable white Virginian's teaching colored schools is passing away slowly, very slowly." Thus, Manly was adamant that aid from the national government and benevolent organizations must continue: "The continued co-operation of charitable societies, and aid from the general government, is a pressing necessity, and will be gratefully received by nearly all classes of people. While money is so much wanted, mind and heart are also equally needed. The personal intervention, advice, and assistance of friends, who know what is to be done, and how to do it, and who labor, *con amore*, are more valuable, more indispensable even than money." [401] Because changing public sentiment was an arduous and lengthy endeavor, Manly, in his role as education superintendent, devoted much of his energy over the next year working to make improvements to the public school system in Richmond as well as lobbying for a larger normal school to trains blacks to become teachers.

In the spring of 1870 Manly wrote Commissioner Howard requesting the Bureau appropriate funds for the construction of a new "colored" normal and high school in Richmond, to be located on 12th Street between Clay and Leigh. Some benevolent society leaders questioned the practicality of building a new school, particularly when the existing

[401] Alvord, *Ninth Semi-Annual Report, January 1, 1870*, 15-16.

facility was only three years old and located in a prime area of the city.[402] In answering the skeptics Manly pointed to the fledging public schools in which city leaders, nearly a year after launching the system, had failed to erect modern buildings for both white and black students. In his view constructing a first rate normal school would not only "invite public attention and shape public opinion," but also "compel the authorities to provide as good for the whites, and so elevate the whole system of school-house architecture." In other words, he wanted to use the new facility to nudge the city from dragging its feet and begin the process of erecting modern school buildings. He cited unsatisfactory physical conditions as one of the main reasons for the negative public sentiment and why men and women were reluctant to enter the teaching profession: "In a state where teaching is esteemed a humble profession at best and teaching in colored schools contemptible – and where public free schools are 'looked down on,' good school-houses will bring great relief and support to teachers and to the system." Moreover, Manly wanted to expand the classical curriculum so that black students could better prepare themselves for possible admission to schools of higher learning, such as Howard University, Hampton and Tuskegee.[403]

Construction of the new normal school was one of the last major initiatives Manly oversaw as education superintendent. 1870 was the final year in the life of the Freedmen's Bureau education division, a situation Manly called "a bitter disappointment." He lamented the Bureau's closing and sympathized with blacks who felt the federal government was

[402] Sarah Lane to R.M. Manly, 12 May 1870, BRFAL-VA-EDU; Minutes of the Richmond Educational Association, 23 April 1870, Manly Collection.

[403] R. M. Manly to O. O. Howard, 24 March 1870, BRFAL-VA-EDU.

abandoning them at exactly the wrong time: "It is not for me to distribute the responsibility for the present condition of things by which the freedmen lose the scanty educational opportunities they have for a short time enjoyed, while there is not immediate prospect of any general or efficient provision being made by the state; but I may safely agree with the colored people, that they are to suffer a grievous wrong for which they, at least, are not responsible."[404] Needless to say Manly did not agree with the decision to scuttle the Bureau's education work.

Before his appointment expired on August 31, Manly made sure the Richmond Educational Association obtained title to the new normal school building as well as the Navy Hill school complex on Duvall Street. Although the city was responsible for providing public schools to the freedpeople, Manly was unwilling to relinquish teacher training to local governments because he was skeptical of their commitment to black education. Action by the Virginia legislature confirmed his suspicions. When lawmakers, in 1871, appropriated $300,000 in support of public education across the state, they cited the inability to hire qualified black teachers and the reluctance of local whites to teach black students as reasons for allocating fewer dollars towards black schools. An alternative was to recruit teachers from outside the state, but as the *Freedmen's Record* pointed out, "Both hostile feeling and regard for economy prevent the employment of Northern teachers."[405] Consequently, normal schools under the tutelage of northern benefactors were the only reliable mechanism available to produce qualified black teachers. Indeed, Bessie

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[404] Alvord, *Tenth Semi-Annual Report, July 1, 1870*, 13-14.

[405] "Report of the Teacher's Committee," in *FR*, 5 (April 1871): 106.

Canedy, who served as principal of the Richmond normal school, reported in 1871 that nearly one dozen former students had secured teaching positions in both public and private schools across the state.[406]

Canedy's long tenure in Richmond and her association with the normal school lasted until the spring of 1872. That year her sponsor, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, ended their partnership with the city and turned over the responsibility of teaching of black students in the public schools to local officials. At the same time, Manly, who served as secretary of the Richmond Educational Association, assumed the role of principal at the normal school. The former New England educator remained active in the Richmond community serving on the city school board and the Richmond City Council. In 1885, Manly transferred the Richmond Normal School to the city, where it officially became part of public school system. He and his wife Mary relocated to Connecticut after accepting faculty positions in the Department of Rhetoric and Composition at the all-female Wellesley College. At the time Ralza Manly was the only male faculty member. After seven years of teaching and in declining health Manly moved to Georgia hoping that a more temperate climate would be beneficial. Three years later, in 1895, he and his family relocated to San Diego where, for a brief time, Manly served on the San Diego school board. It was in California that this visionary and pioneer of black education died on September 16, 1897.[407]

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[406] Letter from Bessie Canedy, 4 March 1871, in *FR* 5 (April 1871): 111.

[407] Who was Who – Biographical Sketch of Rev. Ralza Manly, Manly Collection, 5; Richmond City Council Minutes, 15 May 1871; "Report of the Teachers Committee," in *FR* 5 (April 1872): 118.

The legacy of Manly's stewardship and the work of the Freedmen's Bureau education division are fraught with contradictions. On the one hand, despite shifting political winds, financial challenges, and the tenacious opposition from local whites determined to make life miserable for the Yankee "occupiers," Manly, in partnership with northern aid societies and hundreds of teacher volunteers, laid the foundation for black education in Richmond and Petersburg. Braving hostile conditions these altruistic philanthropists gave thousands of freed slaves the chance to attend school, a feat many skeptics at the time thought impossible. Equally noteworthy was the creation of a free public school system for both races. As W. E. B. DuBois proclaimed, education was the Bureau's greatest contribution: "The greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau lay in the planting of the free school among the Negroes, and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South."[408] Most historians, even those critical of the Bureau, echoed DuBois's sentiment.[409] Of course, this success was due in large measure to the insatiable thirst black Americans had for education. After centuries of involuntary servitude freedpeople saw schooling as the true meaning of freedom; they demanded access to education as a means to achieve intellectual uplift and self-reliance, rights denied to them under slavery.

At the same time, teaching opened the door for women to become more active in the work of benevolence. Their contributions, whether as teachers or as officers in the

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[408] DuBois, *The Soles of Black Men*, 385.

[409] For example, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 144; Cimbala, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, xxvii; Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, 96; John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction*

various aid societies, served notice that women were no longer willing to accept ancillary roles. They demanded an equal voice. In some respects their efforts in the black education movement during Reconstruction fostered an inexorable growth in women influencing the future strategy and organizational structure of charitable work, which was evident during the Progressive era thirty years later.

While laudable, these success stories and achievements masked some of the more unsavory aspects of black education, specifically how northern paternalism precluded freedpeople from achieving a true sense of equality. School textbooks contained demeaning descriptions of blacks and bureau officials, teachers, and aid societies questioned the moral rectitude and abilities of former slaves. A more glaring illustration was the fact that the public school systems in Richmond and Petersburg remained segregated, offering little hope blacks would receive equal attention from school boards dominated by southern whites. Moreover, few blacks occupied key administrative positions. For example, although Manly diligently worked to establish the Richmond Normal School, no black served on the board of trustees of the Richmond Educational Association until the mid-1870's.

Nevertheless, although it was by no means perfect, taken within context of the post-Civil War South it is important to remember the Freedmen's Bureau represented the best hope for freed slaves. What was the alternative? Without the Bureau bitter southerners would certainly not have taken the initiative, at least immediately, to educate

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After the Civil War, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 36; Bentley, *History of the Freedmen's Bureau*, 184; Butchart, *Northern Schools*, 114.

freedpeople and schools for blacks would have remained a long-term dream. A good illustration to understand the lasting influence of Ralza Manly and the Bureau schools in Central Virginia is to look at the advent of normal education. Several hundred black students graduated from the Richmond Normal School during and after Reconstruction, many becoming teachers in Richmond and other areas of Virginia. Some like Rosa D. Bowser became leaders in the black community, serving in numerous civic organizations. Her work as an educator spanned over two decades, but it was her conspicuous involvement in trying to improve the lives of black people that she made her most important contributions. She founded the Virginia Woman's League, served as President of the Richmond Mother's Club and as a member of the Executive Board of the Southern Federation of Colored Women. Her leadership as Chairwoman of the Executive Board of the Women's Educational and Missionary Association of Virginia and President of the Women's Department of the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia illustrated the critical role black women had in bringing to the forefront issues important to the black community.[410] As historian Glenda Gilmore has pointed out in her work on gender and race in Jim Crow North Carolina, many educated and eloquent black women served as "ambassadors to the white power structure."[411] The work of Bowser and countless others demonstrate how blacks used the education they received in the Freedmen's Bureau schools to become spokespersons for the black community.

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[410] D.W. Culp, ed., *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (Atlanta: J.L. Nichols & Co., 1902), 177.

[411] Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xix.

Although its work was temporary the Freedmen's Bureau left an indelible mark on the future of black Americans. When Congress created the Bureau it was entering un-chartered waters. Nothing in the nation's history had prepared the federal government for the sudden emancipation of four million ex-slaves. There were no contingency plans sitting on a shelf to guide Manly and other Bureau officials. There were no tested solutions for the enormous social transformation taking place in American society. As historian James McPherson observed: "Congress and the army and the Freedmen's Bureau were groping in the dark."[412] Were there deficiencies? Absolutely. While DuBois praised the Bureau for securing the recognition of blacks as citizens, he acknowledged the agency had weaknesses: "On the other hand, it failed to begin the establishment of good-will between ex-masters and freedmen [and] to guard its work wholly from paternalistic methods which discouraged self-reliance. . . . Its successes were the result of hard work . . . and the eager striving of black men. Its failures were the result of bad local agents, the inherent difficulties of the work, and national neglect."[413] Needless to say, the vast educational program launched by the Bureau and supported by northern benevolent associations was imperfect. Yet, despite its structural limitations when considering the excruciating conditions and the amount of sweat, toil and financial resources devoted to the black education movement, no one can doubt the commitment and fortitude exhibited by Washington, Bureau agents, and the hundreds of philanthropic volunteers. While the Bureau may have fallen short in many areas, including education, according to one

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[412] James McPherson, "Afterward," in Cimbala, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, 346.

[413] DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 387.

historian the agency still "accomplished much during Reconstruction. . . . It demonstrated that government could (and would) act."[414]

[414] Cimbala, "Introduction," *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, xxx.

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Appendices

Appendix A

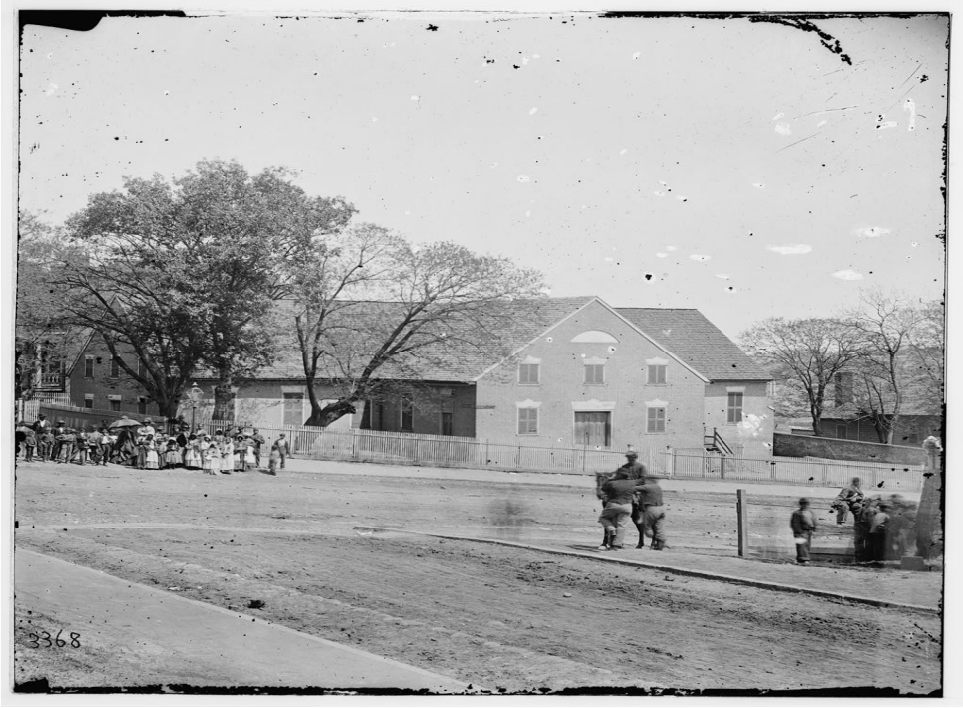
Illustrations and Photographs

The Freedmen's Union Industrial School. Richmond, VA, 1866. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

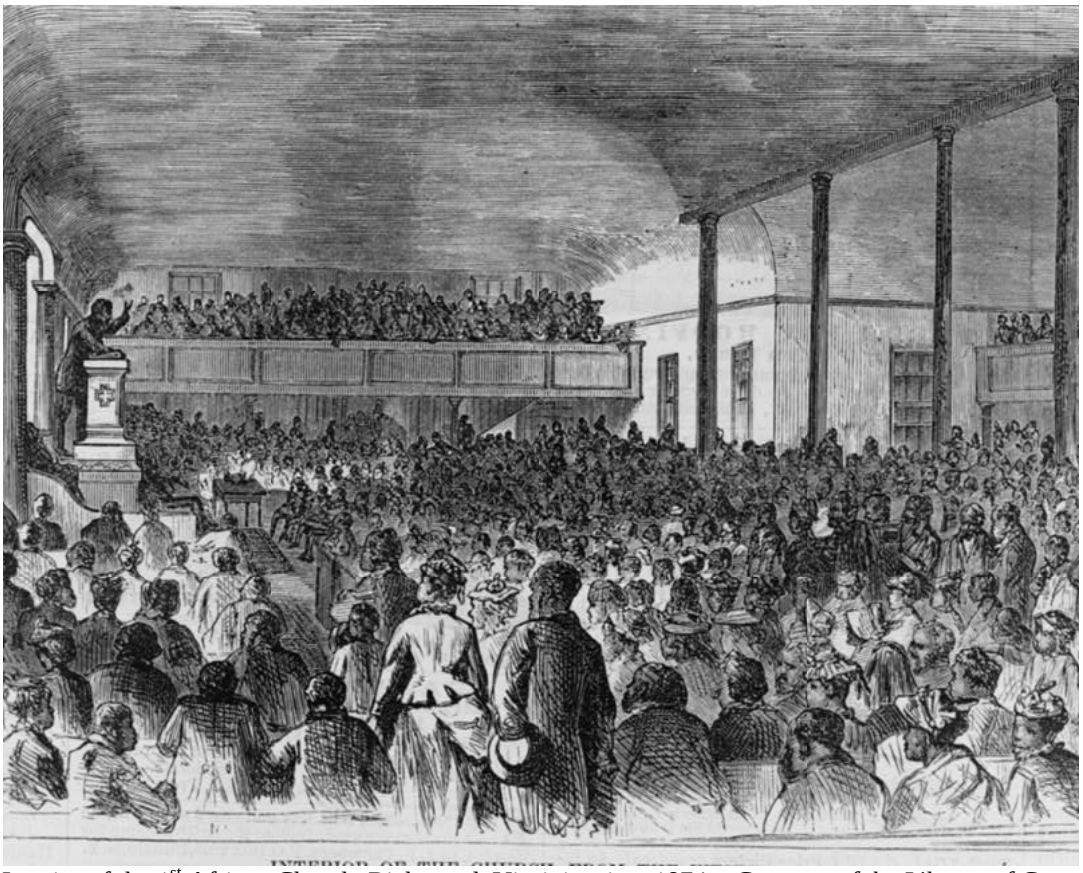
Freedpeople by a canal. Richmond, Virginia, 1866. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

The Cook sisters' classroom for blacks. Richmond, Virginia, 1866. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Many freedpeople schools were held in churches. This sketch is of St. Phillips Church in Richmond, Virginia, 1867. *Courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society.*

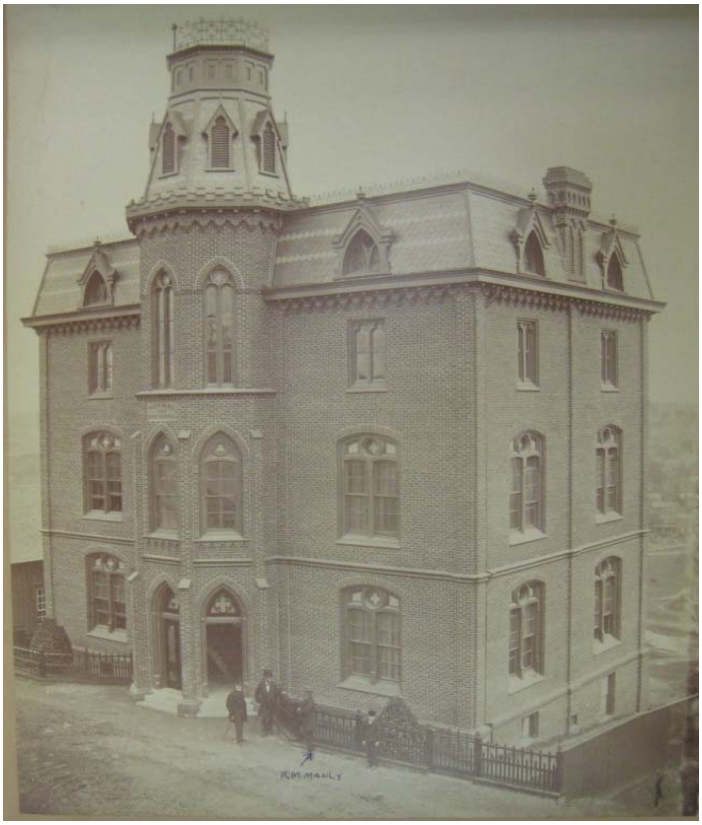


One of the first Freedmen schools established in Richmond was at the 1st African Church, circa 1865. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress*



Interior of the 1st African Church, Richmond, Virginia, circa 1874 – *Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

Ralza Morse Manly, Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent of Education in Virginia, circa 1865. *Courtesy of Wesleyan University.*



Richmond Colored Normal & High School, circa 1868-1870. *Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library.*

Ralza Morse Manly, circa 1872. *Courtesy of Bill Griffing.*

Manly Family, Dalton, GA. Christmas, 1893. Ralza Manly is in the second row, third from the left. His wife, Mary, is standing to his right. *Courtesy of Wesleyan University.*

VITA

Scott Britton Hansen was born on March 4, 1960 in Utica, New York; he is an American citizen. In 1978 he graduated from Lake Brantley High School in Longwood, Florida. He received his Bachelor of Arts in History from Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland, in 1982. As a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University, the Department of History awarded him the James Tice Moore Graduate Essay Award three times. He has worked in the financial services industry for the past twenty-five years and currently resides in Richmond, Virginia.