



# The Last Atlantic Revolution: Reconstruction and the Struggle for Democracy in the Americas, 1861-1912

## Citation

Payne, Samantha. 2022. The Last Atlantic Revolution: Reconstruction and the Struggle for Democracy in the Americas, 1861-1912. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

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May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

The Last Atlantic Revolution:  
Reconstruction and the Struggle for Democracy in the Americas, 1861-1912

A dissertation presented  
by  
Samantha Payne  
to  
The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the subject of  
History

Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
May 2022

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Abstract

**The Last Atlantic Revolution:**

**Reconstruction and the Struggle for Democracy in the Americas, 1861-1912**

This dissertation explores the Atlantic history of Reconstruction in Cuba, Brazil and the United States, the last three slaveholding societies in the Atlantic World. Drawing on archival research in three languages, it makes two key arguments. First, it argues that U.S. Reconstruction precipitated a revolutionary crisis, during which the constitutional rules that had protected slavery since the Haitian Revolution began to collapse, and the rules of political inclusion and exclusion could be re-written across the Atlantic World. Second, it argues that white elites resolved this crisis by constructing a new international order grounded on the principle of Black exclusion from democratic politics. My dissertation uses a transnational methodology to challenge two longstanding assumptions in comparative history: first, that a racist legal system emerged in the U.S. after emancipation, but not in Latin America; and second, that these distinct political regimes developed in isolation from one another, within two American “systems.” This literature has overlooked the ways that transnational conversations and international collaboration shaped the politics of reconstruction in both the U.S. and Latin America. By tracing the Atlantic counterrevolution that followed emancipation, my dissertation reveals how race-based legal discrimination emerged across the hemisphere.

*To Tim*

*Together we see farther and more clearly*

“The unending tragedy of Reconstruction is the utter inability of  
the American mind to grasp its real significance,  
its national and *world-wide implications*.”

W.E.B. Du Bois

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## Acknowledgements

When I started this project, several professors told me I could not finish it. Some warned me very seriously that it was a bad idea and others treated it as a joke. I want to thank my advisor, Sven Beckert, who believed in me. He encouraged me to think broadly and take intellectual risks. His enthusiasm and support buoyed me at many difficult moments and ultimately helped me cross the finish line. Alejandro de la Fuente was the person who first convinced me to study Latin American history. He is a master of the Socratic method and I still think of the long silences during our field meetings as among the most intellectually productive moments I have had in graduate school. Sidney Chalhoub has been a model teacher, a generous scholar, and a true comrade. He spent countless hours talking to me about Brazilian history when I knew next to nothing about it and called me late at night to help coordinate strike actions. I thank my lucky stars he came to Harvard just before I did. Erez Manela asked hard questions and offered important encouragement during my final years in graduate school. I thank him for his commitment to mentoring graduate students, even those who are not his own. Vincent Brown and Manisha Sinha both provided incisive criticism of the final draft. Walter Johnson, although we haven't spoken in years, remains the person I am always arguing with inside my head.

This project has benefitted enormously from the labor of scholars and archivists all over the world. First, I want to thank the staff at the Instituto Histórico, who provided the institutional affiliation I needed to conduct research in Cuba. Yoel Cordoví welcomed me to Cuba and Belquis Quesada helped me get the necessary paperwork to access the archives (no mean feat when you're dealing with the Cuban government). Juana Becquer became my friend and ally in the Archivo Nacional and made it possible for me to complete far more research there than I had ever dreamed. Tomás Fernández Robaina shared his hidden copies of *Previsión* with me, just

when I was about to despair of ever finding a legible version. David Domínguez Cabrera has been a true friend since we first met in the Biblioteca Nacional. He spent many hours helping me identify promising sources and encouraging me to eat healthier lunches (no more sad avocado on spaghetti). I was also exceptionally lucky to cross paths with Lauren Nareau and Christopher Daley in Havana. Their love for the city was infectious and they made my time in Cuba fun.

Before I travelled to Brazil I benefited enormously from the generosity of Israel Ozanam, who became my virtual Portuguese conversation partner and helped me advance past the level of just talking about our cats. Louise de Mello Cardoso helped me find safe housing in Rio de Janeiro. The archivist Frederico Ferreira kindly opened the Arquivo Histórico de Itamaraty for me despite the fact that it was closed for construction—an act of generosity that truly saved this project. In São Paulo, Tâmis Parron, Rafael Marquese, Alain El Youssef, and Marcelo Ferraro changed the way I think about history and enabled me to create a new conceptual framework for this dissertation. I remain convinced that it is worth learning Portuguese just to read their work. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Marcelo, who has read every chapter of this dissertation at least twice. Our continuing debates on “coffee and slavery” have become an essential part of my intellectual life.

Many other scholars read parts of this dissertation with tremendous care. Eric Foner commented on almost every page of my prospectus and the first chapter of my dissertation. He reminded me at a critical moment that Reconstruction was not only a “labor revolution” but a democratic one. I hope this work reflects how much I have taken that criticism to heart. Marial Iglesias Utset ripped apart my fifth chapter in the most productive way imaginable. Gabriel Winant gave me some of the best comments I can remember receiving and encouraged me to submit my work to *Past and Present*. Frederick Cooper pushed me to explain why it took

another twenty years for emancipation to unfold in Cuba and Brazil after the end of the U.S. Civil War. The organizers and participants of the 2019 *re:work* Summer Academy on Unfree Labor—especially Emiliano Travieso and Jéssyka Sâmia Ladislau Pereira Costa—also deserve my special thanks. That conference will always hold an important place in my heart as an example of what academia can be like at its very best.

The hardest thank you to write in many ways is to my brilliant friends from graduate school. My love for them runs so deep and it has sustained me for so long. Harvard is a brutal institution, but my time here is redeemed by them. First, I thank my cohort: James Almeida, Kelly Brignac, Chloe Bordewich, Max Botstein, Belle Cheves, Henry Gruber, Reed Knappe, Tsitsi Mangosho, Eric Nemerich, Rafi Stern, Georgia Whitaker, and Azmar Williams—all of you made me laugh at times when I would rather have cried. Chloe and Georgia, especially, have been pillars for me during the past seven years. I have also learned an enormous amount from Jake Anbinder, Wes Antell, Rudi Batzell, Aaron Bekemeyer, Jonathon Booth, Laura Correa Ochoa, Alicia DeMaio, Cary Aileen García Yero, Cristina Groeger, Marcella Hayes, Brandon Mancilla, Kristin Oberiano, Jake Ransohoff, Simon Sun, Rachel Steely, Erica Sterling, and Corinne Wolfson. Jon and Corinne helped me survive the pandemic with (some of) my sanity intact. Cary and Laura have been marvelous critics and even better friends.

I am just as grateful to the staff in the Harvard History Department. If “Robinson Hall” were a TV show, Dan Bertwell would be its hero. He navigates maddening professional minefields for graduate students every day and somehow still always manages to find a kind word for everyone he meets. Robin Yun submitted quite possibly hundreds of letters of recommendation on my behalf; I would not have a job without her. Cory Paulson, Kimberly

O'Hagan, and Joshua Mejia make it possible for History students to get their PhDs. Finally, Clare Putnam brightened so many of my days—she truly makes Harvard a better place.

Before Harvard, there was William and Mary. Scott Nelson and Carol Sheriff gave me new ways of thinking about the world and convinced me that I wanted to become a historian. They have been wonderful mentors for nearly a decade, and they make me happy I am returning to a liberal arts institution. Logan Buckley, Rachel Lienesch, Elizabeth Pelletier, and Elana Urbach have helped me take ideas apart and put them back together again for nearly half my life now (or more). I am very grateful to them.

I have also been lucky to have several extra “parents” who helped me through my Ph.D. Lisa McNeill and Ed Senteio welcomed me into their home so many times in the last seven years that it ended up feeling like my own. I will always associate them both with a feeling of peace. Arely García Yero treated me like family from my first day in Cuba. She showed me where to buy eggs and taught me how to check when the good movies were on using *Granma*. I adored her. Losing her in 2019 was very painful. But I know she is resting in peace.

My family will be overjoyed to see me finish grad school. I thank my sister, Uma: I have never had another friend like her, and I never shall (and I wish we might always drive about together, like Nikolai and Natasha). My parents have born with me through many ups and downs and offered their unceasing support, in addition to critical cat-sitting services.

I realized I was falling in love with Tim Barker when he sent me an email about the origins of the capitalist world system on February 15, 2017. His passion, integrity, and boundless curiosity about the world have been a continuous source of inspiration to me for the past five years. Our conversations have shaped every page of this dissertation and his faith in me has made it possible to write it. For that I am endlessly grateful.

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## **Abbreviations**

|      |                                                           |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| ACD  | Annaes do Parlamento Brasileiro Camara dos Srs. Deputados |
| AS   | Annaes do Senado do Império do Brasil                     |
| AHN  | Archivo Histórico Nacional                                |
| AMAE | Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores              |
| ANC  | Archivo Nacional de Cuba                                  |
| AESP | Arquivo do Estado de São Paulo                            |
| AHI  | Arquivo Histórico de Itamaraty                            |
| ANRJ | Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro                        |
| BNMJ | Biblioteca Nacional de José Martí                         |
| BMA  | Biblioteca de Mario de Andrade                            |
| FRUS | Foreign Relations of the United States                    |
| LOC  | Library of Congress                                       |
| MHS  | Massachusetts Historical Society                          |
| NARA | National Archives and Records Administration              |
| PIC  | Partido Independiente de Color                            |
| RG   | Record Group                                              |
| SHC  | Southern Historical Collection                            |

## Maps

### Brazil



*“Carta da República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil.”*

*Showing the division of provinces in the Brazilian Republic in 1892.*

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

## Cuba

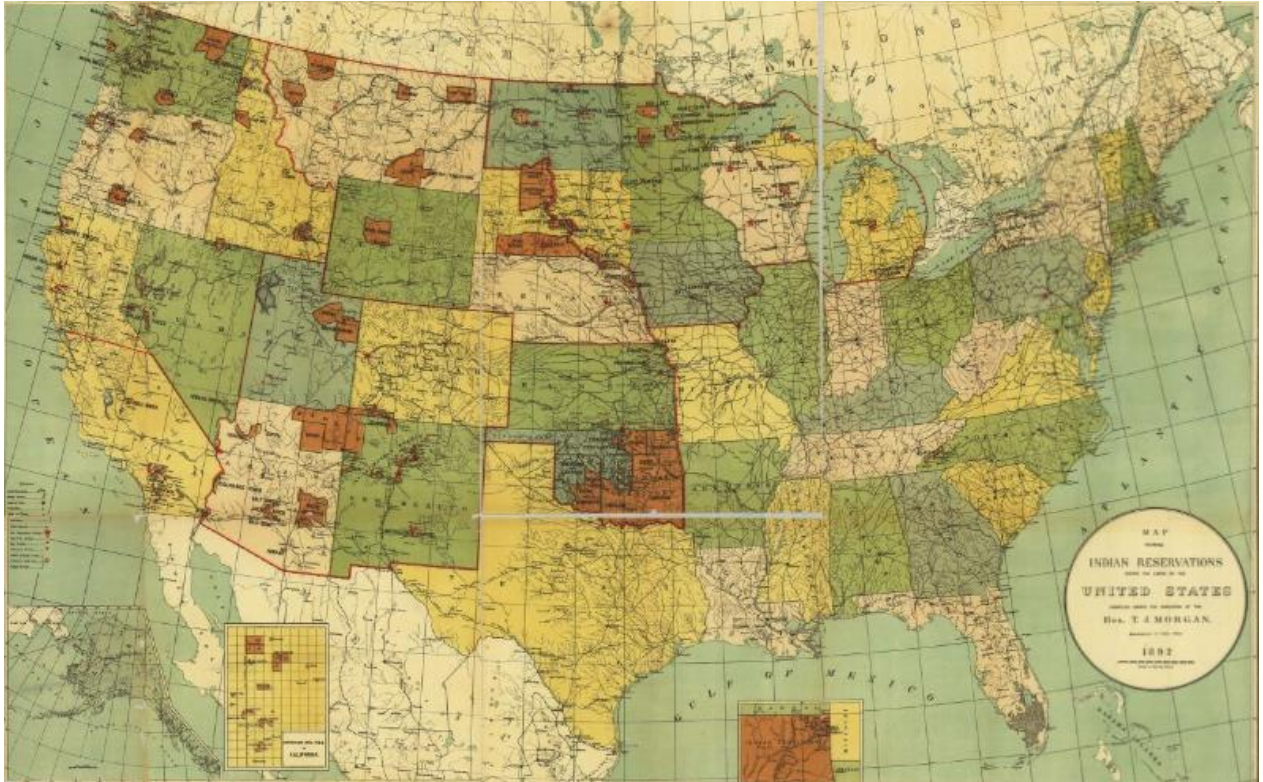


*“Rand, McNally & Co.’s indexed atlas of the world map of Cuba.”*

*Showing the division of provinces under the Spanish Empire in 1892.*

*Courtesy of the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, Harvard University.*

## The United States



*“Map of the United States.”*

*Showing the division of states and Indian reservations in 1892.*

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

## Introduction

On January 27, 1916, the Confederate veteran Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley donated a small collection of his father's books to an academic library in São Paulo. In a letter outlining the significance of the collection, he drew the librarians' attention to one volume of particular value: a first-edition copy of Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon's *Indigenous Races of the Earth*. Nott and Gliddon, he explained, were important scientists who devoted many years of "great and arduous work" to "this study of Ethnology."<sup>1</sup> Their research helped establish the field of craniometry, which offered the first objective proof that "Negros" were inherently inferior to whites.<sup>2</sup> Barnsley was proud of this book because his father had played a direct role in its publication. Nott and Gliddon "had spent all their fortunes" conducting research, he explained. When it came time for them to publish their results, they had approached several "merchants of New Orleans and Mobile," including his father, who was then a cotton commissioner working for Baring Brothers in Louisiana. Godfrey Barnsley had loaned the two scientists "ten thousand dollars" to help them "finish up." When the book was finally published in 1857, the Barnsley family was among the first to receive a copy.<sup>3</sup>

George Scarborough Barnsley treasured that book. In 1916, he could still vividly remember rescuing it from the ashes of his father's plantation in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. "Sherman's army passed through and over Woodlands," he recalled, "destroying

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<sup>1</sup> Southern Historical Collection (hereafter SHC), Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 35, "Comment on Indigenous Races of the Earth," 27 Jan. 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton & Company, 1981), 65-66, 101.

<sup>3</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 35, "Comment on Indigenous Races of the Earth," 27 Jan. 1916.

many things...but fortunately the library escaped much damage.”<sup>4</sup> Two years later, he brought the book with him when he and his brother Lucien left the United States. The brothers found life after slavery intolerable. Their former slaves refused to work and organized political meetings on their plantation.<sup>5</sup> Desperate to return to a nation where “the mastery of the white man will never be erased,” the young men chose to migrate to Brazil, which along with Cuba was one of the last slave societies in the hemisphere.<sup>6</sup> But they were frightened. Leaving the United States did not guarantee their escape from revolution. Since the start of the Civil War, enslaved people in Latin America had launched more than sixty violent insurrections directly inspired by U.S. emancipation.<sup>7</sup> Black people had begun to speak openly about democracy and land redistribution throughout the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately for the Barnsleys, they had allies scattered across the Atlantic World. When their ship was wrecked off the coast of Cuba, sympathetic slaveowners immediately rallied to their cause and pressured the Cuban government into providing the “refugees from political oppression” with every one of their “necessities and wants.”<sup>9</sup> With the support of the Cuban state, the brothers were able to make the last leg of their journey to Brazil.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley, 12 Dec 1867.

<sup>6</sup> For the Confederate view of Brazil as a white supremacist society, see James McFadden Gaston, *Hunting a Home in Brazil* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1867), 374.

<sup>7</sup> On Brazilian slave rebellions inspired by the U.S. Civil War, see Isadora Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation: Black Geopolitical Literacy and Anglo-American Abolitionism in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” (Ph.D. diss, Brown University, 2017), 16, 169.

<sup>8</sup> On the political aspirations of free people of color in the Caribbean during U.S. Reconstruction, see: Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), Madrid, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3489, Domingo Dulce to the Spanish Minister of Overseas Colonies, 16 Jan. 1867.

<sup>9</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 1, Folder 22, “A Letter Published in the Havana Papers,” undated.

In retrospect, Barnsley was thankful for his decision. He informed the Brazilian librarians that he had lived “a long life of prosperity” in São Paulo and had only returned to the United States for a short period after slavery was abolished in Brazil. He considered it a point of pride that he had “managed always to save these books” through each transatlantic journey. Now, his fondest wish was to see *Indigenous Races of the Earth* placed in a Brazilian library, where it would benefit “the fair, honest study of bright dear minds pursuing the torturous but secure path of Truth.”<sup>10</sup>

Barnsley cared so deeply about *Indigenous Races of the Earth* because it had guided his life’s work. Nott and Gliddon were two of the most important architects of white supremacist ideology in the nineteenth century. Their research helped white people envision a world in which Black people would be excluded from democracy because of their objective natural inferiority.<sup>11</sup> Barnsley had devoted his life to making that world a reality. When he and Lucien arrived in Brazil in 1867, they joined thousands of other *Confederados* in advocating for the disfranchisement of Afro-Brazilians.<sup>12</sup> These men believed that universal suffrage in the U.S. South had inaugurated a devastating race war that paralleled the Haitian Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Brazilian slaveowners agreed. They had already come to conceive of U.S. Reconstruction as the “Second Act” of the Haitian Revolution because of the massive slave rebellions it had inspired in their

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<sup>10</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 35, “Comment on Indigenous Races of the Earth,” 27 Jan. 1916.

<sup>11</sup> William H. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 12-25.

<sup>12</sup> The most prominent former Confederate to advocate for Black disfranchisement in Brazil was Henry Washington Hilliard, the U.S. ambassador to Brazil between 1877 and 1881. See chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley, 14 Sept. 1868.

lands.<sup>14</sup> As a result, they began devising new ways of disfranchising Black people that were not explicitly based on race. By 1881, they had implemented nationwide literacy tests that barred nearly all Afro-Brazilians from the polls.<sup>15</sup> *Confederados* like Barnsley thought this was a brilliant idea. When these men returned to the U.S. South in the 1880s, they helped extend the “Brazilian plan” for Black exclusion across the region.<sup>16</sup> By 1915, Barnsley was pleased to see that the antidemocratic movement he had helped forge was gaining traction across the globe.<sup>17</sup> For his white grandchildren, the future looked bright.<sup>18</sup>

*The Last Atlantic Revolution* explores the Atlantic history of Reconstruction in Cuba, Brazil and the United States, the last three slaveholding societies in the Atlantic World. Drawing

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<sup>14</sup> Francisco Antonio Brandão Jr., *A escravidão no Brasil precidida d’um artigo sobre agricultura e colonização no Maranhão* (Brussels: H. Thiry-Van Buggenhoudt, 1865), 44-45.

<sup>15</sup> José Murilo de Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras: a política imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ, 1988), 159; *A construção da ordem: a elite política imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980); and *A cidadania no Brasil: o longo caminho* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001), 39; Sidney Chalhoub, “The Politics of Silence: Race and Citizenship in Nineteenth-century Brazil,” *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 1 (2006), 77; Felipe Azevedo e Souza, “Direitos políticos em depuração: A Lei Saraiva e o eleitorado do Recife entre as décadas de 1870s e 1880,” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2012); Miriam Dolhnikoff “Governo representativo e legislação eleitoral no Brasil do Seculo XIX,” *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 20, no. 1 (2014), 66-82.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 Nov. 1889.

<sup>17</sup> On the drawing of the global color line, see: W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Allograph Press Corp, 1903); George Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* (London: Wishart Books, 1936); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), esp. 393-419; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Color Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). For Barnsley’s praise of U.S. imperialism at the turn of the century, see: SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 35, “Original of Reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederate emigrants, April 1915.”

<sup>18</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 35, “Original of Reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederate emigrants, April 1915.”

on archival research in three languages, it makes two key arguments. First, I argue that U.S. Reconstruction precipitated a revolutionary crisis, during which the constitutional rules that had protected slavery since the Haitian Revolution began to collapse, and the rules of political inclusion and exclusion could be re-written across the Atlantic World. Second, I argue that white elites resolved this crisis by constructing a new international order grounded on the principle of Black exclusion from democratic politics. My dissertation uses a transnational methodology to challenge two longstanding assumptions in comparative history: first, that a racist legal system emerged in the U.S. after emancipation, but not in Latin America; and second, that these distinct political regimes developed in isolation from one another, within two American “systems.”<sup>19</sup> This literature has overlooked the ways that transnational conversations and international collaboration shaped the politics of reconstruction in both the U.S. and Latin America. By tracing the Atlantic counterrevolution that followed emancipation, my dissertation reveals how race-based legal discrimination emerged across the hemisphere.

## **I. The Civil War as the Second Haitian Revolution**

George Scarborough Barnsley lived in the shadow of a revolution long before he ever lived through one. As a child growing up on a slave plantation in northern Georgia, the “specter of Haiti” was all around him.<sup>20</sup> His parents had watched the largest slave revolt in world history

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (New York: Knopf, 1946), 42, 127; Carl Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 5; Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) see esp. “Diverging Paths and Degrees of Freedom,” 253; Robert Cottrol, *The Long, Lingering Shadow: Slavery, Race and the Law in the American Hemisphere* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>20</sup> One of the most powerful illustrations of the intergenerational impact of the Haitian Revolution on white Southerners appears in William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House, 1936). The main character, Quentin Compson, imagines the island as “a spot of earth which might have been created and set aside by Heaven itself...as a theatre for violence and injustice and bloodshed and all the satanic lusts of human greed and cruelty.” See page 202.

unfold on the nearby island of Saint Domingue just decades before he was born. The defeat of the French army in 1803 by hundreds of thousands of self-emancipated people had sent shock waves throughout the Atlantic World.<sup>21</sup> For the first time, slaveowners began to imagine that their violent destruction and the hands of the enslaved was possible, and perhaps even imminent.<sup>22</sup> White men in the antebellum South envisioned slave revolution as a kind of racial apocalypse, with “whole cities wrapped in smoke and flames, the houses and human beings together swallowed up by sheets of fire.”<sup>23</sup> Even rumors of a rebellion were enough to set the

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<sup>21</sup> There is now an extensive literature on the hemispheric impact of the Haitian Revolution. See, for example: Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Luiz Mott, “A revolução dos negros do Haiti e o Brasil,” *Mensario do Arquivo Nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1982), 3-10; Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); David Geggus (ed.), *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Flavio dos Santos Gomes, “Experiências transatlântica e significados locais: ideias, temores e narrativas em torno do Haiti no Brasil escravista,” *Tempo*, no. 13 (2002), 226-237; Gloria García, *Conspiraciones y revueltas: La actividad política de los negros en Cuba, 1790-1845* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2003); Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Marial Iglesias Utset, “Los Despaigne en Saint-Domingue y Cuba: narrativa microhistórica de una experiencia atlántica,” *Revista de Indias* LXXI: 251 (2011), 77-108; Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Ada Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Julius Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso Press, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> For perhaps the best essay on the cognitive impact of the Haitian Revolution on slaveowners in the Atlantic World, see Ada Ferrer, “Cuba en la sombra de Haití: noticias, sociedad, e esclavitud” in María Dolores Gonzáles Ripoll, Consuelo Naranjo, Ada Ferrer, Gloria García e Josep Opatrný (eds.), *El rumor de Haití en Cuba: temor, raza y rebeldía, 1789-1844* (Madrid: CSIC, 2004), 179-231.

<sup>23</sup> Augustus Q. Walton, *A History of the Detection, Conviction, and Designs of John A. Murrell, the Great Western Land Pirate* (Athens, TN: George White, 1835), 33, quoted in Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 68.

planter class on edge. Slaves accused of fomenting insurrection were routinely tortured and executed.<sup>24</sup> This was the world in which George Barnsley came of age.

The Haitian Revolution inspired white terror because it destroyed the most powerful slave society in the Atlantic World. In 1789, the French planter class was the wealthiest in the Americas. Exports from the French Antilles were worth nearly twice as much as everything shipped out of the British Caribbean.<sup>25</sup> The French dominated European markets in sugar, cotton, coffee, and indigo.<sup>26</sup> By the 1780s, the colony of Saint Domingue alone produced about 40 percent of all sugar and 60 percent of all coffee consumed in Europe. French planters owned more than 650,000 slaves and operated more than eight thousand plantations.<sup>27</sup> Their fabulous wealth meant that they passed most of their time in idleness, “attiring themselves” and “singing stupid songs.”<sup>28</sup> During the harvest, slaves on their plantations often worked eighteen to twenty hours a day. Many were worked to death within three years of their arrival on Saint Domingue.<sup>29</sup> As a result, between 1780 and 1790, slave imports to this island alone accounted for roughly one third of the entire Atlantic slave trade.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> On U.S. slave executions in a comparative perspective, see Marcelo Rosanova Ferraro, “A economia política da violência na era da segunda escravidão: Brasil e Estados Unidos, 1776-1888,” (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2021), 192-239.

<sup>25</sup> Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (New York: Verso Press, 1988), 163.

<sup>26</sup> David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, 163.

<sup>28</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Carolyn Fink, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 27-28.

<sup>30</sup> For this estimate of the traffic, see <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/IARRNlqe>.

After the Haitian Revolution, former slaves refused to labor on plantations. On Saint Domingue, a substantial portion of arable land was not suitable for plantation agriculture. This meant that prior to abolition enslaved people had been permitted to use portions of these lands to grow food to sustain their families. These “provision grounds” constituted a striking exception to the near total domination of the enslaved. When the revolution began in 1791, the first demand the slaves made was for additional time to cultivate their plots. After the new nation was formed, Haitian statesmen were unable to compel the masses to return to the plantations. Freedpeople would not be disciplined by landlords or swayed by wages. Instead, they embraced subsistence agriculture and sold surplus crops on the world market through middlemen living in port cities. The creation of an independent Black peasantry destroyed Haitian exports, with net production falling farther after independence than it had during the war. Control of the land and the right to the fruits of one’s labor were two of the key terms under which freedom was first formulated in the Atlantic World.<sup>31</sup>

The Haitian Revolution opened a window of revolutionary possibility across the Americas.<sup>32</sup> News of the revolution circulated quickly among the enslaved. Black sailors and fugitive slaves carried rumors of freedom into every port city in the Atlantic World. These international exchanges fostered a “culture of expectation” among Afro-descendants. Many came to believe that emancipation was imminent.<sup>33</sup> As a result, they launched a wave of insurrections

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<sup>31</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 36-50, 72-82.

<sup>32</sup> On the idea of a crisis—or a moment of revolutionary possibility—see Reinhart Koselleck and Michel Richter, “Crisis,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (April 2006), 357-400. See also Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 133-146.

<sup>33</sup> Scott, *The Common Wind*, 79.

across the Atlantic World. In Cuba and South Carolina, free Black artisans like Denmark Vesey and José Antonio Aponte organized slave rebellions by promising their followers armed support from the Haitian government.<sup>34</sup> In Brazil, slaves began to flee en masse to French Guiana, where they believed they would be free.<sup>35</sup> Liberation, for the first time in centuries, seemed to be at hand.<sup>36</sup>

Slaveowners across the hemisphere blamed the French planter class for the crisis.<sup>37</sup> Almost as soon as the French Revolution began, free people of color from Saint Domingue demanded equal rights. Many of these men were wealthy, well-educated slaveowners, who had been subjected to humiliating racist restrictions under French colonial law. The “big whites” on the island reacted with fury. They argued that political equality for free people of color would bring about the abolition of slavery and threatened to secede from the French empire if the Constituent Assembly yielded to the *mulattoes*’ demands. Months of debate followed, which culminated in the planters’ victory. In May of 1791, the French Assembly issued a constitutional guarantee of the inviolability of slavery and declared that it would not “deliberate [further] on the political status of free persons of color.” Locked in battle with the mulattoes, the “big whites” had forgotten about the political aspirations of the slaves. When news of the constitutional

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<sup>34</sup> Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, xiii.

<sup>35</sup> Flavio dos Santos Gomes, “Escape Routes, Mocambos, and Fears of Sedition in Brazil and French Guiana during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in Elaine Pereira Rocha and Nielson Rosa Bezerra (eds.), *Another Black Like Me: The Construction of Identities and Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 97-131.

<sup>36</sup> Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Tâmis Peixoto Parron, “A política da escravidão na era da liberdade: Estados Unidos, Brasil e Cuba, 1787-1846,” (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2016), 59.

guarantee reached the island, it helped spark the largest slave rebellion in world history.

Slaveowners everywhere had been warned.<sup>38</sup>

As a result, planters in Latin America began searching for an alternative constitutional model. In Cuba and Brazil, they settled unexpectedly on the United States. Before the Haitian Revolution, most of these men had considered the U.S. Constitution to be a failure. It did not recognize the existence of slavery within the nation. Nor did it disfranchise free Blacks. The only protections the Constitution offered for slaveowners were *implicit*—the fugitive slave clause, for instance, referred to slaves only as persons “held to service or labour.”<sup>39</sup> In the 1780s, it was difficult for Latin American elites to understand why a slaveowner like James Madison would deliberately remove the word “slave” from the U.S. Constitution despite the sustained opposition of much of his own social class.<sup>40</sup> The revolution in Saint Domingue was therefore illuminating.

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<sup>38</sup> On the origins of the Haitian Revolution, see: James, *The Black Jacobins*, 62-84; David Geggus, “Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly,” *The American Historical Review* 94:5 (Dec. 1989), 1296-1303; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 163-202; Fink, *The Making of Haiti*, 76-91; and Laurent DuBois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 67-89.

<sup>39</sup> *The Constitution of the United States* (1787), Article IV, Section 2.

<sup>40</sup> On the proslavery arguments put forward by the Anti-Federalists, see: K. Morgan, “Slavery and the Debate over Ratification of the United States Constitution,” *Slavery and Abolition* 22, no. 3 (2001), 56-60. For interpretations of the U.S. Constitution as an anti-slavery document, see: Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations with Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15-47 and Sean Wilentz, *No Property in Man: Slavery and Antislavery at the Nation’s Founding* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). For the stronger interpretation of the U.S. Constitution as proslavery, see: Paul Finkelman, “Slavery and the Constitutional Convention: Making a Covenant with Death,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, eds. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Eric Foner, “Blacks and the U.S. Constitution,” *New Left Review* I no. 183 (1990), 63-74; James Oakes, “The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution” *Cardozo Law Review* 17 (1996): 2023-56; Rosemarie Zagarri, “Suffrage and Representation,” in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, eds. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 661-667; Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); David Waldstreicher, *Slavery’s Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).

By the dawn of the nineteenth century, Cuban and Brazilian planters were convinced that Madison had created the strongest legal protections for slavery in the hemisphere. By 1810, they were preparing to inscribe implicit protections for slavery into their own constitutional orders.<sup>41</sup>

In the Spanish Empire, this task fell to Andrés de Jáuregui. He was the son of a Spanish military captain who had been born into a wealthy slave-owning family in Cuba. He was also the protégé of the most important political theorist of slavery in the Iberian Atlantic World, Francisco Arango y Parreño. When Jáuregui sailed to Cádiz to join the Spanish Constitutional Convention in 1809, he carried Parreño's instructions in his pocket. Over the next two years, he worked to inscribe Madison's implicit protections for slavery into the new Spanish Constitution. Under his guidance, the phrase "traffic in slaves" was substituted for the less objectional "importation of such people." He also helped bar free Black people from full citizenship. The Spanish Constitution of 1812 granted voting rights only to *españoles* whose ancestry originated in Spain or in the overseas territories of the Spanish Empire.<sup>42</sup> Jáuregui was pleased with this provision, but he continued to lobby for more direct and local control over the boundaries of citizenship in Cuba. In 1825, the Cuban slave-owning class succeeded in securing a concession of general power to the Cuban Captain General. This was a significant step toward the federalization of political authority in the Spanish Empire, which slaveowners had modelled directly on the United States.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Parron, "A política da escravidão na era da liberdade," 45-73. See also Márcia Regina Berbel, Rafael de Bivar Marquese, and Tâmis Peixoto Parron, *Escravidão e política: Brasil e Cuba, 1790-1850* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> *La Constitución de Cádiz* (1812), Artículo 22.

<sup>43</sup> José Antonio Piqueras, "Leales en época de insurrección. La elite criolla cubana entre 1810 y 1814," in *Visiones y revisiones de la independencia americana*, eds. Izaskun Álvarez Cuartero & Julio Sánchez Gómez (Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca, 2003), 183-206; Josep M. Fradera, *Colonias para*

Brazilian slaveowners followed in Madison's footsteps just ten years later. Brazil achieved independence from Portugal in 1822. The following year, one hundred delegates gathered in the imperial capital of Rio de Janeiro to draft the new Constitution. Most of these men were already convinced that constitutional silence was the best way to secure the future of slavery in Brazil. As a result, the word slave did not appear in the Brazilian Constitution of 1824. The document established state representation in Parliament on the basis of "population," without clarifying whether slaves would be counted or not. It also granted citizenship to "all those who are born in Brazil," including free Afro-Brazilians.<sup>44</sup> Unlike in the United States and the Spanish Empire, elite Brazilians chose to include free Afro-Brazilian men in the body politic in order to divide them from Africans. Just before Brazilian independence, the British had established their right to liberate Africans captured on slave ships and deliver them onto Brazilian soil. The framers of the Brazilian Constitution designed the category of *brasileiro* in order to minimize the political threat posed by a subaltern group whose social reproduction they could not control.<sup>45</sup> For many years, this strategy succeeded. *Africanos livres* were not

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*después de un imperio* (Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterra, 2005), 62-99; Parron, "A política da escravidão na era da liberdade," 59-73.

<sup>44</sup> Constituição política do império do Brasil (25 Mar. 1824), Título 2, artículo 6.

<sup>45</sup> Parron, "A política da escravidão na era da liberdade," 180-187 and Hebe Maria Mattos, "Racialização e Cidadania no Império do Brasil," in *Repensando o Brasil no oitocentos: cidadania, política e liberdade*, eds. José Murilo de Carvalho e Lúcia Maria B. P. Neves (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009), 361-372. On Latin American constitutionalism, see Joshua Simon, *The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

incorporated into any Brazilian social movement until the 1870s.<sup>46</sup> Slaveowners in Latin America had learned from Madison that “a successful institution is forgotten.”<sup>47</sup>

This Atlantic counterrevolution made the rise of the “second slavery” possible.<sup>48</sup> The Haitian Revolution opened an enormous vacuum in the world market.<sup>49</sup> American planters knew this.<sup>50</sup> Within ten years, they had begun to carve out new slave frontiers in western Cuba, southeastern Brazil, and the southern United States. As a result of their efforts, the total slave population in these regions rose from just over one million in 1770 to nearly six million in 1860.<sup>51</sup> By the middle of the century, slaves in Cuba, Brazil and the United States were producing roughly one third of the world’s sugar, half of the world’s coffee, and three quarters of the world’s cotton.<sup>52</sup> Capitalists became increasingly dependent on their labor. By 1850, slave-

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<sup>46</sup> Beatriz Mamigonian, *Africanos livres: A abolição do tráfico de escravos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1898-1992* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 115.

<sup>48</sup> I am drawing here on the work of Manisha Sinha, who dates the beginning of the “Counterrevolution of Slavery” to the 1820s. See Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10-27.

<sup>49</sup> Dale Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 58-59. See also Daniel Rood, *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 34. I use “American” throughout the dissertation in the broad and hemispheric sense, except when it appears in a primary source to refer to U.S. citizens.

<sup>51</sup> For data on the slave population in 1770, see Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 5. For data on 1860, see Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 131.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1958), 691-93; William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik, eds., *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1500-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31; Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean: An Economic History of Cuban Agriculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, vol. 1 (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978), 24 and vol. 3, 35-36.

grown commodities constituted nearly 60 percent of exports in the United States, 80 percent of exports in Cuba, and 80 percent of exports in Brazil.<sup>53</sup>

The United States stood at the helm of the international proslavery order. Cotton was the largest single sector of the global economy during the first half of the nineteenth century. For most of the antebellum era, the United States produced close to 80 percent of all cotton imported by Great Britain.<sup>54</sup> Between 1830 and 1860, the value of these exports more than quintupled, growing from \$29.7 million to \$191.8 million.<sup>55</sup> The North American planter class became the wealthiest in the world. By 1860, there were more millionaires per capita in the Mississippi Valley than anywhere else on the continent.<sup>56</sup> In a single year, slaves in a seven-thousand square mile region of the Yazoo Mississippi Delta produced an astonishing sixty-six million pounds of cotton, nearly ten times as much as had been exported from Saint-Domingue to France at the height of its power.<sup>57</sup> By 1860, the value of U.S. cotton exports was nearly double that of all Cuban sugar and Brazilian coffee exports combined.<sup>58</sup>

The threat of a second revolution grew despite the growing economic might of the American slaveowners. Slave frontiers, as the Barnsleys knew, were dangerous places. Enslaved people were forced to work harder and for longer hours than they ever had before. Most lived on

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<sup>53</sup> Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 205 and Richard Graham, “Brazil from the middle of the nineteenth century to the Paraguayan War” and Hugh Thomas, “Cuba from the middle of the eighteenth century to c. 1870” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 278, 749.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 6-11.

<sup>55</sup> Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, 131.

<sup>56</sup> Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 113.

<sup>58</sup> Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, 131.

large plantations where the majority of the labor force was male. Many had been separated from their families through one of the millions of slave sales that took place to fuel frontier expansion.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, these men and women were able to forge closer connections across the Black Atlantic World. Every plantation in Cuba, Brazil and the United States was connected to the world market through a rapidly expanding network of railroads and steamships that also linked enslaved people to one another.<sup>60</sup> After the Age of Revolutions, slaveowners were highly attuned to the dangerous revolutionary currents that could pass through these transatlantic networks. After a slave uprising took place in western Cuba in 1843, they began working across national lines to prevent Black transnational organizing.<sup>61</sup> That May, the U.S. Secretary of State John C. Calhoun helped the Spanish government spy on a group of Afro-Cuban abolitionists who had migrated to New York.<sup>62</sup> Calhoun believed that the fall of slavery in one nation would guarantee “its destruction in the other.” “Hence,” as he put it, “our mutual interest.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> On the social history of the second slavery, see: Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); Warren Dean, *Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System, 1820-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Rebecca Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Walter Johnson, ed., *The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Sidney Chalhou, *A força de escravidão: ilegalidade e costume no Brasil oitocentista* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, 85.

<sup>61</sup> Rafael de Bivar Marquese and Tâmis Peixoto Parron, “Internacional escravista: a política da segunda escravidão,” *Topoi* 12 (Jul-Dez 2011), 97-117.

<sup>62</sup> Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Havana, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 140, No. 39.

<sup>63</sup> John C. Calhoun to Lt. James E. Calhoun, 25 May 1844, in eds. Clyde Wilson and W. Edwin Hemphill, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 18 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1959), 621.

Calhoun was right. Just months after the beginning of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, a “general strike against slavery” began. Slaves in Virginia and Missouri were the first to seek freedom behind Union lines. They forced the U.S. military to declare that it would not return fugitive slaves to Confederate enemies. This policy inspired tens of thousands of enslaved people to strike out for liberation.<sup>64</sup> Just as slaveowners had feared, news of their actions circulated quickly throughout the Atlantic World. By the end of 1861, enslaved people in Cuba and Brazil had learned of general strike and had become convinced that it heralded their emancipation. Enslaved organizers informed their followers that the U.S. army would liberate them once slavery was destroyed in the United States. Acting on this information, thousands of slaves launched violent rebellions across the hemisphere.<sup>65</sup>

Slaveowners attempted to crush these uprisings and for years it appeared that they would succeed. Only the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865 tipped the balance of power in favor of the slaves. For the second time in half a century, slaveowners in Cuba and Brazil witnessed the violent destruction of the most powerful planter class in the hemisphere. Emancipation destroyed 50 percent of all wealth in the U.S. South and 17 percent of all wealth in the United States.<sup>66</sup> Once again, former slaves refused to return to plantations and began demanding access to land.

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<sup>64</sup> On the “general strike,” see W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935), 57. See also Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 90-127; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 80.

<sup>66</sup> See Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 60 and Philipp Ager, Leah Platt Boustan and Katherine Eriksson, “The Intergenerational Effects of a Large Wealth Shock: White Southerners after the Civil War,” *American Economic Review* 111, no. 11 (November 2021), 3767-3794. See also Claudia Goldin, “The Economic Effects of Emancipation,” *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (Mar. 1973), 74.

Their actions terrified white elites in Cuba and Brazil. When Congress enfranchised African American freedmen in 1867, Cuban and Brazilian slaveowners became convinced that enslaved people in Latin America had gained a powerful new ally on the world stage. As a result, they prepared to grant major political concessions to their slaves, including the liberation of their future children.<sup>67</sup>

U.S. Reconstruction therefore opened a second window of revolutionary possibility throughout the Americas. Once again, Latin American slaveowners embraced reform because they feared revolution.<sup>68</sup> Just a few years after the end of the Civil War, Spain and Brazil enacted gradual emancipation laws that promised freedom to all future children born to the enslaved. These laws did not abolish slavery, which persisted in Cuba until 1886 and Brazil until 1888. They did, however, guarantee slavery's eventual demise throughout the hemisphere.<sup>69</sup> They also marked the beginning of the second constitutional crisis for slave societies in the Americas. For the first time since the Haitian Revolution, state officials in Cuba, Brazil, and the United States would have to determine the political status of former slaves.

This account of the Civil War makes it possible to see the revolutionary contests that emerged from the crisis of slavery in a new light. In the 1860s, the Atlantic World that George Scarborough Barnsley had known as a child was passing away. This world, constituted through

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<sup>67</sup> Sidney Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade: uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na corte* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990).

<sup>68</sup> On the concept of a "passive revolution" that I use here, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 110-119. On the relationship between violence and gradualism, see Barrington Moore, "England and the Contributions of Violence to Gradualism," in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 3-40. It is important to note that only Brazilian slaveowners succeeded in executing a passive revolution (see chapters 2 and 3).

<sup>69</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 333-71.

the forced migration of twelve million Africans, had shaped nearly every aspect of life in the Americas for almost four centuries. As it came to an end, it was profoundly unclear what kind of political order would emerge in its wake—or what place freedpeople would hold in it. For this reason, scholars of abolition in Cuba, Brazil and the United States have often represented the abolition of slavery as a moment of revolutionary possibility, when former slaves took up new struggles to give full meaning to their freedom. Yet, until now, contests over the future boundaries of Black political life have been studied almost exclusively as unfolding within the nation-state.<sup>70</sup> Breaking with this approach makes it possible to see these contests as a transnational struggle over the future of democracy in the Americas. I define that struggle as Atlantic Reconstruction.

## II. Atlantic Reconstruction

This definition draws directly on the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. He was the first historian to conceptualize Reconstruction as a struggle for democracy. He meant democracy as rule by the poor.<sup>71</sup> That was the original meaning of democracy in the ancient world and in the nineteenth century it still made sense to former slaves.<sup>72</sup> In *Black Reconstruction in America*, Du Bois argued that former slaves saw suffrage as a means to obtain land. They believed that land

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<sup>70</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Press, 1988); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Cuba and Louisiana after Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Emília Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia* (São Paulo: Livraria Editora Ciências Humanas, 1982); Sidney Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*.

<sup>71</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 206.

<sup>72</sup> For the definition of democracy in ancient Greek, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (New York: Verso Press, 1995), 220.

ownership would emancipate them from white control. As a result, they attempted to use the political power they obtained during Reconstruction to secure the breakup of plantations and the redistribution of land to former slaves.<sup>73</sup> Their movement was defeated. Southern planters “got the ear” of capitalists in the North who could not countenance the confiscation and redistribution of property anywhere in the United States. The result was a new alliance between Northern and Southern capitalists who together managed to overthrow Reconstruction. According to Du Bois, their triumph ended “the hope of democracy in America for all men.”<sup>74</sup>

*The Last Atlantic Revolution* reveals the international dimensions of this struggle.<sup>75</sup>

Former slaves in the United States were not the only ones who fought to use democratic political power to redistribute land after the crisis of slavery. In both Cuba and Brazil, freedpeople sought to leverage their votes to abolish the plantation system and establish small farms for themselves. These movements for “rural democracy” emerged in Brazil in 1880 and in Cuba in 1908.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 123, 206, 368, 386, 591.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 581-592.

<sup>75</sup> By applying the category of “Reconstruction” to Latin America, I am assuming a certain risk. Reconstruction has always been defined as either a time period or a political movement within U.S. history. Foner himself describes Reconstruction as the “process by which the United States came to terms with the consequences of the U.S. Civil War, the most dramatic of which was the destruction of slavery.” But this is not how all actors understood it at the time. In the nineteenth century, both Cubans and Brazilians spoke of the “reconstruction” of their own constitutional orders after slavery. Latin American historians, too, have used the term. Ada Ferrer and Hebe Mattos are two of the most important examples. Their books, *Insurgent Cuba* and *Das cores do silêncio* both analyze the “reconstruction” of the political and economic orders of Cuba and Brazil after emancipation. In developing this category, I am standing on their shoulders. See: Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 99-111 and Hebe Mattos, *Das cores do silêncio: os significados da liberdade no sudeste escravista* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2013), 237-275.

<sup>76</sup> Both movements, in my view, require much deeper study than I offer here. There is very little work that has been done on the movement for “rural democracy” in Brazil, although it is mentioned in many studies of Brazilian abolitionism. See, for example, Robert Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 161; Celso Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations in Brazilian Political Citizenship* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 131; Angela Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas: o movimento abolicionista Brasileira (1868-888)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015), 237. For two relatively recent articles on Brazilian rural democracy, see Angela Bernadete Lima, “‘Quem possui a terra, possui o homem’: abolicionismo e democracia rural nas

Although they began after U.S. Reconstruction, they were hemispheric in scope. Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian political organizers took direct inspiration from the African American struggle for “forty acres and a mule.”<sup>77</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they travelled repeatedly to the United States to organize alongside African American activists.<sup>78</sup> They did so because the crisis of slavery had demonstrated that their prospects of emancipation were directly intertwined. For this reason, the movement for abolition transformed into a struggle for democracy not only in the United States but across the hemisphere.<sup>79</sup>

This movement threatened the survival of plantation capitalism.<sup>80</sup> This idea is difficult to take seriously today. We now know that emancipation led to a “rapid, vast, and permanent”

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ideais agrárias de André Rebouças,” *PerCursos* 20:43 (2019), 295-314, and Sergio Pinto Handler, “The Dream of Rural Democracy: U.S. Reconstruction and Abolitionist Propaganda in Rio de Janeiro, 1880-1888,” 2018 Conference Paper, *Freedoms Gained and Lost: Reinterpreting Reconstruction in the Atlantic World* (March 16-18, 2018), College of Charleston. In the Cuban historiography, scholarship on the *Partido Independiente de Color* (PIC) has focused overwhelmingly on the question of the size of the party and whether it was broadly representative of Afro-Cuban views. See, for instance, Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*; 251-252; Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 55, 78. As a result, relatively little has been done to explicate the PIC’s connection to the countryside.

<sup>77</sup> Maria Alice Rezende de Carvalho, *O quinto século: André Rebouças e a construção do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan, 1998), 130.

<sup>78</sup> Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg: On Being Antillano, Negro, and Puerto Rican in New York, 1891-1938,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 1 (Fall 2001), 19-23; Roberto Saba, *American Mirror: The United States and Brazil in the Age of Emancipation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 195.

<sup>79</sup> On this transformation within the U.S. context, see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 83.

<sup>80</sup> Following Robert Brenner, I define capitalism as market dependence. See Robert Brenner, “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe,” *Past & Present* 70 (Feb. 1976), 30-75 and Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (New York: Verso Press, 2017). Slave plantations were capitalist because they were dependent on world markets. The clearest illustration of this dependence comes from the history of the British Empire. When Jamaica was cut off from the New England cod trade during the American Revolution, fifteen thousand of enslaved people starved to death. See Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of a Fish that Changed the World* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1997), 100; Peter Pellizzari, “A Struggle for Empire: Resistance and Reform in

increase in the production of cotton, sugar, and coffee for world markets. In the United States, cotton production surpassed its previous high just five years after the end of the U.S. Civil War. By 1880, the U.S. was exporting more cotton than it had before emancipation. By 1890, it supplied 81 percent of the British, 66 percent of the French, and 61 percent of the German markets.<sup>81</sup> Sugar and coffee production followed the same pattern in Cuba and Brazil.<sup>82</sup> But there was no way for anyone to know this at the time. Democracy was a genuine possibility and it frightened white elites. The Barnsleys repeatedly predicted that the “consequences” of freedom in Cuba and Brazil would be “the same as here—a great decrease of labor and demoralization.”<sup>83</sup>

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the British Atlantic World, 1760-1778,” (Ph.D. diss, Harvard University, 2020). On the general dependence of slave plantations on the world market for food supplies, see Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Oceans of Grain: How American Wheat Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 51. This interpretation cuts against traditional Marxist histories of Southern slavery: Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); and *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations & The Politics of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For more recent interventions in this (U.S.-centric) debate, see Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 11-14; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 98-135; Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); John C. Clegg, “Capitalism and Slavery,” *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2015), 281-304; Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery?” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 2 (June 2015), 289-310. For the book that started it all, see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994, originally published 1944).

<sup>81</sup> Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 291-292.

<sup>82</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 89, 120; Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*, 31.

<sup>83</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 14, Godfrey Barnsley to George Barnsley, 1868.

Planters across the hemisphere believed that “misery and anarchy” would soon engulf their lands.<sup>84</sup>

For this reason, white elites in all three nations collaborated to construct a new international order grounded on the principle of Black exclusion from democratic politics. Brazilian slaveowners led the way. As thousands of ex-Confederates arrived in their nation, these men became increasingly convinced that universal suffrage had resulted in a violent race war in the U.S. South. In response, they pioneered new ways of excluding Black people from democracy that were not explicitly based on race. In 1881, the Brazilian Parliament enacted the *Lei Saraiva*, which established literacy tests as a national voting requirement. Participation in Brazilian elections dropped from 10.9 percent of the total population to 0.8 percent in 1882; nearly all Brazilian freedpeople were barred from voting.<sup>85</sup> Southern planters then extended this model for Black disfranchisement into the U.S. South during the 1890s, where it became the legal foundation for Jim Crow and the United States’ burgeoning overseas empire.<sup>86</sup> Finally, North American and Cuban elites worked together to import the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion into the Cuban Republic in 1900. Their failure resulted in the use of military force to destroy Afro-Cuban democratic organizing during the first decade of the twentieth century. By the end of 1912, thousands of agricultural workers lay dead.<sup>87</sup> The dream of rural democracy died with them.

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<sup>84</sup> José de Alencar, “Terceira carta sobre a emancipação,” 6 Jul. 1867, in *Cartas a favor da escravidão*, ed. Tâmis Parron (São Paulo: Editora Hedra, 2008), 82.

<sup>85</sup> Chalhoub, “The Politics of Silence,” 84.

<sup>86</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 321-351.

<sup>87</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 194-225.

The defeat of rural democracy marked the triumph of white supremacist politics across the post-emancipation Atlantic World. To some this point may be so obvious as to hardly be worth stating. But there are still leading U.S. historians who deny that white supremacy exists in Latin America.<sup>88</sup> It is therefore worth pausing to define white supremacy and to consider how it becomes inscribed in the law. White supremacy is an ideology that represents blackness as a hereditary and unalterable marker of inferiority. This ideology becomes institutionalized when its adherents gain control over the state.<sup>89</sup> Politics is therefore the mechanism by which white populations—whose lives are supported, nurtured, and protected by the state—are separated from Black populations, who are exposed to death, to persecution, and to murder.<sup>90</sup> The laws I describe in this dissertation were the political project of the international capitalist class in the post-emancipation Atlantic World. To this day, the descendants of former slaves in Cuba, Brazil, and the United States have shorter lifespans because of their passage.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> This is a problem I have encountered repeatedly when presenting my work. It persists because of the Tannenbaum debate and in spite of decades of work by Latin American scholars to illuminate the history of white supremacy in the region. For early efforts of Latin American scholars to prove the existence of racism, see Gordon K. Lewis, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); Florestan Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes* (São Paulo: Globo, 2008, 1964); Abdias do Nascimento, *O genocídio do negro brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978). For an overview of this historiography, see Pauline Alberto and Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, “‘Racial Democracy’ and Racial Inclusion: Hemispheric Histories,” in *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, eds. Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 264-318.

<sup>89</sup> George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 170. For other definitions of racism that have informed my thinking, see: Patrick Wolfe, “Land, Labor and Difference: Elementary Structures of Racism,” *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001), 866-905; Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race and Ideology,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 181 (May/June 1990), 95-118; Angela Zimmerman, “Three Logics of Race: Theory and Exception in the Transnational History of Empire,” *New Global Studies* 4, no. 1 (August 2010), 1-11.

<sup>90</sup> This is paraphrased from Édouard Louis, *Who Killed My Father*, trans. Lorin Stein (New York: New Directions, 2019), 14. See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>91</sup> On Black life expectancies, see *La salud de la población afrodescendiente en América Latina* (Washington, D.C.: Organización Panamericana de la Salud, 2021) and Elizabeth Arias, Betzaida Tejada-

### III. The Interventions

At the same time, we know that white supremacist ideology assumed different forms in the United States and Latin America. Explaining this divergence and its consequences has been the central task of comparative historians for nearly a century. In 1946, the historian Frank Tannenbaum asked the question that still dominates the field: why did a white supremacist, segregationist state emerge in the U.S. after the end of slavery, but not in Latin America? In *Slave and Citizen*, he argued that the answer could be found in the different histories of two slave “systems.”<sup>92</sup> In the British and Spanish empires, slavery emerged in two distinct “moral and legal settings.”<sup>93</sup> In Latin America, the legal code enabled manumission, and the Catholic Church recognized slave marriages and baptized slave children.<sup>94</sup> By contrast, slaves in British North America were legal chattel and planters heavily regulated slave religion.<sup>95</sup> As a result, slavery in the British colonies raised “a barrier to recognizing the humanity of the Negro” that did not exist in Latin America.<sup>96</sup> After emancipation, this barrier persisted in the United States in the form of a biracial caste system, while in Latin America there was no equivalent “hardening of the system.”<sup>97</sup>

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Vera, and Farida Ahmad, “Vital Statistics Rapid Release,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

<sup>92</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (New York: Knopf, 1946), 42, 127.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 46, 55, 56.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

Most scholars have portrayed the Tannenbaum thesis as a political response to the Holocaust. The murder of millions of Jews in Nazi Germany put a spotlight on apartheid in the United States. For the first time, white scholars and intellectuals in mainstream academic institutions began to criticize Jim Crow. It was in this context that the Carnegie Corporation of New York commissioned Tannenbaum, a prominent Jewish historian, to write *Slave and Citizen*.<sup>98</sup> Tannenbaum was an unusual figure in many ways. He had written about convict labor in the U.S. South and agrarian revolution in Mexico.<sup>99</sup> He was personally connected to a number of scholars and intellectuals in Latin America who described the region as a “racial paradise.”<sup>100</sup> His effort to explain the divergence between the two regions was profoundly shaped by their vision, on the one hand, and his own experience touring Southern prisons, on the other.

His argument was also shaped by his increasing alienation from the left. As a young man, Tannenbaum had arrived in New York with only a few cents in his pocket. He worked as a bus boy during the 1910s and joined the Waiters Industrial Union, a local of the Industrial Workers of the World. In 1914, he led more than one thousand unemployed men in a sit down in the Baptist Tabernacle Church. “We are hungry,” he told the Reverend, “and we are homeless. We want something to eat and a place to sleep.” Tannenbaum was arrested for this “offense against

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<sup>98</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, “From Slaves to Citizens? Tannenbaum and the Debates on Slavery, Emancipation, and Race Relations in Latin America,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 77 (2010), 158.

<sup>99</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Darker Phases of the South* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1924) and *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

<sup>100</sup> Columbia University Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York, Frank Tannenbaum Papers, Series I, Box 1, José Vasconcelos to Frank Tannenbaum, 7 Nov. 1924; see also Series II, Box 8 for correspondence with Gilberto Freyre.

property” and spent the following year in prison.<sup>101</sup> When he got out, he became something of a cause célèbre among New York progressives.<sup>102</sup> Several wealthy patrons paid for his admission to Columbia University, where he began to drift from movement politics. Columbia became a “shrine,” as he put it later, although he insisted into the 1920s that his politics had not changed.<sup>103</sup> By the 1930s, that was no longer true. After completing his Ph.D. in Economics at the Brookings Institution, he wrote an essay titled “The Prospect of Violent Revolution in the United States,” which dismissed “the theory of class struggle” as “animistic theology.”<sup>104</sup> At no point in *Slave and Citizen* did Tannenbaum weigh the possibility that enslaved people had a hand in achieving their own freedom; nor did he draw any connection between race and class. As a tenured historian at Columbia, he attributed modern racism to colonial law.

Many historians have challenged Tannenbaum’s thesis without changing his question. In 1986, Carl Degler set out to debunk *Slave and Citizen*, but opened by asking “why did the systematic separation of the races arise in the United States, but not Brazil?” He argued that the reason was a “mulatto escape hatch,” which prevented Brazilian elites from referring to the biological origins of race.<sup>105</sup> In 2005, Rebecca Scott offered a different explanation. She argued in *Degrees of Freedom* that interracial democracy triumphed in Cuba after emancipation, but not

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<sup>101</sup> Philip Foner, *Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), vol. 4, 444-448.

<sup>102</sup> Matt Yeager, “Frank Tannenbaum: The Making of a Convict Criminologist,” *The Prison Journal* 91, no. 2 (2011), 181.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Hale, “Frank Tannenbaum and the Mexican Revolution,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (1995), 216-246.

<sup>104</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, “The Prospect of Violent Revolution in the United States,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, LXXXIX (May 1931), 521-525.

<sup>105</sup> Carl Degler, *Neither White Nor Black: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*. (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 5, 107, 225.

in Louisiana. As a result, white supremacy gained “legal backing” only in the United States.<sup>106</sup> Ten years later, Robert Cottrol reversed her interpretation. He attributed the rise of a rigid racial caste system in the nineteenth-century United States to the U.S. democratic tradition. In his view, Latin American elites did not need racism because they took human inequality for granted. North Americans, on the other hand, cherished a democratic ideology that clashed with human bondage.<sup>107</sup> Most recently, Ariela Gross and Alejandro de la Fuente have posited that distinct laws of manumission explain the two region’s “divergent trajectories of race.” In their opinion, only a careful examination of the laws regulating freedom will enable us to answer Tannenbaum’s enduring question.<sup>108</sup>

In my view, it is now urgent to change the terms of this debate. In the past two years, more than five thousand Black men have died at the hands of police in Brazil and the United States.<sup>109</sup> The Brazilian police kill more Black men every year than any other police force in the Americas.<sup>110</sup> My dissertation therefore attempts to explain how racism became embedded in the law throughout the American hemisphere as the result of a single Atlantic process. I use the category of Atlantic Reconstruction to illuminate transnational vectors of causality that have been missed by comparative historians. For example, scholars have long contrasted the “politics

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<sup>106</sup> Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) see esp. “Diverging Paths and Degrees of Freedom,” 253, 254.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Cottrol, *The Long, Lingering Shadow: Slavery, Race and the Law in the American Hemisphere* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 8, 9.

<sup>108</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela Gross, *Becoming Black, Becoming Free: Comparing Law, Race, Slavery and Freedom in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 5, 10.

<sup>109</sup> Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (São Paulo: Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2021), 59-66 and “Mapping Police Violence,” accessed 28 March 2022, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

<sup>110</sup> “Judicial Action Against Police Abuse in Brazil,” Human Rights Watch, 22. Sept 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/06/judicial-action-against-police-abuse-brazil>.

of silence” that emerged in post-emancipation Brazil with the rigid racial caste system that triumphed in the post-emancipation United States.<sup>111</sup> Atlantic Reconstruction reveals how these distinct forms of race-based legal discrimination were mutually constitutive, as Brazilian elites embraced “racial silence” in large part because of the lessons they absorbed about racial violence in the post-emancipation United States. This category therefore enables us to explain differences in the ways white supremacy operated in the Americas without losing sight of the fact that race-based legal discrimination emerged throughout the post-emancipation Atlantic World.

My dissertation also intervenes in the history of U.S. Reconstruction. W.E.B. Du Bois founded this field in 1935.<sup>112</sup> He wrote *Black Reconstruction in America* during the greatest crisis of capitalism the world had ever seen. The Great Depression made it possible for him to imagine a past and future full of radical possibility. In this way, he and Tannenbaum were like ships passing in the night. As Tannenbaum distanced himself from the left, Du Bois became more deeply involved. In 1933, he began teaching courses on “Karl Marx and the Negro” at Atlanta University. He spent the darkest years of the Depression assembling the largest collection of books on communism that had ever existed in the American South. He was eventually fired from his position for his radical politics in 1943.<sup>113</sup> When he returned to New York City the following year, he joined the Popular Front—an interracial labor movement forged by Black and European migrants who dreamed of building a social democracy in the United

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<sup>111</sup> Brodwyn Fischer, Keila Grinberg, Hebe Mattos, “Law, Silence, and Racialized Inequalities in the History of Afro-Brazil,” in *Afro-Latin American Studies*, 130-176.

<sup>112</sup> Du Bois was preceded by the Dunning School—a group of white supremacist scholars who argued that U.S. Reconstruction demonstrated that Black people must be excluded from democracy. For a representative example of this work, see Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1929).

<sup>113</sup> David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 542-553.

States.<sup>114</sup> In New York, Du Bois spent his time with communist intellectuals like Paul and Eslanda Robeson, Herbert and Fay Aptheker, James and Esther Cooper Jackson, and Jack and Liza Foner.<sup>115</sup> Together, these men and women re-wrote the history of the United States, putting working-class people—including slaves and African Americans—at its center.<sup>116</sup>

The defeat of the Popular Front during the early years of the Cold War meant that *Black Reconstruction* was neglected by mainstream historians for decades.<sup>117</sup> It was only taken up again by a young scholar and activist named Eric Foner in the 1960s. Foner had known W.E.B. Du Bois as a “Red Diaper Baby” growing up in New York.<sup>118</sup> Both of his parents were blacklisted by the state legislature just two years before he was born. They taught him about African American history and instilled him with the confidence to speak out about past and present injustices in the United States. As a result, he was hired to teach African American history at Columbia University in 1969. He began researching U.S. Reconstruction just a few years later.<sup>119</sup> His seminal work—*Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*—was

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso Press, 1997), xvii-xviii.

<sup>115</sup> Other “Red Diaper Babies” included Angela Davis and Bettina Aptheker, both of whom went on to play major roles in the civil rights movement. Olivia Rush Weinstein, “The New Old Left: Political Educations of the W.E.B. Du Bois Clubs of America,” (Honors Thesis, Harvard University, 2022), 23-24.

<sup>116</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 132-135. For examples of this work, see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1939) and Philip Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Citadel Press, 1950-1955), in five volumes.

<sup>117</sup> C. Vann Woodward and Kenneth Stamp were important exceptions. See Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 591, 694.

<sup>118</sup> Weinstein, “The New Old Left,” 50.

<sup>119</sup> Foner, *Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 3-24.

published in 1988 and has defined the field ever since.<sup>120</sup> In it, Foner argued that the end of slavery marked a moment of revolutionary possibility for interracial democracy in the United States. He believed that Jim Crow was the product of a counterrevolution, in which planters and capitalists exploited white supremacy in order to undermine interracial democracy and regain control over Black labor.<sup>121</sup> Foner did more to revitalize Du Bois and bring his ideas into the political mainstream than any other historian alive today. “If *Reconstruction* was born in the archives,” he says, “it was written from the heart.”<sup>122</sup>

Much more than Du Bois, however, Foner was shaped by the nationalist impulses of the Popular Front. Many of the leading white intellectuals of the Popular Front were outspoken American exceptionalists. They considered themselves the special inheritors of a distinctive democratic tradition that stretched back to Samuel Adams and Thomas Paine.<sup>123</sup> Eric Foner still holds onto this idea.<sup>124</sup> He has now argued for nearly forty years that Reconstruction was a

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<sup>120</sup> Historians now debated the concept of “America’s Unfinished Revolution” for nearly forty years. For an excellent overview of the recent U.S. Reconstruction historiography, see Carole Emberton, “Unwriting the Freedom Narrative: A Review Essay,” *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 2 (May 2016), 377-394.

<sup>121</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 228-277, 460-511, 550-563.

<sup>122</sup> Foner, *Who Owns History?*, 19.

<sup>123</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 129-130. See also Philip Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: Citadel Press, 1945).

<sup>124</sup> It is worth noting that Foner is critical of American exceptionalism, including his own. In a 2015 interview with the Brazilian historians Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu, he remarked that “American historians are very insular, maybe a little less so now than we used to be. But because we all believe, or most of us, in American exceptionalism, right? That is the bane of our existence... [and] you’re right, basically my work is internal American history. I think today of course in U.S. history everyone talks about globalizing or internationalizing American history, and that’s all fine. I think it’s great. Anything that cuts against our parochialism is good. On the other hand, as I said, it’s easier said than done. Most American historians do not know any other foreign language. How are you going to do global history if you only know English? ... I am a prisoner of the literature that is in English.” See Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu, “Interview with Eric Foner,” trans. Kristin McGuire, *Revista Brasileira de História* 35, no. 69 (June 2015), 9-10.

“unique and dramatic experiment in interracial democracy” unparalleled in the history of “this or any other country that abolished slavery.”<sup>125</sup> In his view, the U.S. Constitution made Reconstruction unique. The Reconstruction amendments guaranteed universal manhood suffrage and black equality before the law for the first time in U.S. history. Although their revolutionary potential remained unfulfilled at the time, the amendments endured, waiting to be put into execution during the twentieth-century civil rights movement. Foner now acknowledges that the civil rights movement also failed to achieve equal citizenship for all. But he remains optimistic about the promise of American democracy. In his most recent book, he argued that the U.S. Constitution “may yet be employed in new ways to implement the Reconstruction vision.” According to Foner, Reconstruction remains “America’s Unfinished Revolution.”<sup>126</sup>

My dissertation challenges the exceptionalism of this argument by rooting the revolutionary possibility of Reconstruction in the Black Atlantic World. The idea of democracy in the Americas originated in Haiti after the violent destruction of slavery. On this side of the Atlantic Ocean, former slaves were the first people to fight for rule by the poor. Afro-descendants in Cuba, Brazil and the United States held onto their vision of democracy for more than half a century, even as proslavery constitutions prevented them from enacting it. Only the political crisis precipitated by the U.S. Civil War made democracy a real possibility in the Americas again. As the international proslavery order began to collapse, former slaves struggled for personal autonomy, democratic political power, and landed independence. Their vision was

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<sup>125</sup> For the quote, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, xxii and Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 6.

<sup>126</sup> Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), preface.

the root of the radical possibility of Atlantic Reconstruction, and it was born from the collective experience of Atlantic slavery.

## Chapter 1

### **“A General Insurrection in the Countries with Slaves”: The U.S. Civil War and the Origins of an Atlantic Revolution, 1861-1866**

In July of 1861, the Brazilian ambassador to the United States held an important meeting with Charles Sumner, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to discuss the war plans of the Union Army. Just months after the beginning of the Civil War, the ambassador, Miguel Maria Lisboa, was interested in just one question: *did the Union Army intend to free the slaves?* Sumner, whom Lisboa considered a “fanatical abolitionist,” was hardly reassuring. He informed Lisboa that “the government will do everything possible to bring the rebels into line without destroying the country; but should they prove obstinate, no means of subjugating them will be spared; there would be a civil war and a servile war.” Lisboa, in turn, passed this message on to the Brazilian government. “A total war,” he wrote, was “within the realm of possibility;” one that might bring about “the immediate emancipation of the slaves.”<sup>127</sup>

Lisboa had worried about this possibility, and its implications for the future of Atlantic slavery, for months. In 1860, Brazil was one of the last three slave societies in the hemisphere. Of the nearly six million men, women and children still enslaved in the Americas, roughly one and a half million labored in Brazil, four million in the United States, and four hundred thousand in Cuba.<sup>128</sup> On December 19, 1860, the day before South Carolina seceded from the Union, the British ambassador had warned Lisboa that the triumph of abolitionism in the United States would be the “fatal blow for African slavery in the whole world.” Lisboa, that same day, had

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<sup>127</sup> Arquivo Histórico de Itamaraty (hereafter AHI), Rio de Janeiro, 233.3.11, 5 July 1861, Miguel Lisboa to Antônio Coelho de Sá e Albuquerque. Underlining in text.

<sup>128</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 7; Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*, chap. 6; Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 7.

written that “every Brazilian friend of his country must understand the necessity of putting himself on alert, to avoid the contagion of ideas that may affect our interests so seriously.”

“Fears of slave insurrection,” he continued, were “very serious” in the United States, and “many states have finally established Public Safety Committees...to arrest, banish and persecute” every man suspected of being an abolitionist.<sup>129</sup>

Lisboa’s meeting with Charles Sumner sparked a flurry of discussion around the Atlantic World. The first person Lisboa consulted after this unsettling conversation was Gabriel García y Tassara, the Spanish ambassador in Washington D.C. Tassara, he found, was more sanguine about the future of Atlantic slavery. A veteran diplomat who had spent the better part of a decade in the United States, he assured Lisboa that although he had spoken with Sumner about the issue “various times,” he had never felt much cause for concern. He was certain that “if such a barbarity [as slave emancipation] were attempted...Europe, despite its animating abolitionist spirit, would rise up to stop it.” Still, the two men agreed on the “convenience” of coordinating an international response, should some “threat to the tranquility” of slavery in Cuba or Brazil arise. Lisboa reported this bit of good news back to the Brazilian government that same day.<sup>130</sup> Tassara, for his part, took a bit more time. It was August of 1861 before he warned the Spanish government that the Civil War might prove “a new agent of disturbances” for the proslavery interests “on which the prosperity and very existence of [our] rich Antillean island depend.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 19 Dec. 1860, Lisboa to Luiz Ferreira de Aguiar. Underlining in text.

<sup>130</sup> AHI, 233.3.11, 5 July 1861, Lisboa to Albuquerque.

<sup>131</sup> Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid (hereafter AMAE), Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2405, 6 Sept. 1861, Gabriel Tassara to Saturnino Calderón de la Barca y Collantes.

Still, these men were complacent. On July 25, 1861, the U.S. Congress passed the Crittenden-Johnson resolution, clarifying that the United States was waging a war to save the Union, not to destroy slavery. When a Union general attempted to liberate slaves a few weeks later, President Lincoln immediately countermanded his order.<sup>132</sup> For Tassara, this was reassuring. “The institution of slavery is so strong in the South that it will resist every blow from abolitionism,” he wrote, “there is no reason to fear the catastrophes...that memories of Saint Domingue bring to the imagination; the loyalty of the slaves in general is assured.”<sup>133</sup> Lisboa, too, remained calm. That December, he acknowledged the basic impossibility of the Union Army “inciting a servile war” in the South. “Setting aside the immorality of such politics,” he wrote, emancipation “would divide the North...and produce a reaction among the peoples of Europe, who would, without a doubt, revolt at the prospect of such blood and misery” being unleashed upon the Confederacy.<sup>134</sup> José Pereira Leal, the Brazilian consul in New York, was perhaps the most confident of the three. In debating the question with Lisboa, he predicted that not even the “frenetic” abolitionist Charles Sumner would vote for slave emancipation on the floor of the Senate. Even if the abolitionists had a congressional majority, would it be worth it, he asked, “for the states of the North to put the South in such danger?” The natural consequence of emancipation would be “the need to make people of color equal to whites...an impossibility in the United States short of a general cataclysm.”<sup>135</sup> The scenario, as he pictured it, seemed almost laughable.

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<sup>132</sup> Scott Reynolds Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78.

<sup>133</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2405, 6 Sept. 1861, Tassara to Calderón.

<sup>134</sup> AHI, 233.3.11, 1 Dec. 1861, Lisboa to Benevenuto Augusto de Magalhães Taques.

<sup>135</sup> AHI, 220.2.7, 16 Nov. 1861, Felipe Jose Pereira Leal to Taques.

Over the next five years, the world seemed to shift under their feet. The letters these men sent to Latin America began to document what had, until recently, been unimaginable. In 1863, the President issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing nearly all slaves within Confederate territory. In 1865, the U.S. Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment, permanently abolishing slavery in the United States. By that spring, it was clear to Gabriel Tassara that the politics of slavery within the Spanish Empire had undergone a profound transformation. In May of 1865, he wrote to the Spanish Secretary of State to suggest convening a *junta* of slaveowners who “believe in the necessity of reform.” This way, the Spanish government could “avoid offending the sensibilities of the reigning property owners,” while “simultaneously securing...the sympathies of the Black population.” “Now more than ever,” he argued, it was essential not to “deprive the government of popularity among the slaves whose [support] it must strive to earn.” The abolition of slavery in Cuba might generate “some conflicts,” but the “inevitable catastrophes” that would follow “non-abolition” promised to be far worse.<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Miguel Lisboa confronted this new reality more quickly. In November of 1863, he wrote to the Marquez de Abrantes in Brazil that a “social crisis...is unfolding before my eyes.” He went on to say that “its repercussion in Brazil is certain. Whatever the result of the present American conflict...such a revolution in the north of the continent will, without question, echo first in Cuba, and then in Brazil; and if we do not study the question with care, if we do not prepare ourselves to work, when the moment arrives, we will expose our country to immeasurable evils.” These evils, he added, would not be the simple result of propaganda the abolitionist “apostles” in the United States and Europe would “hurl at Brazil.”

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<sup>136</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2409, 30 May 1865, Tassara to Antonio de Benavides y Fernández de Navarrete.

Rather, it was that these radicals “would find natural allies *in a large class of our population*, who, transforming a question of external pressure into one of internal politics, would create grave embarrassments for us, unless the friends of our country were prepared to give the movement a convenient direction.” Still, he admitted, “what we should do in Brazil to navigate the crisis I foresee, is not for me to say.”<sup>137</sup>

As these letters indicate, over the course of the Civil War, a political reckoning was taking place inside slave societies across the Atlantic World. Beginning in 1861, slaveowners and state officials in Cuba and Brazil faced the immense challenge of containing Black revolutionary currents across the Atlantic. Despite their intensive policing of Black transnational networks, enslaved men and women in both Cuba and Brazil learned of the Civil War and understood that it heralded their emancipation. In response, they walked off plantations, fled to maroon communities, and organized revolts. Although the scale of this insurrectionary violence never reached the same heights as in the Confederacy, the beginning of Reconstruction in the United States transformed the political implications of slave insurrection across the Atlantic World. The fall of the Confederacy forced slaveowners in Cuba and Brazil to confront the possibility of their violent destruction as a social class at the same moment that the radicalization of Republican politics raised the possibility of U.S. military support for a general slave insurrection in the Atlantic World. It was in this context that many white elites in both states became convinced of the necessity of a gradual abolition measure, which they hoped would ensure subaltern political loyalty at a moment when revolutionary violence threatened the future of slavery.

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<sup>137</sup> AHI, 233.3.13, 9 Nov. 1863, Lisboa to Marquez de Abrantes. My emphasis.

## I. The Origins of an Atlantic Revolution

Scholars have long debated the role of the U.S. Civil War in bringing about the fall of slavery in the Atlantic World. Just a few years after the defeat of the Confederacy, Spain and Brazil passed gradual emancipation laws that promised freedom to all future children born to the enslaved. These laws did not abolish slavery, but they did guarantee its eventual destruction throughout the hemisphere.<sup>138</sup> Early historians of abolition attributed the gradual emancipation laws primarily to the outcome of the Civil War.<sup>139</sup> They argued that Cuban and Brazilian slaveowners embraced reform in large part because the abolition of slavery in North America discredited the institution on the world stage.<sup>140</sup> But many considered this explanation inadequate.<sup>141</sup> In particular, social historians objected to an account of abolition in which enslaved people played almost no part. These scholars developed a powerful alternative

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<sup>138</sup> By the 1870s, precedents for free womb laws stretched back nine decades, from Pennsylvania's free womb law in 1780 to Paraguay's in 1842. See Seymour Drescher, *Abolition*, 333–71.

<sup>139</sup> The first historian to make this argument was Joaquim Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império: Nabuco de Araújo, sua vida, suas opiniões, sua época*, 3 vols. (Rio de Janeiro and Paris: H. Garnier, 1899), ii, 315–21.

<sup>140</sup> Arthur Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1967), 163, 239–53; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888*, 67, 70–89; Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, 41–57.

<sup>141</sup> Since the 1970s, Brazilian historians have demonstrated that economic modernization, British diplomatic pressure, the Paraguayan War, and the anti-slavery politics of the Brazilian Emperor also accelerated the turn to gradual emancipation. See da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia*; Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras*, 50–70; Henrik R. Kraay, "Slavery, Citizenship and Military Service in Brazil's Mobilization for the Paraguayan War," *Slavery and Abolition* xviii, no. 3 (1997), 228–256; and Jeffrey D. Needell, *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831-1871* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). Similarly, scholars of the Spanish Empire have portrayed the Ten Years' War and the rise of an anti-slavery public sphere as important catalysts for gradual emancipation: José Antonio Piqueras, *La revolución democrática: cuestión social, colonialismo y grupos de presión* (Madrid: Ministerio de trabajo y seguridad social, 1992), 271–98; Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Anti-Slavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 49, 100–23. In all of these accounts, the end of the Civil War still figures as a critical turning point because it left Cuban and Brazilian slaveowners isolated on the world stage.

explanation for gradual emancipation that was rooted in subaltern agency. In their telling, slaveowners surrendered freedom of the womb as a political concession to their slaves in order to diffuse mounting revolutionary tensions within Cuban and Brazilian society.<sup>142</sup> For this reason, historians who have recently attempted to reassert the global origins of the crisis of slavery in Latin America often provoke controversy. Their accounts diminish the importance of enslaved people in achieving gradual emancipation.<sup>143</sup>

This chapter argues that the end of the Civil War precipitated the abolition of slavery in Cuba and Brazil *because* of the actions of the slaves. Historians have long known that international events informed the struggles of enslaved workers.<sup>144</sup> Yet only very recently have they begun to ask how the Civil War influenced the political strategies of enslaved people in Latin America. The only existing study on this subject, by Isadora Mota, proved that in Brazil, slaves imagined the Civil War as a “transnational struggle for freedom,” which inspired them to

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<sup>142</sup> For the classic statements of this position, see Warren Dean, *Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System, 1820–1920* (Stanford, CA, 1976), 124–38; Rebecca Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton, 1985), 63–83; Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*, 157–71. See also Eduardo Spiller Pena, *Pajens da casa imperial: juriconsultos, escravidão, e a lei de 1871* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2001), 169–89, 285–90; Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 46–66.

<sup>143</sup> Needell, *The Party of Order*, 233; Rafael de Bivar Marquese, “Capitalismo, escravidão e a economia cafeeira do Brasil no longo século XIX” *Saeculum—Revista de História*, xxix (2013), 304–11; Alain El Youssef, “O Império do Brasil na segunda era da abolição, 1861–1880” (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2019). For a critical response to Needell, see Sidney Chalhoub, “Resenha de: ‘Os conservadores no Brasil Império’ de Jeffrey D. Needell,” *Afro-Ásia*, xxxv (2007), 317–26.

<sup>144</sup> The Haitian Revolution is the best-known example. See Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*; Scott, *The Common Wind*; Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America*; dos Santos Gomes, “Experiências transatlântica e significados locais,” 226–237; Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); David Geggus (ed.), *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); David Geggus and Norman Fiering (eds.), *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes*; Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*.

strike out for their own liberation.<sup>145</sup> Mota sees the revolutionary struggles inspired by the Civil War as critical evidence of the centrality of Brazil to the formation of transnational abolitionism.<sup>146</sup> In her account, these slave rebellions culminated primarily in the hardening of a regime of race-based border policing within the Brazilian nation-state.<sup>147</sup> By contrast, I reveal how the beginning of Reconstruction tipped the balance of power in the ongoing struggles between Latin American slaveowners and their slaves. As news of the Union occupation reached Cuba and Brazil, slaveowners became convinced that their insurgent slaves had gained a powerful new ally on the world stage. Many were unwilling to risk the escalation of revolutionary violence under this reconfigured world order. As a result, they granted major concessions to enslaved workers, including the liberation of their future children.

## **II. A War Without Borders**

Since the beginning of Atlantic slavery, Black people had built invisible networks of communication that spanned the American hemisphere. The original architects of these subaltern lines of communication were the “Atlantic creoles,” a small group of Afro-descended men and women who worked as sailors and interpreters during the early years of the Atlantic slave trade. As they traversed the Atlantic World, they passed news and information between the communities of Afro-descendants that sprang up in port cities ranging from Boston to Salvador, Brazil.<sup>148</sup> In the eighteenth century, the rapid expansion of plantation slavery in the Americas

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<sup>145</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 1.

<sup>146</sup> For the most recent version of this argument, see Isadora Moura Mota, “Other Geographies of Struggle: Afro-Brazilians and the American Civil War,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (2020), 35-62.

<sup>147</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 188–237.

<sup>148</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 23.

altered the nature of these transatlantic exchanges. The Black mariners who swapped news and rumor across the Atlantic were more likely to be slaves, or pirates.<sup>149</sup> In plantation societies, port cities became sites of contact between Black sailors and local slaves. And in colonies where slaves sometimes outnumbered whites by a margin of two to one, any news these sailors brought of freedom elsewhere in the Atlantic World was, as historian Julius Scott has argued, “potentially explosive.”<sup>150</sup>

In the nineteenth century, these maritime connections grew even tighter as unprecedented economic transformation rocked the Atlantic World. Industrial revolutions first in Great Britain and then in the northern United States led to a vast expansion in demand for slave-grown commodities. Almost simultaneously, the Haitian Revolution and the decline of the West Indian sugar industry destroyed export production in the French and British empires. The result was the rapid and unparalleled expansion of plantation slavery across the frontier regions of western Cuba, the southern United States, and southeastern Brazil.<sup>151</sup> Between 1820 and 1860, the total-value of cotton, sugar, and coffee exports from these three nations grew from \$48.5 million to \$291.5 million.<sup>152</sup> The second slavery also drew these societies closer together. By mid-century, the United States was the leading consumer of Cuban sugar and Brazilian coffee; by the 1860s, 65 percent of Cuban sugar and 47 percent of Brazilian coffee were exported to the United

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<sup>149</sup> Mary Hicks, “João de Oliveira’s Atlantic World: Mobility and Dislocation in Eighteenth-Century Brazil and the Bight of Benin,” in *The Many Faces of Slavery: New Perspectives on Slave Ownership and Experiences in the Americas*, eds. Lawrence Aje and Catherine Armstrong (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020), 170.

<sup>150</sup> Scott, *The Common Wind*, 7.

<sup>151</sup> Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, 58-59.

<sup>152</sup> Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, 131.

States.<sup>153</sup> New commercial infrastructure, including steamship and telegraph lines, emerged to sustain this growing trade. In 1860, it took a steamship just three days to travel from New Orleans to Havana; by 1865, a traveler could move from New York to Rio de Janeiro in just over a month.<sup>154</sup> When the U.S. and Brazil Mail Steamship Company was inaugurated in December of 1865, the first steamer to depart for Rio de Janeiro was called the *Havana*.<sup>155</sup>

As a result, when the U.S. Civil War began in 1861, the news spread quickly across the hemisphere. Almost as soon as South Carolina seceded, delegates from the state's legislature contacted the Brazilian Foreign Ministry to "articulate the views of South Carolina's political class on the current crisis unfolding in the American Union."<sup>156</sup> Gabriel Tassara also forwarded the Confederate declaration of independence to the Spanish Foreign Ministry.<sup>157</sup> By that fall, U.S. diplomats were beginning to experience the consequences of secessionist activity abroad. In November, Elisha Wallace, a U.S. consul in Cuba, complained that "all [here] are strong and violent secessionists as are most of the inhabitants of the Island of Cuba."<sup>158</sup>

Word of a growing slave rebellion in the South travelled almost simultaneously. On November 8, 1860—just two days after Lincoln's election—Miguel Lisboa wrote to the

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<sup>153</sup> Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, 85; El Youssef, "O Império do Brasil na segunda era da abolição, 1861-1880," 103-104.

<sup>154</sup> Adam Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach: A Kidnapping in the Twilight of Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 94. For a description of the mid-century journey from the U.S. to Brazil, see: SHC, *Brazilian Travel Diary*, 1866.

<sup>155</sup> "From Brazil; The New Steamship Line," *New York Times*, 3 Dec. 1865.

<sup>156</sup> AHI, 235.2.1, 25 Jan. 1861, João Cansanção de Sinimbú to Lisboa.

<sup>157</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, leg. 1470, 18 Mar. 1861, Tassara to Calderón.

<sup>158</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59, Micro copy T-55, Roll No. 5, 30 Nov. 1861, Elisha Wallace to William Seward.

Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs to inform him that federal troops had been sent to guard military arsenals in Georgia and North Carolina, “out of fear that these stores of weapons might be attacked by slaves.”<sup>159</sup> Ten days later, he again warned that “the slaves in some locations are beginning to stir,” adding that the “violent agitation of the question of slavery in the entire North, over a quarter century, is finally producing a malignant influence among the slaves, inspiring them with vague notions of freedom.”<sup>160</sup> In Cuba, the Spanish Empire’s Captain General, Francisco Serrano, learned of these developments even more directly. On November 11, 1861, Franco Muñoz, the Spanish consul in Charleston, wrote to inform him of the fall of nearby Port Royal to the Union Army. “The town has been abandoned by its inhabitants, composed almost entirely of the owners of local plantations. It is rumored that Blacks refuse to follow their masters.” The “sensation,” Muñoz added, was one of “indefinable panic.” With the town “almost deserted,” twenty-two thousand Blacks remained, “of whom eight thousand are free people, in general educated artisans who perfectly understand the pretext for this war.”<sup>161</sup>

Even thousands of miles away, slaves learned of the “general strike” that had begun in the Confederacy.<sup>162</sup> In Brazil, this news first reached the northern province of Maranhão in late 1861. The Union warship *Powhatan* docked in the capital city of San Luís that September, in pursuit of a wayward Confederate cruiser.<sup>163</sup> Within days, Brazilian officials detected a “movement” among the province’s slaves. In towns stretching along the region’s waterways,

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<sup>159</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 8 Nov. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>160</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 19 Nov. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>161</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2404, 11 Nov. 1861, Franco Muñoz to Francisco Serrano.

<sup>162</sup> Here, I borrow a term from Du Bois, who described the mass flight from slave plantations during the Civil War as a “general strike.” See *Black Reconstruction in America*, chapter 4.

<sup>163</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 80.

enslaved Afro-Brazilians had begun to “declare their freedom.” Slaves insisted that they “no longer had to obey their masters” because “a [U.S.] warship was there to liberate them.”<sup>164</sup>

As a result, the “movement” that emerged in Maranhão in 1861 soon extended across the northern part of the country. In the early months of 1862, slaves in the nearby province of Pernambuco heard rumors of their freedom. Apparently, the government had mandated emancipation, but “the planters refused to obey.” Slaves on the sugar plantation Guararapes immediately gathered to discuss the news. Then, they killed their owner and set fire to his sugar mill. Over the next few hours, they proceeded to neighboring plantations, declaring that all Brazilian slaves “would receive their freedom.” Eventually, the local police learned the origins of this deadly rumor: the ongoing “insurrectionary movement” in the province of Maranhão.<sup>165</sup>

Spanish and Cuban slaveowners, too, faced growing danger from this revolt. For them, the threat first emerged in the port cities of the U.S. South. Just a few decades earlier, large swaths of this region had belonged to the Spanish Empire. As a result, many Spanish merchants and slave traders lingered there, living and working in Southern port cities through the early years of the Civil War.<sup>166</sup> Beginning in November 1861, the Spanish consul Franco Muñoz began writing to the Captain General in Cuba, begging him to evacuate these men from the city of Charleston. “In a matter of hours,” he warned, the city could be “reduced to ashes” by Union bombs. “But this threat is nothing,” he added, compared to the “more terrible calamity” that

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<sup>164</sup> Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (hereafter ANRJ), Rio de Janeiro, IJ1-842, 20 Jan. 1862, Pedro Leão to Francisco de Paula Negreiros de Saião.

<sup>165</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-332, 12 Mar. 1862, Dispatch to Saião.

<sup>166</sup> For discussion of Spanish control of Southern territories and ports around the turn of the century, see Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016), 8-9 and Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 13, 101-102.

awaited them. Muñoz feared execution at the hands of slaves. In each letter, he reminded the Captain General of the city's large Black population. On November 13, 1861, he reported that "the authorities have taken measures to prevent [slave insurrection], but should it come we are unprepared to defend ourselves as all the soldiers have left...Many of the Spaniards living here, accompanied by their children, have come to me, begging for support and protection, imagine my feelings!" In the end, he was left pleading, "in the name of every Spanish resident of Charleston...I am asking you to take measures to remove us" from the Confederacy.<sup>167</sup>

In the months that followed, Spanish slaveowners across the South began to echo these demands for a state-sponsored evacuation. In April of 1862, the Union Navy opened fire on the forts outside of New Orleans. Over the next twenty-four hours, the entire city watched as rebel sailors pushed rafts covered in flaming pine and pitch into the water to float down on Yankee ships, and an enormous mob gathered at the harbor, brandishing pistols and burning huge piles of cotton. By the first of May, fifteen thousand Union soldiers led by General Benjamin Butler had marched into the city and raised U.S. flags over every public building.<sup>168</sup> For the five thousand Spanish residents of New Orleans, however, the Union takeover was far less concerning than the events that followed. On May 28, 1863, the Spanish consul Juan Callejón informed the Spanish government that the Union Army was organizing "twenty regiments of negros" to secure the city of New Orleans during an outbreak of yellow fever. All the white soldiers had been evacuated, and "the people of color are in a state of agitation." Callejón concluded, "you can easily

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<sup>167</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2404, 13 Nov. 1861, Muñoz to Serrano.

<sup>168</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 420-421.

understand the grave dangers...for the white people of the city.” He requested that the Cuban Captain General deploy a warship to “protect us in the unhappy circumstances.”<sup>169</sup>

Over the next few weeks, the consulate’s demands became more specific, and more forceful. On June 5, another New Orleans consul, José Valles y Puig, wrote to inform the Captain General that the Black regiments were formed “almost entirely of former slaves” and “the dominant feeling among them is to revenge themselves upon the whites.” Puig echoed his colleague’s demand for naval reinforcements, this time suggesting the provision of a steamer that “can guarantee, if not the property, at least the lives of our numerous compatriots here in New Orleans.”<sup>170</sup> Soon, these men grew desperate. On July 3, Puig and Callejón began demanding that the Union Army provide security “against a servile insurrection” for “the numerous foreigners who reside in this city.” Puig and Callejón predicted that freedpeople would employ violence to “defend their new rights and to acquire still more.” Under these circumstances, they argued, defenseless Spaniards had “a right to depend on the active citizens of the United States” for protection.<sup>171</sup> The next day, Callejón sent an update to the Captain General in Cuba, informing him that the Spanish steamer the *Pizzaro* had not yet arrived, the evacuation was incomplete, and the freedpeople were “in such a state of excitement” that the consulate had appealed to the U.S. government for additional security.<sup>172</sup>

The Spanish state sought to evacuate its citizens but feared contributing to the growth of revolutionary currents in the Black Atlantic as they did so. In November of 1862, Gabriel

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<sup>169</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2407, 28 May 1863, Juan Callejón to Tassara.

<sup>170</sup> AMAE, Ultramar, leg. 2407 H, 5 June 1863, Valles y Puig to the Cuban Captain General.

<sup>171</sup> AMAE, Ultramar, Leg. 2925H, 3 July 1863, Letter from the Spanish Consulate to the Brigadier General Emory.

<sup>172</sup> AMAE, Ultramar, Leg. 2925H, 4 July 1863, Juan Callejón to the Cuban Captain General.

Tassara circulated a clipping from the Washington, D.C. newspaper, the *Star*, to various members of the Spanish government. The *Star* reported that “various secessionist families from New Orleans arriving at the Island of Cuba have managed to bring many slaves with them: as a result, the Black Cubans are beginning to learn to sing songs of Lincoln, much to the disgust of their owners.” Tassara did not hesitate to outline the potential consequences of these developments. “Supposing there is some grain of truth in these reports of the *Star*,” he wrote, the entry of African American slaves into Cuba “must not be tolerated, aware as we are of the possible repercussions of the ongoing crisis of slavery in this country.”<sup>173</sup> The Spanish Secretary of State drew similar conclusions, noting in a later report on refugee evacuation that “in the current circumstances” offering asylum to slaveowners “may bring more difficulties than advantages.”<sup>174</sup> Despite official reservations, more than one thousand enslaved African Americans were illegally transported to Cuba during the Civil War.<sup>175</sup> By 1863, Afro-Cuban slaves could be heard singing in the fields, “onward, Lincoln, onward, you are our hope.”<sup>176</sup>

In Cuba, slaveowners grew increasingly restless. In August of 1861, a Spanish official reported to the Secretary of State that “the crisis unfolding in the neighboring American Union...has produced no small alarm” among “the principal planters and capitalists” of Cuba.<sup>177</sup> By 1863, their fear had intensified. The new Captain General, Domingo Dulce, warned the Spanish government that “the bloody war” between the North and the South “has produced grave

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<sup>173</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2407, 4 Nov. 1862, Tassara to Seward.

<sup>174</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2407, 28 Mar. 1863, Report on “Asylum in New Orleans.”

<sup>175</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 106.

<sup>176</sup> Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery*, 105.

<sup>177</sup> AMAE, Sección Ultramar, leg. 2924, 12 Aug. 1861, Gabriel Enriquez to Calderón.

fears for the future here...it will not be possible to prevent the people of color from learning” of the abolitionist doctrines now circulating in the Atlantic World. He worried that Afro-Cubans, inspired by emancipation in the United States, might threaten the public safety and attempt “to overthrow...the established order of things.” Slaveowners, he added, lived in a state of constant “alarm and unrest.”<sup>178</sup>

In 1864, the Spanish government caught wind of a slave conspiracy in eastern Cuba. The Captain General immediately established a Military Commission to crush the anticipated slave rebellion. Half a dozen men and women—both slaves and free people of color—were arrested and charged with conspiring “to incite slave rebellion in demand of their freedom.” By the end of the year, the colonial state had punished every conspirator and heightened security across the island.<sup>179</sup> In Washington, D.C., Gabriel Tassara heard the news a few weeks later. He wrote immediately to the Spanish Secretary of State, attaching a clipping from a New York newspaper, which reported that “an insurrection...has broken out at Puerto Principe, Cuba” and added that “the wildest rumors are afloat” of another revolt, this time to take place in Havana.<sup>180</sup>

In Brazil, meanwhile, the scale of revolutionary violence continued to grow. Between 1860 and 1864, sixty-three slave rebellions took place in Brazil, several of which were directly inspired by U.S. emancipation.<sup>181</sup> By 1864, large swaths of the countryside were in a state of insurrection. Perhaps the largest revolt that year took place in Diamantina, a mining district in

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<sup>178</sup> Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), Madrid, Ultramar, leg. 3551, Expediente 5, 30 Oct. 1863, Dulce to Francisco Permanyer Tuyets.

<sup>179</sup> Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Havana, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 135, No. 19.

<sup>180</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, leg. H 1471, 19 Dec. 1864, Tassara to Lorenzo Arrazola y García.

<sup>181</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 16, 169.

Minas Gerais. There, a small group of slaves “read about the events of the Civil War” in a local newspaper, and then “transmitted [the information] to those who did not know how to read.”<sup>182</sup> Over the next few days, more than three hundred slaves launched a violent revolt.<sup>183</sup> Brazilian soldiers fought these insurgents for almost a month. Eventually, the state deployed more than one hundred regiments of the National Guard to “extinguish the volcano” that had erupted in Diamantina.<sup>184</sup> Across the region, police braced for the worst, seeking to “arrest and punish” all potential rebels in order to “avoid the expansion of the insurrection.”<sup>185</sup>

During the U.S. Civil War, the scale of revolutionary violence never reached the same heights in Cuba. Only four slave insurrections took place in Cuba between 1860 and 1866.<sup>186</sup> There were two key reasons for this. First, Cuba was historically one of the most heavily militarized slave societies in the hemisphere.<sup>187</sup> Across the island, the Spanish military relied on tactics of espionage, terror, and brute force to dominate Black people and repress Afro-Cuban organizing. As recently as 1844, more than three thousand men and women had been tortured, shot, and imprisoned by the Spanish government as the result of a few conspiratorial meetings held in the western zone of the island.<sup>188</sup> In Brazil, by contrast, policing was decentralized, with

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<sup>182</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-628, 11 Oct. 1864, Joaquim Rabelho to Pedro de Alcantaro Leite and ANRJ, 84.0.ACR.164, Apelante José (escravo de Francisca de Araújo Padilha), 9 April 1864. For further discussion of this revolt, see Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 135-138.

<sup>183</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-465, 18 Mar. 1863, Lopes de Leão to Sinimbú.

<sup>184</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-628, 29 Oct. 1864, João Salomé Queiroga to Leite.

<sup>185</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-465, 18 Mar. 1863, Leão to Sinimbú.

<sup>186</sup> Pedro Deschamps-Chapeaux, *Subelevación de esclavos en Cuba, 1553-1880* (San Juan: Puerto Ediciones, 2013).

<sup>187</sup> Piqueras, “Leales en época de insurrección,” 190.

<sup>188</sup> García, *Conspiraciones y Revueltas*, 130.

more than twenty provincial presidents directing local police forces under guidelines established by the distant Ministry of Justice.<sup>189</sup> In this regard, Cuban slaveowners held another distinct advantage: Cuba was roughly seventy times smaller than Brazil. If necessary, police could travel the entire length of the island in just a few days. In Brazil, local police requiring reinforcements against slaves might have to wait for weeks before the Brazilian National Guard could reach them.<sup>190</sup>

Still, slaveowners in both countries had reasons to feel confident. In 1864, the fate of North American slavery remained unclear. That spring, the U.S. military suffered major defeats. In just two months, the Union army lost 65,000 men—roughly three-fifths of the total number killed, wounded or missing during the previous three years of war.<sup>191</sup> That summer, northern morale reached a new low. Many northerners objected to bloodshed of this magnitude, especially when victory was nowhere in sight. The result was a growing clamor for peace that damaged Lincoln’s prospects for reelection and endangered the Emancipation Proclamation. In August, Lincoln’s Democratic opponent, George McClellan, announced his willingness to abandon emancipation in order to negotiate an armistice with the Confederacy. A few weeks later, Lincoln began to despair. On August 19, 1864, he called the abolitionist Frederick Douglass to his office to ask for advice on how to increase the number of freedpeople who, in the event of his electoral defeat, could not be re-enslaved.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Parron, “A política da escravidão na era da liberdade,” 345.

<sup>190</sup> See, ANRJ, IJ1-437, 22 Feb. 1865, Dispatch to the Provincial President of Espírito Santo.

<sup>191</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 741-742.

<sup>192</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 303-309.

Moreover, there was little reason for slaveowners to believe that the ongoing rebellions in Cuba and Brazil could not be contained. Since the beginning of the century, state forces in Cuba and Brazil had crushed dozens of revolts. In 1814, Brazilian soldiers suppressed a violent rebellion involving more than a hundred slaves in Bahia.<sup>193</sup> In 1830 and 1832, slaveowners in São Paulo discovered and repressed two major slave conspiracies organized across fifteen different plantations.<sup>194</sup> State forces crushed another rebellion involving more than three hundred slaves in the province of Rio de Janeiro in 1838.<sup>195</sup> The largest rebellion by far took place in Salvador, Bahia, in 1835, when more than five hundred enslaved Africans were defeated in a pitched battle with the Brazilian army.<sup>196</sup> In Cuba, the colonial state repressed similar insurrections in 1812, 1825, 1835, 1841, and 1843.<sup>197</sup> Perhaps the best reason slaveowners had to feel hopeful was that by 1864, no rebellion inspired by the U.S. Civil War had yet matched the scale of these previous revolts. That year, the largest insurrection in Brazil involved only three hundred slaves; in Cuba, a mere half dozen. It therefore remained profoundly unclear to these men whether the mass insurrection occurring in the Confederacy heralded the beginning of “a

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<sup>193</sup> João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, “Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Brazil” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, 287.

<sup>194</sup> Ricardo Pirola, *Senzala insurgente: malungos, parentes e rebeldes nas fazendas de Campinas* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2011), 24.

<sup>195</sup> Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Histórias de quilombolas: mocambos e comunidades de senzalas no Rio de Janeiro—século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006), 179-255.

<sup>196</sup> João José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: A história do levante dos males, 1835* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986), 9, 87-103.

<sup>197</sup> Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2; Manuel Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection: Domination and Resistance on Western Cuban Plantations* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 31, 34-40; Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 102.

second Haitian Revolution,” as some were calling it.<sup>198</sup> Slaveowners, after all, had dealt with the threat of Atlantic revolution before.

### III. The Reaction of the Old Order

Since the Haitian Revolution, slaveowners had been preparing for a crisis like this one. During the 1790s, in response to the mass revolt of Blacks and people of color in Saint Domingue, both the Spanish Empire and the United States developed new legal mechanisms to curtail the movement of revolutionary people and ideas across the Atlantic World. In May of 1790, Spanish officials ended a rule welcoming fugitive slaves from foreign colonies.<sup>199</sup> In the early 1800s, Cuban governors refused settlement to white French colonists; admitted French colonists but prohibited them from bringing slaves; deported free people of color; and denied French slave traders admission to the island.<sup>200</sup> In Virginia, the state legislature tightened restrictions against slave gatherings of any kind. In 1794, South Carolina’s legislature prohibited West Indian Blacks from entering the state. North Carolina and Maryland enacted similar measures in 1795 and 1797, respectively. This fear of Black foreigners reached as far north as Massachusetts, where all Black foreigners were threatened with deportation, and as far south as Brazil, where the state monitored the activity of French ships entering Brazilian waters.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Some African Americans began referring to the U.S. Civil War as a “second Haitian Revolution” after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. See Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 99-110. This alarmed Brazilian slaveowners: Celia Maria Marinho de Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987), 47.

<sup>199</sup> Scott, *The Common Wind*, 128.

<sup>200</sup> Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 175.

<sup>201</sup> Scott, *The Common Wind*, 191; Rafael Marquese and Tâmis Parron, “Revolta escrava e política da escravidão: Brasil e Cuba, 1791-1825,” *Revista de Indias* 71 (2011), 31.

In the 1820s, South Carolina took these restrictions a step further. In response to the slave insurrection plot of Denmark Vesey, the state legislature ratified the “Negro Seaman Acts” in 1822. These laws required the imprisonment of all free Black sailors entering South Carolina until their ship was ready to depart and further mandated that the captain of this ship pay for their detention. If the captain failed to do so, these Black sailors would be enslaved and sold.<sup>202</sup> The provision for enslavement was removed by the state legislature in 1823 but re-enacted in 1835. Across the South, other states followed suit. In 1829, Georgia passed a law requiring that any vessel with free Blacks on board be quarantined for forty days. In North Carolina, a similar measure was enacted in 1830. In 1832, Florida barred any free Black person from entering the state on pain of imprisonment.<sup>203</sup>

Slaveowners across the Atlantic World were inspired by these laws. In 1825, slaveowners began lobbying for their imposition in Cuba.<sup>204</sup> Under pressure to contain the growing threat from abolitionist movements in the North Atlantic, both the Spanish and Brazilian Empires quickly heeded their call.<sup>205</sup> In 1831, as part of a general anti-slave trade law, the Brazilian Parliament banned freedpeople from entering Brazilian ports. By 1834, this law had been interpreted to include all foreign people of color who could not prove their status as freeborn.<sup>206</sup> In 1837, the Spanish Captain General imposed a new law mandating that every foreign person of

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<sup>202</sup> Philip M. Hamer, “Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seaman Acts, 1822-1848,” *The Journal of Southern History* 1, no. 1 (1935), 4–11, 30.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, 12-18.

<sup>204</sup> ANC, Fondo Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, leg. 201, No. 8927-A.

<sup>205</sup> For examples, see ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 937, No. 33066; leg. 40, No. 7; leg. 39, No 18.

<sup>206</sup> On this measure, see Wlamyra Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação: abolição e cidadania negra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), 46-49; Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*, chap. 8, Kindle; and Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 193, 204.

color arriving in Cuban ports be imprisoned until their ship's departure. This measure was later amended to allow ship captains to pay a one-thousand-peso bail so that foreign Black sailors could remain onboard their ships and perform select labor on Cuban docks.<sup>207</sup> In 1848, the Captain General considered constructing a separate jail for Black sailors whose captains refused to post bail, in order to ensure their isolation from local Afro-Cuban prisoners.<sup>208</sup>

Free Black people fought these laws for decades prior to the Civil War. In 1838, more than six hundred Black sailors living in New York demanded that the U.S. Congress protect their freedom to cross borders. They pointed out that as sailors, it was essential “to travel both by sea and land to and from the state of South Carolina and Georgia and to and from the island of Cuba.” Yet, in carrying out “their lawful business...many of us have been arrested and thrown into loathsome prisons and dungeons and all of us liable to be thus incarcerated...without any crime being brought or alleged against us *except that of our complexion*.” They concluded by imploring the U.S. Congress “to protect your petitioners” in their “constitutional rights and privileges as citizens of the United States.”<sup>209</sup>

Their protests had little effect. When slave insurrection broke out in the Confederacy, both the Spanish and Brazilian empires reacted almost immediately by tightening existing anti-Black travel bans. As early as December of 1860, Miguel Lisboa began requesting more precise guidelines from the Brazilian government to facilitate the effective enforcement of the 1831

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<sup>207</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 133, No 22.

<sup>208</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 142, No. 7.

<sup>209</sup> NARA, RG 233 (Records of the U.S. House of Representatives), File 24A-G6.8, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, June 4, 1838. Ref. to the Com. On Foreign Affairs. Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Underlining in text, my emphasis.

law.<sup>210</sup> By 1862, he was urging its broad expansion. That year, the U.S. Congress passed the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, which allocated one hundred thousand dollars for Black colonization projects outside the U.S. This legislation provoked great alarm throughout Latin America.<sup>211</sup> Lisboa warned the Brazilian Foreign Ministry that many leaders of the colonization movement in the United States were not *freedpeople*, but rather *freeborn*, and thus would not be subject to the existing travel ban. He urged the Brazilian government to “close the door” to all Black foreigners; only then could it eliminate the threat of immigrants “imbued with dangerous ideas.”<sup>212</sup> In 1866, the Brazilian Council of State ruled that the 1831 travel ban applied to all foreign people of color.<sup>213</sup> By 1868, notices had gone up in every Brazilian consulate in the United States: “NOTICE: Captains or Masters of vessels must not land any person of Color in Brazil; should they take any, they will be compelled to carry them back, and pay the fines imposed by Law. No Passports or Visas to be given to such persons of color.”<sup>214</sup>

In Cuba, the government developed an elaborate surveillance system to manage the influx of African American “servants” arriving from the South. Beginning in 1863, the Captain General required all white refugees to petition for permission to enter the island with any person of color. In addition to paying bail, successful claimants were now required to secure an elite Cuban sponsor, who would vouch for the good behavior of their slave or servant as long as they

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<sup>210</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 3 Dec. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>211</sup> Maria Clara Sales Carneiro Sampaio, “Não diga que não somos brancos: os projetos de colonização para afro-americanos do governo Lincoln na perspectiva do Caribe, América Latina e Brasil dos 1860” (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2009), 10.

<sup>212</sup> AHI, 233.3.12, 20 Aug. 1862, Lisboa to Abrantes.

<sup>213</sup> ANRJ, IR.COD.0.306, Vol. 35, Doc. 17.

<sup>214</sup> AHI, 258.3.9, 1 Feb. 1868, Aguiar to Albuquerque. Capitalization in text.

remained in Havana.<sup>215</sup> Even these additional security measures were not considered sufficient: local police continued to trail Black foreigners as they moved through the city, occasionally reporting their activities back to the Captain General.<sup>216</sup> By 1866, the state was tracking dozens of these individuals.<sup>217</sup>

At the same time, Afro-Cubans living and working abroad found it increasingly difficult to return home. One free Afro-Cuban, Santiago Lima, was a portrait artist whose work required frequent trips to the United States. Over the course of the Civil War, he travelled to New York City three times, soliciting a special passport from the Spanish government before each trip. Then, in April of 1864, the Spanish police denied his request for re-entry. The police chief explained that his “continuous trips to the United States induce suspicion.” It took four months and a special letter of recommendation from the Lieutenant Governor of Guanajay before he was allowed to return home.<sup>218</sup> Others were not so lucky. José Claudio Pineda, a Black man from Matanzas, had been deported by the Spanish government for involvement in the slave conspiracy of 1844. In 1861, he decided to return to the island after the death of his mother, under the impression a recent pardon for “political crimes” had absolved him in the eyes of the Spanish state. He paid dearly for his mistake. The police detained him on arrival. A judge then ruled that the Queen’s pardon did not apply to him, as he had, in fact, committed “a race crime;” within a few days, he was sentenced to life in prison.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> See, ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 1293, No. 50408, No. 50387, No. 50390.

<sup>216</sup> ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 968, No. 34205.

<sup>217</sup> ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 1633, No. 82164.

<sup>218</sup> ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 957, No. 33901.

<sup>219</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 122, No. 72.

Across the Atlantic World, Black people endured imprisonment and family separation in the face of heightened travel restrictions. In 1864, Catalina Rolland, a free woman of color, petitioned the Spanish government for permission to leave Cuba to settle a family affair. She was informed that “the return of all people of color who absent themselves for any reason” was prohibited across the island.<sup>220</sup> In Brazil, Black travelers repeatedly faced arrest and deportation. In October of 1865, a thirty-five-year-old African American freedman named Henry Hunter departed New York for Brazil. When a Brazilian consul caught wind of this slip, he immediately wrote to the Brazilian Minister of Justice, who in turn alerted every provincial governor in Brazil to Hunter’s possible arrival.<sup>221</sup> Local police forces were expected to “stop the freedman” from disembarking.<sup>222</sup> A few months later, a young African American woman and her two small children were detained in the port of Rio de Janeiro. Although they arrived in the company of her white employer, he was unable to prevent their arrest and deportation back to the United States.<sup>223</sup> The Brazilian Consulate in New York, meanwhile, sent a polite reminder to the president of the new U.S. and Brazil Mail Steamship Company: no Black traveler was allowed to set foot in Brazil.<sup>224</sup>

These racist travel bans endured for decades. In 1877, a North American railway company sought to import two thousand African American workers to construct a railroad in northern Brazil. The Brazilian government denied their request, suggesting that they “employ

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<sup>220</sup> ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 1633, No. 82163.

<sup>221</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-1002, 27 Nov. 1865, José Antônio Saraiva to José Tomás Nabuco de Araújo.

<sup>222</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-311, 10 Jan. 1866, Feliano Toscano de Brito to Araújo.

<sup>223</sup> ANRJ, IR.COD.0.306. Vol. 35. Doc. 17.

<sup>224</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-1002, 24 Jan. 1866.

white people” instead, perhaps some of the “thousands of unemployed Irish people who live in the United States right now.”<sup>225</sup> Spanish officials, too, continued to stop African American sailors from disembarking in Cuba. In October of 1879, a U.S. consul complained that the mayor of Cienfuegos was “restricting the liberty of African American citizens of color that may hereafter arrive at this port.” Apparently, the mayor classified them “as cattle or merchandise [and] they are sent to jail, or remain on board of their vessels, the vessel to be subjected to a fine of One Thousand Dollars if they go on shore during their stay.”<sup>226</sup>

Years of intensified border policing did little to stem the tide of revolutionary violence. During 1865 and 1866, the slave insurrection in Brazil continued unabated. By early 1865, maroon communities in Maranhão were effectively waging war against the Brazilian government. The President of the Province, Lafayette Ruiz Pereira, warned the Ministry of Justice that the slave rebellion “is becoming general,” adding that he had deployed one hundred and twenty additional regiments of the National Guard to try to “suffocate” the insurgency. By September, little had changed. Pereira reported that “free Blacks, who know how to read” were continuously spreading rumors of freedom “among the slaves of the capital and interior...these poor people seem to believe that the current war [in the United States] has something to do with the cause of their freedom.” On some plantations, every single slave escaped. For Pereira, the implications were disturbing. He warned the Minister of Justice that the slave population in Maranhão was “larger than the free [population].”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> AHI, 233.4.6, 12 Feb. 1878 and 23 Dec. 1877, Antonio de Carvalho Borges to the Brazilian Secretary of State.

<sup>226</sup> NARA, RG 59 (General Records of the Department of State), Microfilm T-55, Roll No. 6, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Santiago de Cuba, 27 October 1879, W. W. Cross to William Seward.

<sup>227</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-231, 1 May 1865 and 13 Sept. 1865, Lafayette Ruiz Pereira to Araújo.

Across Brazil, state officials faced similar challenges. In April of 1865, the Provincial President of Rio de Janeiro sent an urgent request to the Ministry of Justice for reinforcements from the National Guard. Local officials in São Fidélis had discovered a “plan for a slave uprising,” and the police were undertaking mass arrests on nearby plantations.<sup>228</sup> As in Maranhão, these measures had little effect. A few months later, another “movement among the slaves” was discovered on the coffee plantations of the Paraíba Valley. This time, the state deployed fifty regiments of the National Guard to prevent an uprising.<sup>229</sup> Hundreds of miles away, in the northern regions of Brazil, the same “movement among the slaves” was growing. On July 4, 1865, more than four thousand slaves in the province of Pará struck out for their freedom. These men and women, “inspired by the war in the United States,” launched one of the largest revolts of the era. In February of 1866, the provincial government called in the Brazilian Navy to repress ongoing insurrection.<sup>230</sup>

In Cuba, too, the unrest continued. During the final days of 1864, Gabriel Tassara sent a coded message to the Captain General warning that “on Christmas day an insurrection will explode in Havana.” Even if the rumors proved false—as Tassara hoped they would—he still feared that “we...have nothing good left to hope for.”<sup>231</sup> He was right on both counts. That year, Christmas day passed uneventfully in Cuba, but the feeling of inescapable unrest continued. In 1865, another conspiracy emerged, this time among slaves in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba. In October, the *Savannah Daily Herald* reported that “Cuba looks very calm on the

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<sup>228</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-467, 1865, Dispatch regarding a slave insurrection in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>229</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-468, 15 Sept. 1865, Provincial President of Rio de Janeiro to the Minister of Justice.

<sup>230</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 137, 176-185. For the quotes I use here, see, ANRJ, IJ1-977, 20 Feb. 1866, Araújo to the Minister of the Navy.

<sup>231</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, leg. 1471, 19 Dec. 1864, Tassara to Navarrete.

surface; but the Cubans are troubled with negro conspiracies and plans of insurrection...the planters are not willing to tell the extent of their fears.” That July, “the police of Santiago de Cuba discovered and punished—silently but with terrible severity—a negro conspiracy for the extermination of the whites in the coffee hills, five or six leagues back of that city.” According to one correspondent in the region, four leaders of the conspiracy managed to escape in a fishing boat to Jamaica. He claimed that “I have at times had conversations with several of them in their plantation Spanish....and I glean the same story from all. The negroes of Cuba know that slavery has been abolished in the United States...and they expect to do the same thing for themselves.”<sup>232</sup>

During these years, Afro-Cubans faced terrible persecution at the hands of the state. Following Confederate defeat, the Captain General in Cuba issued a new order regarding the general “subordination of people of color to the white race.” It began by acknowledging that slave emancipation in the United States “has had an unavoidable effect” on the tranquility of the island. New reports constantly reached him that “people of color do not observe that respect, restraint, obedience and meekness that our laws require and that for the good of the public order must be demanded of them.” As a result, he was mandating the careful enforcement of all laws relating to “the respect and obedience that people of color owe to the white race.” Over the next few weeks, governors from around the island wrote in to confirm their receipt of the new directive. Some of them suggested additional provisions for the better subjugation of Black people, including a new vagrancy law, or a mandatory thirty-day prison sentence for those who “lack respect for the white class.”<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> *The Savannah Daily Herald*, Aug. 16, 1865. Thanks to Jonathon Booth for this source.

<sup>233</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 228, No. 1.

Yet for slaveowners, each passing month seemed worse than the last. The weeks following Confederate surrender at Appomattox saw an expansion, rather than reduction, of U.S. military power in the Southern countryside. Between March and August of 1865, thousands of federal soldiers, including former slaves, moved into previously unoccupied plantation districts across the former Confederacy. The U.S. Army's first act in these regions was to establish military rule and eliminate civil governance, effectively destroying the political power of the white planter class.<sup>234</sup> In the Caribbean, the situation seemed almost as volatile. In early 1865, insurgents on the island of Santo Domingo—including many Black Dominicans—successfully ousted the Spanish military after four years of grueling guerilla warfare.<sup>235</sup> Then, on October 7, 1865, former slaves in the British colony of Jamaica launched a massive revolt that swept the eastern part of the island. The colonial governor immediately declared martial law. Over the next three days, British soldiers murdered 354 Black Jamaicans, flogged more than six hundred and burned close to one thousand Black-owned properties. Spain was the only foreign government to offer military assistance.<sup>236</sup>

It was at this moment that state officials in both Cuba and Brazil began to fear a “general insurrection” in the Atlantic World. Among the first to do so was a Brazilian police chief in the state of Minas Gerais, José Maria Brandão. In late 1864, he began warning local officials that

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<sup>234</sup> Gregory Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 24-25.

<sup>235</sup> Anne Eller, “Dominican Civil War, Slavery, and Spanish Annexation, 1844-1865,” in Don Doyle (ed.), *American Civil Wars* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 149-166.

<sup>236</sup> On the Morant Bay Rebellion, see Gad J. Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Edward Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 291-300; Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 307-349.

slaves were preparing to launch “a general insurrection” across the region.<sup>237</sup> Over the next year, it became increasingly clear that he was right. In the summer of 1865, the President of the Province of Pará wrote to inform the Brazilian Minister of Justice that “a general insurrection of slaves” was underway in northern Brazil.<sup>238</sup> Local police across the region confirmed that “slave flight continues to grow on a grand scale,” and worried that “very shortly the province will be entirely without slaves.”<sup>239</sup>

Spanish officials, too, were alive to the danger. On December 29, 1865, Gabriel Tassara wrote to the Captain General in Cuba to warn him about the growing threat of “a general insurrection in the countries with slaves.” Although Christmas had come and gone in the United States with only “a few partial conflicts, started by the Blacks,” the threat of violence had been enough to frighten the entire white population of the South. This worried Tassara less than other news he had just received, “from our charge d’affaires in Haiti.” There, he said, it was rumored that free Black men were conspiring with African American abolitionists to launch an Atlantic-wide slave insurrection. “The risks that arise from this situation are grave,” he admitted. “It is not necessary to say that if this crisis inspires, in certain classes, a greater interest in maintaining the only political and social order powerful enough to protect them...it on the other hand stirs the elements of revolution, which those disillusioned with the current regime will tend to exploit, without any kind of consideration or remorse.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-628, 10 Oct. 1864, Report of José Maria Brandão.

<sup>238</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 29 July 1865, Provincial President of Pará to Araújo.

<sup>239</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-977, 13 Dec. 1865, Dispatch to the Provincial President of Pará.

<sup>240</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 227, No. 19.

In the months that followed Confederate defeat, men like Tassara could envision two possible worlds. The “elements of revolution”—Black people organizing throughout the Atlantic World—might triumph, destroying the last remaining slave regimes in the hemisphere. Or the slaveowners might hold out. The horizon was still not clear.

#### IV. A Changing Horizon

Throughout 1865, a violent transformation was unfolding in the U.S. South. In the early months of that year, freedpeople began organizing mass meetings across the former Confederacy to proclaim their new presence in the political life of the nation. They celebrated their triumphs—emancipation, the Freedmen’s Bureau, the federal recognition of Haiti and Liberia—even as they demanded the continued, fundamental transformation of the United States, based on universal male suffrage, Black access to public education, racial equality before the law, and land redistribution to former slaves.<sup>241</sup> That summer, the federal government began responding to their call.<sup>242</sup> In late July, the Freedmen’s Bureau issued a Circular instructing agents to set aside forty-acre tracts of land for freedmen. At that point, the Bureau controlled more than 850,000 acres of Southern land, abandoned by planters during the war or surrendered by former slaveowners who had been financially wrecked by emancipation.<sup>243</sup> Confronted with sudden poverty and an inverted social order in which former slaves became armed occupiers, elite white Southerners began organizing a violent, counterrevolutionary insurgency that terrorized Black

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<sup>241</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 118-120.

<sup>242</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 123.

<sup>243</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 158-159; John Willis, *Forgotten Time: The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta after the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 12; Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 87-89. See also Claude Oubre, *Forty Acres and Mule: The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Land Ownership* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

people across the South.<sup>244</sup> They were often joined in this white supremacist campaign by their sons (usually Confederate veterans, frequently amputees) as they trekked home across the Southern countryside during the long summer of 1865.<sup>245</sup>

For months, Spanish and Brazilian diplomats tracked the progress of this revolution with a growing sense of astonishment. In 1863, the Brazilian ambassador Miguel Lisboa began sending reports on the “Condition of the Freedman” back to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>246</sup> In gruesome detail, he portrayed the post-emancipation South as a land of “*famine, disease and death*.” Lisboa put the blame for this situation squarely on the shoulders of the abolitionists and Radical Republicans. In his eyes, “immediate emancipation” had delivered freedpeople from bondage only to leave them “facing a future in which this want and misery shall be multiplied a hundredfold.”<sup>247</sup> Tassara, too, was appalled by the coming of freedom in the United States. At the end of 1865, he observed that “the great question is always the so-called organization of Black labor.” “On this point,” he continued, “the truth is that up to now, no system has emerged here, nor has a single measure been taken, that could serve as a lesson or model” for any other nation in the process of abolishing slavery.<sup>248</sup> For all this, he still considered U.S. Reconstruction to be “one of the most extraordinary spectacles” in all of world history.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 146, 155-157.

<sup>245</sup> David Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 12.

<sup>246</sup> AHI, 233.3.13, 9. Nov. 1863, Lisboa to Abrantes.

<sup>247</sup> AHI, 233.3.13, 10 Jan. 1864, Lisboa to Abrantes. Italics in text.

<sup>248</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 227, No. 19.

<sup>249</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2409, No. 50, 14 Mar. 1865, Tassara to Navarrete.

The proslavery press, too, sounded the alarm. Throughout 1865, the most prominent and widely read newspaper in the Brazilian Empire, the *Jornal do Commercio*, published front-page updates on the progress of U.S. Reconstruction.<sup>250</sup> Its reporting charted the violent destruction of Southern plantation property and the expansion of the Union military occupation across the former Confederacy. In July of 1865, the *Jornal* described the flight of President Jefferson Davis from Richmond and noted the efforts of other Confederate leaders to organize guerrillas to combat the advancing Union army.<sup>251</sup> By the end of the year, the elite readers of the *Jornal do Commercio* were left wondering: was it even possible to bring the “dangerous conflicts, appalling disorders, and terrible destruction” in the U.S. South to a halt?<sup>252</sup>

In Cuba, the conservative press provided even more extensive coverage of the revolution unfolding across the water. Between 1864 and 1866, the *Diario de la Marina*—the “voice” of the slaveowning class in Havana—published almost one thousand articles about events taking place in the United States.<sup>253</sup> Their narrative of early Reconstruction stressed the wretched state of freedpeople and the emergence of violent conflicts between former slaveowners and free Black workers. According to the *Diario*, “large bands” of freedpeople roamed the Southern countryside, “robbing and killing, even setting women on fire through their windows.”<sup>254</sup> Other local newspapers followed along, portraying “a state of anarchy” in the post-emancipation

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<sup>250</sup> Jeffrey Needell, *The Party of Order*, 150. For examples of the coverage of Reconstruction, see *Jornal do Commercio*, 26 Jan. 1865, 3 June 1865, 26 July 1865.

<sup>251</sup> “Exterior,” *Jornal do Commercio*. 3 June 1865.

<sup>252</sup> “Exterior,” *Jornal do Commercio*. 2 Jan. 1866.

<sup>253</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 272. The number is the result of a search in digitized copies of the *Diario*.

<sup>254</sup> “Habana,” *Diario de la Marina*, 14 July 1865.

South.<sup>255</sup> Much like Lisboa and Tassara, the Cuban press blamed northern abolitionists for the upheaval, arguing that “the radicals” had brought “ruin” to the South.<sup>256</sup>

For some Cuban slaveowners, relationships with former Confederates brought the experience of Reconstruction even closer to home. After the war, many Southern slaveowners fled to Cuba, including secessionist luminaries like General Edmund Kirby Smith, General John Breckinridge, and the former Confederate Secretary of State, Judah Benjamin. Jefferson Davis himself visited the island multiple times, including in December 1867 and 1869, when he spent the winter holidays in Havana.<sup>257</sup> In Cuba, these men received a royal welcome: in January of 1865, Confederate refugees were greeted on arrival with “huge demonstrations of sympathy and enthusiasm” from local white *cubanos*.<sup>258</sup> A few months later, one white Southerner reported that upon arriving in Havana, “we saw for the first time the Confederate flag flying on ex-blockade runners openly exultant over the murder of Lincoln.”<sup>259</sup> Yet the news they brought to elite Cuban slaveowners was hardly reassuring. In early 1865, the *Diario de la Marina* reported that white refugees recently arrived from Savannah spoke of a city reduced to “misery.” These Georgians described how “families who once lived in comfort had to sew and find small jobs just to get the food necessary” to survive. Meanwhile, enslaved African Americans “were fleeing Savannah” to hide behind Union lines.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, leg. 293, No. 7.

<sup>256</sup> “Habana,” *Diario de la Marina*, 14 July 1865.

<sup>257</sup> Horne, *Race to Revolution*, 112.

<sup>258</sup> “Confederación del Sur,” *Diario de la Marina*, 21 Jan. 1865.

<sup>259</sup> Diary of Mary Cadwalader Jones, quoted in Horne, *Race to Revolution*, 103, 112.

<sup>260</sup> “Confederación del Sur,” *Diario de la Marina*, 21 Jan. 1865.

In Brazil, ex-Confederates arrived in even greater numbers. As early as 1860, the Brazilian legation in Washington D.C. had begun receiving inquiries from Southern planters wishing to move to Brazil.<sup>261</sup> These men hoped to abandon the United States to build new lives in a more secure slave society. The Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Paula Souza, understood their departure as a form of capital flight.<sup>262</sup> Hoping to seize an opening in the international cotton market, he launched a series of programs to facilitate the migration of Southern planters with technical knowledge of cotton production.<sup>263</sup> By 1865, Souza imagined that as many as “three hundred or four hundred thousand families” might make their way to Brazil.<sup>264</sup> Although the numbers never reached these heights, scholars now estimate that between eight to twenty thousand *Confederados* migrated to Brazil during the early years of U.S. Reconstruction.<sup>265</sup>

These men fled personal ruin and Radical rule in the post-emancipation South. Many left for Brazil in April of 1866, immediately after the passage of the first Civil Rights Act.<sup>266</sup> Others left because they faced Black insubordination at home. George Barnsley, the eldest son of an impoverished Louisiana planter, departed for Brazil in late 1865. Over the next two years, his father Godfrey sent him numerous updates from the plantation where he grew up. Godfrey described a continuous state of rebellion among his Black field hands, “particularly after going to

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<sup>261</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 3 Dec. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>262</sup> Biblioteca de Mario de Andrade (hereafter BMA), São Paulo, Arquivo Paula Souza, PS.865.10.09/3, 9 Oct. 1865, Antônio de Paula Souza to his son.

<sup>263</sup> Rafael Marquese and Tâmis Parron, “Internacional escravista: a política da segunda escravidão,” *Topoi* 12 (2011), 111.

<sup>264</sup> BMA, Arquivo Paula Souza, PS. 865.06.18/1, 18 June 1865, Calarans to Souza.

<sup>265</sup> Mota, “On the Imminence of Emancipation,” 86.

<sup>266</sup> SHC, Edward McCrady L’Engle Papers, Box 1, Folder 9, 6 May 1866, S. McConnell to Edward McCrady L’Engle.

vote.” Black women, he complained, “lived in idleness” on his plantation. He blamed this state of affairs on the “white Radicals,” who believed were attempting to “bring about a collision of the races.” George, meanwhile, congratulated himself on his removal to Brazil.<sup>267</sup>

For Brazilian planters, the stories the *Confederados* shared were, at best, unnerving. Upon arrival, most white Southerners travelled through the Brazilian Empire, accompanied by a government translator. On these journeys, ex-Confederates might stay in the homes of as many as fifty Brazilian planters in states ranging from Pernambuco to São Paulo.<sup>268</sup> Over meals or during tours of Brazilian slave plantations, the travelers discussed U.S. Reconstruction. Brazilian planters wanted to know “about the Free Negroes” and “what sort of citizens they make.” One *Confederado*, Andrew McCollam, informed them that free African Americans were “a lazy idle thriftless set of beings not willing to work but depending upon stealing for a living.”<sup>269</sup> Another white Southerner, Ballard Dunn, conveyed an even darker picture of abolition. He described “awful anarchical struggles” unfolding in the former C.S.A., and eventually compared the U.S. military occupation to rule by “a gang of old hyenas.”<sup>270</sup>

Perhaps the most difficult news for Cuban and Brazilian slaveowners to grasp was the new role of the U.S. Army in supporting Black insurrection. Since 1789, Latin American slaveowners had seen the United States as the founder of a new global order based on white

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<sup>267</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, 14 Sept. 1868, Godfrey Barnsley to George Barnsley.

<sup>268</sup> For an account of one such journey, see: Biblioteca de Mario de Andrade (hereafter BMA), São Paulo, IN.1866/6, Obras Raras e Especiais, Ballard S. Dunn, *Brazil, The Home for Southerners* (New York: G.B. Richardson, 1866).

<sup>269</sup> SHC, Andrew McCollam Papers, Series 2.1, Box 4, Folder 44, 25 July 1866, The Brazilian Diary of Andrew McCollam.

<sup>270</sup> BMA, IN.1866/6, Obras Raras e Especiais, Dunn, *Brazil, The Home for Southerners*, 4.

supremacy, forced labor, and the aggressive expansion of state power.<sup>271</sup> These men had modelled their own founding documents on the U.S. Constitution, convinced that the American Republic had crafted the best legal protections for slavery in the modern era.<sup>272</sup> Now, they heard directly from Southern planters about the horrors of the U.S. military turned against them. Their most prominent newspapers tracked the Union Army's devastating "March through Georgia," which brought freedom to more than ten thousand slaves.<sup>273</sup> Miguel Lisboa marveled at this world turned upside down—in other nations, he remarked, a "rebellion is punished with the execution of its leaders, but never with a race war, never with the massacre and extermination of the rebel people."<sup>274</sup> Tassara, too, was stunned. The North "is destroying the Constitution of the United States," he observed, and "erecting over its ruins a despotic system to make the revolution triumph."<sup>275</sup>

For Cuban and Brazilian slaveowners, the possibility of a general slave insurrection made this historic military reversal particularly disturbing. For the past five years, Spanish and Brazilian elites had shared an understanding that internal conflict would prevent U.S. military incursions into Latin America.<sup>276</sup> By 1865, that sense of collective security was over. Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, warned Miguel Lisboa that the anti-slavery Republican

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<sup>271</sup> Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, 9.

<sup>272</sup> Parron, "A política da escravidão na era da liberdade," 59.

<sup>273</sup> *El Diario de la Marina*, 21 Jan. 1865.

<sup>274</sup> AHI, 233.3.12, 25 Sept. 1862, Lisboa to Abrantes.

<sup>275</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, leg. 1472, No. 346, 2 Aug. 1866, Tassara to Eusebio Calonge y Fenollet.

<sup>276</sup> Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 8, 107-126.

Party favored filibustering and anticipated the day when “our entire continent will be annexed to the United States.”<sup>277</sup> To Lisboa, this new combination of abolitionism and imperial aggression posed an “infinitely” greater threat to Brazil than prewar Southern filibustering.<sup>278</sup> Tassara, too, began to fear Republican expansionism. In January of 1866, Charles Sumner delivered a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate condemning the kidnapping of African American freedpeople to Cuba and Brazil. He implored the State Department, the War Department, and the U.S. Navy to “look after the liberty of these people, to which we are pledged.”<sup>279</sup> Tassara spent the following months working to prevent a U.S. investigation into illegal Cuban slave trading.<sup>280</sup> By this point, Cuban and Brazilian slaves were already convinced that the arrival of the U.S. military would herald their emancipation; now, government officials were beginning to wonder.

Rumors of Black enfranchisement made this possibility even more threatening. In the nineteenth century, it was widely understood that in the United States, Congress exercised war powers.<sup>281</sup> Spanish and Brazilian officials therefore observed the rise of a mass movement for Black suffrage with a great deal of concern. On May 22, 1865, Ignacio de Avellar, the new Brazilian ambassador to the United States, reported that “thousands” of former slaves were petitioning the U.S. Congress for the right to vote.<sup>282</sup> That same week, Gabriel Tassara wrote to

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<sup>277</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 7 Oct. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>278</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 19 Dec. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbú.

<sup>279</sup> *The Congressional Globe: Containing the Debates and Proceedings of the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), 146.

<sup>280</sup> AHN, Ultramar, leg. 4701, Caja 2, Expediente 61, 20 Jan. 1866, Dulce to Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, and AMAE, leg. 2928 H, 16 Feb. 1866, Seward to Tassara.

<sup>281</sup> On the contemporary understanding of the relationship between Congress and the military, see: Downs, *After Appomattox*, 117.

<sup>282</sup> AHI, 233.4.1, 22 May 1865, Ignácio de Avellar Barbosa da Silva to João Pedro Dias Viera.

the Captain General in Cuba to inform him that Radical Republicans were travelling through the South, “proclaiming the beginning of the Black vote.”<sup>283</sup> In Latin America, the proslavery press linked the Black suffrage movement directly to the threat of U.S. military expansion. The *Diario do Rio de Janeiro*, for instance, warned of freedpeople converging on the Capitol even as the U.S. Army moved outward, toward Latin America.<sup>284</sup> Brazilian diplomats began to compare U.S. soldiers to filibusters.<sup>285</sup>

For the first time, a number of slaveowners in Cuba and Brazil began to look for a way out. In Brazil, Francisco Antonio Brandão Jr. led the way. Brandão was the son of a Brazilian cotton planter, who grew up in the province of Maranhão. For four years, his family had watched plantations across the province go up in flames as fugitive slaves took up arms against the Brazilian government. By 1865, he was convinced that if Brazil failed to abolish slavery, “the slave will sign his freedom papers with the blood of his oppressors.”<sup>286</sup> That year, he published *A escravatura no Brasil*, one of the first major works by an elite Brazilian to call for the gradual abolition of slavery across the Empire. In it, he pointed to the Black freedom struggle unfolding across the Atlantic World as the central reason that slaves in Brazil were “inspired to fight.” Was it necessary, he wondered, for Brazil to pass through the same “bloody scenes” as the United States, before the state would take action?<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2409, 30 May 1865, Tassara to Dulce.

<sup>284</sup> “Exterior,” *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 28 Feb. 1866.

<sup>285</sup> AHI, 233.3.9, 19 Dec. 1860, Lisboa to Sinimbu.

<sup>286</sup> Brandão Jr., *A escravatura no Brasil precedida d’um artigo sobre agricultura e colonização no Maranhão*, 45.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, 44-45, 96.

Some Cuban slaveowners were beginning to reach the same conclusion. In May of 1865, Gabriel Tassara held a prolonged meeting with two of the principal slaveowners on the island of Cuba. These men had come to Washington, D.C. to urge the Spanish government to “resolve the question of slavery in Cuba.” Along with Tassara, they proposed convening a *junta* of reform-minded slaveowners to draft legislation for the gradual abolition of slavery. They acknowledged this measure would divide the Cuban slaveholding class—some of whom would reject emancipation “under any circumstances”—but they remained certain that fundamental reform was the only way to avert the violent situation unfolding in the United States. This meeting marked an important moment in the history of Atlantic slavery. For the first time in at least half a century, Cuban slaveowners were openly addressing a new political constituency: “the slaves themselves.”<sup>288</sup>

To these men, it was apparent that slave emancipation in the United States had put slaves in a new position of political strength within their own societies. Over the following months, this new awareness grew. In Brazil, more prominent men began to speak out in favor of gradual abolition, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Antônio Saraiva, and the former Minister of Justice, the Visconde de Jequitinhonha.<sup>289</sup> By January of 1866, even the *Jornal do Commercio* had begun urging reform in front-page editorials describing the “calamities” of U.S. Reconstruction.<sup>290</sup> In Cuba, too, there was a growing sense that the abolition of slavery had become politically imperative. In 1865, the Captain General authorized the publication of the

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<sup>288</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, leg. 2409, 30 May 1865, Tassara to Arrazola. For the decades-long silence of Spanish officials and Cuban slaveowners on the question of abolition, see Marquese and Pârron, “Revolta escrava e política de escravidão,” 30.

<sup>289</sup> AHI, 235.2.1, 3 Nov. 1865, Saraiva to Joaquim Maria Nascentes de Azambuja and *Jornal do Commercio*, 14 Aug. 1865. For additional names see de Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco*, 51.

<sup>290</sup> “Retrospecto político do anno de 1865,” *Jornal do Commercio*, 2 Jan. 1866.

island's first anti-slavery newspaper and began permitting reformers to meet publicly in Havana.<sup>291</sup> A few months later, the Spanish government convened the *Junta de Información*, a reform commission tasked with abolishing slavery in the Empire's overseas territories. Colonial officials were open about why. "The sudden emancipation of four million slaves," they wrote, had left Cuba vulnerable. The island was now "surrounded" by freedpeople, who, at any moment, might "lend a hand" to Afro-Cuban slaves and "destroy the peace and social order" of the Spanish Empire.<sup>292</sup> For these men, one thing was clear: the horizon of political possibilities in the Atlantic World had changed.

## V. Conclusion

Over the next year, state officials gathered in Madrid and Rio de Janeiro to begin the labor of reform. In October of 1866, the Spanish *Junta de Información* asked several slaveowners to answer a series of questions addressing the fundamental issues of slavery and the state. In the Spanish Empire, how should abolition be carried out? What could be done to protect the interests of plantation agriculture during the transition to free labor? And, perhaps most importantly, after the end of slavery, who would be eligible to vote?<sup>293</sup> Just a few months later, the Brazilian Council of State met to discuss almost precisely the same questions.<sup>294</sup> In both nations, these questions had not been touched since the Age of Revolutions. The beginning of Reconstruction, therefore, marked a moment of political crisis throughout the Atlantic World. In all three societies, the constitutional rules that had protected slavery for half a century had begun

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<sup>291</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 291.

<sup>292</sup> AHN, Ultramar, leg. 4931, Expediente 1, 30 Jan. 1867.

<sup>293</sup> AHN, Ultramar, leg. 3489, Junta de Información de Ultramar.

<sup>294</sup> Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império*, vol. 3, 44-80.

to collapse, and, as elite men were beginning to realize, they would have to be re-written. For enslaved people and their descendants, no good outcome from this process was guaranteed. The contest over their future place in the Atlantic World was, in some ways, just beginning. Still, one thing was certain. Across the American hemisphere, the terms of the Black freedom struggle would never be the same.

## Chapter 2

### **“A New Age is Approaching”: *Cuba Libre* and the Struggle for a Democratic Atlantic World, 1866-1873**

On August 12, 1869, the U.S. General Daniel Sickles stumped across the floor of the Spanish War Department in Madrid. He had spent the morning preparing for his first meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister as the U.S. ambassador to Spain.<sup>295</sup> The meeting, he knew, would be an unpleasant one. For the past year, Cuban insurgents had been waging a revolutionary war for independence.<sup>296</sup> Now, Sickles intended to lend support to their struggle. As he informed the Spanish Prime Minister, Juan Prim, later that day, it was only natural “that a deep sympathy with the Cuban people should have grown up in the United States, especially as so many of our citizens regarded the Cubans as fighting for the same principles of self-government [that] we had ourselves adopted.” Over the course of a two-hour conversation, Sickles argued forcefully that Spain must end the war in Cuba and grant Cubans the right to “vote by universal suffrage upon the question of their independence.”<sup>297</sup> Two weeks later, he formalized these demands. In an official letter to the Spanish Secretary of State, he urged Spain to recognize the Cuban Republic and to inaugurate the abolition of slavery across the island.<sup>298</sup>

The appointment of Daniel Sickles as U.S. ambassador to Spain marked a radical shift in the direction of U.S. foreign policy. For the past three years, Sickles’ predecessor under

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<sup>295</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. 31, Reel 52, File Nos. 4 and 5, Aug. 12, 1869, Daniel Sickles to Hamilton Fish.

<sup>296</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 22.

<sup>297</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. 31, Reel 52, File Nos. 4 and 7, August 12 and 13, 1869, Daniel Sickles to Hamilton Fish.

<sup>298</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. 31, Reel 52, File No. 14, September 3, 1869, Daniel Sickles to Don Manuel Silvela.

President Andrew Johnson had refused to comment on the question of Cuban slavery.<sup>299</sup> Sickles, by contrast, had no such inhibitions. He was a blunt man with a fiery reputation. In 1859, he became famous for murdering his wife's lover in the street across from the White House, and then serving out the remainder of his term as a Congressman from New York.<sup>300</sup> Four years later, he donated his own leg to the U.S. Army Medical Museum after it was amputated during the battle of Gettysburg.<sup>301</sup> Between 1865 and 1867, he served as the commanding general of the Military Department of South Carolina, where he banned discrimination against African Americans and oversaw the mass political enfranchisement of thousands of former slaves.<sup>302</sup> He spent the following year campaigning for the election of Ulysses S. Grant and the implementation of universal male suffrage across the continental United States.<sup>303</sup> Now, in the summer of 1869, he arrived in Madrid—ready to carry the labor of Radical Reconstruction out into the Atlantic World.

Daniel Sickles nearly succeeded. Between 1866 and 1873, political crises in Cuba and the United States coincided to make the Radical Reconstruction of the Atlantic World possible. In Cuba, slaveowners lost control of tens of thousands of enslaved laborers. Their failure to make adequate political concessions to their slaves in the aftermath of U.S. emancipation paved the way for revolution in 1868. To many African Americans, the outbreak of the revolution in Cuba signaled the beginning of a new stage in the transnational struggle for freedom that they had

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<sup>299</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. 31, Reel 52, File No. 139, 13 Jul. 1869, John Hale to William H. Seward.

<sup>300</sup> "The Sickles Case: The Last Phase of Public Opinion," *The New York Herald*, 19 Jul. 1859.

<sup>301</sup> "Personal and General Notes," *The Daily Picayune*, 21 Jan. 1895.

<sup>302</sup> "The Administration Enforcing Civil Rights," *North American*, 8 Feb. 1866.

<sup>303</sup> William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: Norton & Co., 2002), chap. 18, Kindle.

begun during the Civil War.<sup>304</sup> For the next five years, newly enfranchised former slaves fought to use the power of the activist Reconstruction state on behalf of the Cuban insurgency. They imagined a new Atlantic World, reconstructed around the principles of Black freedom, equality, and political inclusion; and for a brief “pulse of time” between 1869 and 1870, that world seemed at hand.<sup>305</sup> For nearly twelve months, Republican Party officials in the United States debated recognizing the new Cuban Republic, even at the risk of war with Spain. This international pressure coincided with military victories on the part of the Cuban Liberation Army—including former slaves—to put the Spanish government on the defensive. By the spring of 1870, Spanish officials were weighing a radical possibility: granting Cuba independence, on the basis of Black freedom and political equality.

By 1873 the possibility of this new world had all but disappeared. Beginning in 1869, Cuban slaveowners regrouped, this time, with support. Inside the United States, white elites within the Republican Party were beginning to organize against the rise of an international Black freedom movement. These men belonged to different factions of the Republican Party: some were elite New Yorkers, motivated by a racist conviction that Cubans were unfit for republican citizenship; others, radical abolitionists who feared and opposed U.S. military expansion in the Caribbean. By 1873, they had undermined the Free Cuba movement and successfully charted a

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<sup>304</sup> This episode in American history is beginning to receive the attention it deserves. See: James Shinn, “The Free Cuba Campaign, Republican Politics, and Post-Civil War Black Internationalism, 1869-1874,” in *Revolutions and Reconstructions: Black Politics in the Long Nineteenth-Century*, eds. Van Goose and David Waldstreicher (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 176-198; and Gregory Downs, *The Second American Revolution: The Civil War Era Struggle over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 95-143. In contrast to Shinn, I argue that the African Americans engaged in the Free Cuba campaign were not nationalists. In contrast to Downs, I root the radical possibility of Reconstruction in the Black Atlantic World. For a deeper engagement with Downs’ argument, see Samantha Payne, “The Place of Cuba in the Global History of Reconstruction,” *Almanack Brazilense* 23 (December 2019), 509-513.

<sup>305</sup> This phrase is borrowed from Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 346.

new, conservative course for the future of Atlantic Reconstruction.

### **I. Pandora's Box Reopened**

For Afro-Cubans, the spring of 1865 was a time of hope. That April, the news of Confederate surrender “circulated like an electric spark throughout the island.” From Havana to Santiago, Cuban planters observed that news of emancipation in the United States “stirred every heart, leading our slaves to believe that a new age is approaching.”<sup>306</sup> Free people of color shared this sense of optimism. As the Cuban Captain General noted shortly after the end of the Civil War, “free Blacks are yearning to achieve equal rights.” Although censorship forced Afro-Cuban political organizing underground, the Cuban Captain General remained convinced that the “aspirations” of Black people were “producing a vague and ill-defined sense of unease” across the island.<sup>307</sup> By 1866, this tension was perceptible from abroad. That May, the U.S. Secretary of State observed that emancipation in North America “seems to be profoundly agitating the people of all classes, white, Black, and colored,” in Cuba. “The desire for emancipation,” he concluded, “has undoubtedly been intensified by the success with which it has been recently crowned in the United States.”<sup>308</sup>

Across the Atlantic World, Cuban revolutionaries were beginning to organize. Just a few weeks after Confederate surrender, Spanish, Cuban and Puerto Rican activists in Madrid founded

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<sup>306</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 4931, Caja 1, Expediente 1, Informe de los señores Rodríguez Ogea, Echeverría, Nicolás Azcárte, José de la Cruz Castellanos, José Morales Lemus, José Miguel Angulo Heredia, Conde de Pozos Dulces, Manuel de Ortega, Calixto Bernal, Agustín Camejo, José Julian Acosta, S. Ruiz Belvis, Gerónimo M. Usera, Tomás Terry (haciendo una reserva).

<sup>307</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3489, 16 Jan. 1867, Domingo Dulce to the Spanish Minister of Overseas Colonies.

<sup>308</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), House of Representatives, Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress, 23 May 1866, Mr. Seward to Mr. Hale, 575.

the first Abolitionist Society in the Spanish Empire.<sup>309</sup> In Florida, Afro-Cuban cigar makers began attending local meetings of the anti-slavery Republican Party.<sup>310</sup> And in cities like Boston and New York, large communities of Cuban émigrés began organizing politically alongside American anti-slavery activists. Throughout April of 1865, Cuban immigrants held rallies with prominent abolitionists from across the United States, calling for Cuban independence and the “immediate and absolute end of slavery” worldwide.<sup>311</sup>

Cuban slaveowners and Spanish officials feared this alliance. As the Spanish ambassador to the United States, Gabriel García y Tassara, put it in 1865, “an invasion to promote slave insurrection...could occur at any time.”<sup>312</sup> By 1866, these fears had become widespread among the Cuban planter class. That fall, a group of white Cuban elites wrote to the Spanish Colonial Ministry, fretting that “relations between Spain and the United States are friendly today...but if, for any reason...a conflict was to emerge, can we doubt which side the slaves would be on?”<sup>313</sup>

As a result, Cuban slaveowners began to embrace a politics of reform. On May 12, 1865, twenty-four thousand Cuban property owners signed a petition to the Spanish government calling for the gradual abolition of slavery. “At our doors,” it read, “a bloody drama is unfolding...that

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<sup>309</sup> Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Anti-Slavery*, 49.

<sup>310</sup> Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 73-74.

<sup>311</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Leg. 2409, No. 12, 28 April 1865, Tassara to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>312</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Leg. 2409, No. 102, 13 June 1865, Garcia Tassara to the Cuban Captain General.

<sup>313</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 4931, Caja 1, Expediente 1, Informe de los señores Rodríguez Ogea, Echeverría, Nicolás Azcárte, José de la Cruz Castellanos, José Morales Lemus, José Miguel Angulo Heredia, Conde de Pozos Dulces, Manuel de Ortega, Calixto Bernal, Agustín Camejo, José Julian Acosta, S. Ruiz Belvis, Gerónimo M. Usera, Tomás Terry (haciendo una reserva).

threatens to shake the foundations of the social and political order across this hemisphere.”<sup>314</sup>

They believed that it was now time to “deploy the principle of abolition, wherever the sound of chains can still be heard.”<sup>315</sup> In a separate letter to the Spanish Colonial Ministry, the Cuban Conde de Vega Mar explained this logic more fully. “Despite being a slaveowner,” he wrote, “I and many others see with perfect clarity” the danger that lies ahead. On behalf of Cuban slaveowners, he assured Spanish colonial officials: “we are now ready to make the sacrifices that gradual emancipation demands, in order to preserve our own fortunes, which will otherwise be lost” due to “the continuous pressure of the United States.”<sup>316</sup>

Over the following year, a small group of elite men gathered in Madrid to begin the labor of reconstruction. Their commission, known as the *Junta de Información de Ultramar*, included planters, manufacturers, merchants, and professionals from across the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>317</sup> Their ambition was nothing less than the complete “social reorganization” of the Spanish Empire.<sup>318</sup> In addition to drafting legislation for the gradual abolition of slavery, they hoped to undertake electoral reform—including establishing a clear plan for the political representation of the colonies in the Spanish Cortes.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Manuel de la historia de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1980), 567.

<sup>315</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4931, Caja 1, Expediente 1, 30 Jan. 1867, Inmigración.

<sup>316</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Expediente 2, 2 Jan. 1868, Informe del Excmo Señor Conde de Vega-Mar, Senador del Reino, en contestación á los interrogatorios hechos por el Gobierno de S.M. sobre la información de las leyes especiales para las Isla de Cuba y Puerto-Rico.

<sup>317</sup> Hoffnung-Garskoff, *Racial Migrations*, 46.

<sup>318</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 3489, 16 Jan. 1867, Domingo Dulce to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>319</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 3489, 1867, Junta de Información de Ultramar. Interrogatorio sobre las bases en que deban fundarse las leyes especiales.

Their meeting unfolded in the shadow of a revolution. In 1866, the U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which guaranteed Black equality before the law for the first time in U.S. history. A few months later, the Republican Party passed the Military Reconstruction Acts, which established universal male suffrage across the occupied South.<sup>320</sup> The Spanish-language press covered these events with a breathless urgency. *El Correo de Nueva York*, a newspaper representing white elite Cuban views, reported that “the aim of this legislation is to give people of color the same rights as whites.”<sup>321</sup> A later article from *El Correo* argued that the political enfranchisement of African American freedpeople had transformed the South into “a pitiful picture of discord, outrage, violence, and crimes.” “If the current situation is not resolved quickly,” wrote the Cuban editor, then the U.S. South “will face truly grave and disastrous consequences”—consequences that would be familiar to all students of “revolutions” in the Atlantic World.<sup>322</sup>

The *Junta de Información* took these warnings seriously. On March 14, 1867—just ten days after the news of Black political enfranchisement swept across the U.S. South—a Cuban representative, the Marques de O’Gavan, stood up in the salon of the Spanish Colonial Ministry to condemn the actions of the Radical Republicans. “Powerful whites,” he declared, “unrestrained by...their admirable Constitution,” have “exalted the Blacks.” As a result, Black men—the “poisoned fruits” of the “detestable tree of slavery”—were assuming political power in the U.S. South. In the Spanish Empire, he warned, the “same result” could not unfold. “White

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<sup>320</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 277.

<sup>321</sup> “La guerra de razas—la Reconstrucción del Sur,” *El Correo de Nueva York*, No. 51, 2l.

<sup>322</sup> “Revolución formidable en New Orleans,” *El Correo de Nueva York*, No. 53, 2.

men must rule,” he concluded. “One way or another.”<sup>323</sup>

Yet, it was precisely this “way” that remained unclear. Since 1825, the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico had been ruled by Captain Generals, appointed by the Spanish Colonial Ministry, who exercised almost complete control over the government.<sup>324</sup> Ten years later, a new Spanish Constitution had completely eliminated all Cuban and Puerto Rican representation in the Spanish Parliament. Since then, discontent had grown among the liberal and professional classes on the islands. Small farmers and planters, particularly in eastern Cuba, felt their interests were neglected by a state that primarily served the large sugar planters in the west.<sup>325</sup> These men had been excluded from the benefits of the economic expansion that unfolded on the island during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>326</sup> Yet, the question of extending political representation to the colonies raised serious problems for the Spanish ruling class. In the early nineteenth century, the population of Cuba was composed of 274,000 whites, 114,000 free people of color, and 212,000 slaves. Since then, the non-white population had only grown: by the 1850s, more than 370,000 enslaved and 232,493 free people of color lived in Cuba.<sup>327</sup> In Puerto Rico, the imbalance between the free and slave populations was even more pronounced—241,037 free people of color lived on the island, compared with 41,738 slaves.<sup>328</sup> The dilemma, by 1866, was clear: how could white elites extend democratic institutions to the Spanish colonies, without

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<sup>323</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, leg. 3489, 14 Mar. 1867, El Marques de O’Gavan to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>324</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 274.

<sup>325</sup> Fradera, *Colonias para después un imperio*, 133, 149, 154.

<sup>326</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 18.

<sup>327</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 17.

<sup>328</sup> Fradera, *Colonias para después un imperio*, 86.

losing control over a large working class that was mostly Black?

Cuban and Puerto Rican reformers offered different answers to this question. The Cubans, living in a society dominated by plantation slavery, were profoundly committed to race-based political exclusion. Just a few months after the end of the U.S. Civil War, Cuban elites began writing to the Spanish government, urging the expansion of “universal suffrage” for “white men born or residing” in the colonies.<sup>329</sup> At an early meeting of the *Junta de Información*, the Cuban representative José Suarez de Argudín formalized this proposal. In the United States, he argued, “equal rights” had resulted in nothing but “the loss of cotton, sugar, and all the products from the Southern states, which were once worth 249,549,313 pesos annually.” The Republican Party had “idled four million laborers” by transforming them into citizens. Only white male suffrage, he was convinced, could prevent Cuba from similarly burying itself “in the ruins of its former opulence.”<sup>330</sup>

Puerto Rican reformers believed this was the worst possible idea. In the salon of the Spanish Colonial Ministry, the Puerto Rican teacher and liberal activist José Julián de Acosta stood up almost immediately to oppose Argudín’s plan. In his view, “to create new obstacles for the colored population, to separate it from the common life of the white race, would be...to fan antagonisms that the law must silence.”<sup>331</sup> Fearful of inciting racial divisions on an island where the vast majority of non-white people were already free, Acosta argued that imposing literacy

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<sup>329</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Expediente 5, 5 Dec. 1865, El Conde de Vega Mar to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>330</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 4931, Caja 1, Expediente 1, 27 Nov. 1866, Voto del Sr. Suarez Argudin.

<sup>331</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 4391, Caja 1, Expediente 1, 1869, Junta Informativa de Ultramar. Extracto de las contestaciones dadas al interrogatorio sobre la manera de reglamentar el trabajo de la poblacion de color y asiática, los medios de facilitar la inmigracion que sea mas conveniente en las mismas provincias.

and tax qualifications on suffrage would better serve the interests of the white elite. These requirements, he insisted, would effectively prevent “the political equality of free men of color” without “provoking any dangerous reactions.”<sup>332</sup>

By April of 1867, it was clear that the commission was at an impasse. On April 24, the *Junta de Información* dissolved without making any final proposal to the Spanish government.<sup>333</sup> Desperate, elite reformers began to turn elsewhere for inspiration. On September 13, 1867, the Spanish Secretary of State sent a letter to Rio de Janeiro, requesting information on “the condition and laws” governing slavery in the Brazilian Empire. The Brazilian slaveowners, he hoped, might lead the way to reform.<sup>334</sup>

By that fall, however, it was too late. In October of 1868, a small group of merchants and planters in eastern Cuba issued the *Grito de Yara*, launching a revolution. Their first act was to free their slaves. In the Cuban Republic, they declared, all men would be “free and equal.” Yet they did not endorse immediate or uncompensated emancipation. Like Lincoln, the early leaders of the Cuban insurgency were liberals, who were theoretically convinced of the justice of abolition but who opposed the confiscation of property.<sup>335</sup> They were also trapped between the need to secure the political support of radical abolitionists—including Radical Republicans in the United States and the slaves themselves—and to appease the sugar planters in the western part of the island, who they hoped would finance the revolution. As a result, the principal conspirators

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<sup>332</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3489, Extrato de la respuesta a las preguntas 1ª y 2ª del Interrogatorio sobre las bases en que deban fundarse las leyes especiales para el gobierno de las provincias de Cuba y Puerto Rico.

<sup>333</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 294.

<sup>334</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Legajo 4882, Volume IX, Expediente 12, 13 Sept. 1867, Spanish Minister of State to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>335</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 242–246.

of the Cuban war for independence articulated only a “desire for abolition, gradual and indemnified.” They claimed that their “moderation” entitled them to the support of all the inhabitants of the island.<sup>336</sup>

Quickly, however, it became clear that under the new revolutionary circumstances, slaves would not tolerate anything less than immediate emancipation. Between October and December of 1868, hundreds of enslaved people fled plantations and began presenting themselves for service in the Cuban Liberation Army. They declared their desire to “sustain the Holy Cause” of freedom and independence.<sup>337</sup> In response, the President of the Cuban Republic—Carlos Manuel de Céspedes—began to modify his position. That December, he issued his own version of the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves belonging to enemies of the Republic would be considered free. By April, the revolutionaries had declared the general abolition of slavery across the island.<sup>338</sup> Across the Atlantic World, Afro-descendants were watching.

## **II. In the Hands of Abolition Democracy**

For African Americans, 1868 seemed to mark the dawn of a new era. Following the passage of the Military Reconstruction Acts in 1867, tens of thousands of former slaves registered to vote. Aligning overwhelmingly with the Republican Party, they resisted white supremacist violence and marched in legions to the polls. That summer and fall, 265 Black men won statewide elections for the first time in history.<sup>339</sup> Their presence in state constitutional

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<sup>336</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 22-26.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>338</sup> Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *La guerra de diez años* (Havana: Editorial de las Ciencias Sociales, 1950), 107-109 and Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 47.

<sup>339</sup> Thomas Holt, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 35.

conventions over the following year infused these events with a dramatic and revolutionary character. Across the South, Black elected officials labored to construct a new society, in which the government would serve the poor, and racial discrimination would be eliminated from social life.<sup>340</sup> In 1868, these men achieved major victories for their movement. In July of 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified, which guaranteed “the equal protection of the laws” to all citizens regardless of race. A few months later, the former General Ulysses S. Grant won the presidency, ensuring the continuation of Republican control over the future of Reconstruction.<sup>341</sup> In the fall of 1868, it seemed to many former slaves that the world they had long imagined was very close to becoming a reality.

The *Grito de Yara* seemed to confirm this view. Across the United States, the Black press hailed the beginning of the Cuban revolution as a turning point in world history. Just seven days after Cuban insurgents declared their independence, the *Christian Recorder* in Philadelphia announced that “the beginning of the end of slavery the world over is at hand.” The newspaper’s African American editors believed that the revolution would “carry into the irredeemable depth of the sea, every whip and chain, every [last] bloodhound and oppressor” in the Americas.<sup>342</sup> Other Black journalists shared this view. In May of 1869, the *Vincennes Gazette* in Indiana proclaimed that the Cuban revolution had ushered in a new “Age of Emancipation.” The insurrection, the *Gazette* predicted, “will have a shattering effect upon the institution of slavery...the political struggle now in progress is almost certain to result in total emancipation”

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<sup>340</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 209.

<sup>341</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 239, 242, 325.

<sup>342</sup> “The Revolution in Spain,” *The Christian Recorder*, 17 Oct. 1868.

across the Atlantic World.<sup>343</sup>

For many African Americans, the struggle against Cuban slavery was deeply personal. For centuries, Black men and women in the South had lost family, friends, and loved ones to the Cuban slave trade.<sup>344</sup> One African American, Ben, lived for more than forty years as a slave in Cuba before escaping to the U.S. Consulate in Havana. “I was born free in the city of Charleston,” he explained, “but I have lived all my life in chains.” Ben was kidnapped from a fishing boat off the coast of Florida at the age of twelve. In Cuba, he was re-baptized as Juan and sold to a local sugar planter. The Cuban slave trade cost him his freedom, his identity, and his relationships with his family, including his father, mother, brother, and two younger sisters.<sup>345</sup> His experience of kidnapping in the age of slavery was hardly unique, and it persisted in the Southern United States after the Civil War.<sup>346</sup> As long as Cuban slavery endured, many African Americans believed, their freedom could never truly be secure.

As a result, Black political organizers in the United States mobilized quickly in support of the Cuban freedom struggle. Black newspaper editors were among the first to call for U.S. recognition of the Cuban Republic. These men believed that U.S. recognition would accelerate Cuban independence by permitting North American arms manufacturers to sell weapons and

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<sup>343</sup> “The Age of Emancipation,” *Vincennes Gazette*, 1 May 1869.

<sup>344</sup> John Harris, *The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 3.

<sup>345</sup> ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg. 948, No. 33475. These details are drawn from a report the U.S. consul drafted about his case and sent to the Spanish government on October 5, 1853. The damaged condition of the document makes it impossible to tell whether Ben ever returned to Charleston.

<sup>346</sup> Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach*, 114.

supplies directly to the Cuban insurgents.<sup>347</sup> In May of 1869, the *Christian Recorder* reported that “Spain is still pouring her legions into Cuba,” and urged “President Grant...to hurry up” and recognize the new Cuban Republic.<sup>348</sup> That October, the Black abolitionist and newspaper editor Frederick Douglass joined the chorus. In his newspaper, *The New National Era*, he published an editorial arguing that the United States government had “a moral responsibility towards the slaves of Cuba, considering that the greatest number of them have been imported into that island...in American ships; considering, also, that they are kept in bondage and slavery for the purpose of supplying the sugar market to the United States.” The people and government of the United States, he declared, “have it in their power to do for these slaves...what no other human [beings] can.”<sup>349</sup>

Over the following year, a grassroots “Free Cuba” movement emerged in Black churches and schoolyards across the United States. The campaign was forged within existing Black communication networks. In 1873, Elder Dove, a Black political organizer in Missouri, “came into possession” of a pamphlet “calling upon the colored men of the nation to offer up their protest against the barbarous and inhuman system of slavery” in Cuba. Over the next twenty-four hours, Elder Dove organized a “Free Cuba” rally in a local meeting hall by distributing pamphlets and fliers in every Black church and schoolhouse in the region. At the meeting, a prominent Black schoolteacher named G. W. Grey addressed a crowd that seemed to include “every colored face in the city.” According to *The New National Era*, Grey’s “eloquent, able,

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<sup>347</sup> Philip Foner, *A History of Cuba and Its Relations with the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1963), 199.

<sup>348</sup> “Cuba,” *The Christian Recorder*, 1 May 1869.

<sup>349</sup> “Letter from Havana,” *The New National Era*, 5 Oct. 1871.

and sympathetic” address repeatedly “brought the house down in applause.” Afterward, Elder Dove urged the Black men in the audience to enlist in the Cuban Liberation Army. He claimed that he could see a full “regiment in the house,” and predicted that if “one hundred thousand men” could be mustered from within the United States, there would not be a single “proslavery man [left] in Cuba twenty-four hours after their arrival.”<sup>350</sup>

Meetings like this inspired many African Americans to join the Cuban Liberation Army. On November 17, 1873, two journalists telegraphed President Grant from Savannah to inform him that “an enthusiastic and large mass meeting of colored citizens” had just taken place “to express indignation at the butchery” in Cuba. As many as five thousand former slaves, they believed, were now “ready to enlist for Cuba to teach the Spanish authorities” a lesson. African American veterans were also eager to join the fight. On November 25, 1873, the Taylor Colored Guards of Williamsport, Pennsylvania telegraphed President Grant to “volunteer our services for Cuba.”<sup>351</sup> Others reached out to the Cuban insurgents directly. In 1875, a man named W. D. Sneed wrote to the Cuban Revolutionary Junta in New York to inform them “that a thousand Black men” in Mississippi “hoped to have an early opportunity of enlisting in the holy cause of freedom, human rights, and redemption” in Cuba.<sup>352</sup>

The Cuban Liberation Army took advantage of these revolutionary currents in the Atlantic World. In September of 1870, a man named John Richard wrote to Thomas E. Jordan, an American General in the Cuban Liberation Army, to inform him that “a small battalion could

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<sup>350</sup> “Letter from Missouri,” *The New National Era*, 13 March 1871.

<sup>351</sup> Ulysses S. Grant Papers, vol. 24, 247-248. Available digitally from the Mississippi State University Library.

<sup>352</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Legajo 170, No. 128-34, Nov 1875, W.D. Sneed to the Junta Revolucionaria en Nueva York.

be raised” in Baltimore composed of “educated colored men” who had previously served in the U.S. Civil War.<sup>353</sup> A few days later, another recruiter in Jamaica informed Jordon that “six hundred Colored Troops” serving in the British Army had recently arrived in Kingston. Of these, he believed that at least “three hundred” could be “recruited very easily” to serve in Cuba. “When I was there,” he added, “they were all very anxious to go.”<sup>354</sup> At the same time, “such a large number of volunteers” had departed New York City for the island that the local press began to report that “fully one-third of the organized force of the Cuban Army is composed of Americans.”<sup>355</sup> By late 1869, Spanish officials were growing concerned. As the Spanish ambassador to the United States remarked that October, “halting the organization and departure of [armed] expeditions for Cuba...is now of the greatest importance.”<sup>356</sup>

U.S. government officials closely monitored the progress of this struggle. In December of 1868, following a major victory of the Cuban Liberation Army at Bayamo, the abolitionist chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Charles Sumner, issued a resolution calling on “the people of Spain not to allow the present opportunity to pass without securing the immediate emancipation of slaves and the final abolition of slavery throughout Spanish dominions.”<sup>357</sup> The House of Representatives approved another resolution the following April, declaring that “the

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<sup>353</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Legajo 170, No. 127-22, September 1870, John E. Richard, Dirigidas to Thomas Jordan. Baltimore, Sept. 1870.

<sup>354</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Legajo 168, No. 115-29, October 1870, D. Carta firmada por S. Gordon, dirigida al Mayor General Thomas Jordan.

<sup>355</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Legajo 168, No. 119-1, June 1869, John B. Jackson to Jose Morales Lemus, Jun 1869.

<sup>356</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Legajo 2409, 29 Oct. 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>357</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Leg. 1472, No. 150, 19 Dec. 1868, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

United States sympathizes with the people of Cuba in its patriotic efforts to secure its independence and to establish a republican government that will guarantee...political rights to all of its people.”<sup>358</sup> In the House, especially, Republican representatives were continuously “forwarding proposals empowering the President of the United States to recognize the republican government of Cuba.”<sup>359</sup> By the summer of 1869, the Spanish ambassador to the United States warned that if the armed rebellion in Cuba were to “persist into December, when the U.S. Congress will reconvene,” then “there will inevitably be serious consequences” for the future of the Spanish empire in the Americas.<sup>360</sup>

Despite surging popular support for the Cuban insurgency, the Republican Party establishment remained divided on the question. Although President Grant publicly sympathized with the Cuban rebels, his Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, viewed them with contempt. Fish was a “large, comfortably ugly man,” born into an “impeccable Manhattan and Hudson Valley lineage,” which included several founders of the colony of New York.<sup>361</sup> Until 1854, he was a respected member of the conservative wing of the Whig Party. After 1856, he joined an elite faction of the Republicans, who fought for Lincoln’s nomination in 1860 over his more radical opponent, William Seward.<sup>362</sup> Fish, like many members of his social class, was an inveterate racist. After traveling to Cuba in 1855, he observed, “we all returned charmed with the climate,

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<sup>358</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Leg. 1472, No 48, 11 April 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>359</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Legajo 1472, No 48, 11 April 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>360</sup> AMAE, Leg 1472, No 130, 4 Aug. 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>361</sup> McFeely, *Grant*, Kindle, Chapter XVIII.

<sup>362</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 211.

the scenery, and the natural productions of the island, ‘where only man is vile.’” He felt that “with its present population, the island of Cuba will be anything else than a desirable acquisition to the United States, and I can see no means of getting rid of a population of some 450,000 called *white* but really of every shade and mixture of color.”<sup>363</sup> Fish, throughout his career, firmly opposed U.S. intervention on behalf of the Cuban insurgency.

Even some of the more egalitarian leaders of the Republican Party were hesitant about Cuban recognition. Charles Sumner, for example, opposed it.<sup>364</sup> For years, he had observed the growing imperial ambitions of Republican elites with a profound sense of unease.<sup>365</sup> Although he supported U.S. expansion to the north and west, he worried that imperialism in the Caribbean would threaten the future of interracial democracy, both at home and abroad. Many white Republicans who supported intervention believed that if the United States annexed islands in the Caribbean, African Americans would move there, ridding the nation of its racial “problem” once and for all.<sup>366</sup> For Sumner, this was a dreadful possibility, and in the struggle over Cuban recognition, he was unable, or unwilling, to look beyond it. As a result, he found himself in an uncomfortable alliance with men he normally deplored—including Hamilton Fish, who believed that Cubans were inherently unfit for republican citizenship.<sup>367</sup>

Still, U.S. recognition of the Cuban Republic seemed increasingly likely. In the summer

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<sup>363</sup> McFeely, *Grant*, Chapter XVIII.

<sup>364</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1996), 416.

<sup>365</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (New York: Verso Press, 1961), 317-318.

<sup>366</sup> Robert May, *Slavery, Race, and the Conquest of the Tropics: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Future of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 273.

<sup>367</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 494-497.

of 1869, the nomination of Daniel Sickles as the new U.S. ambassador to Spain marked a major victory for the international Black freedom movement. Sickles was committed to Cuban independence and the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean. His appointment left Spanish officials fearful that the U.S. intended to “recognize the Cuban insurgents as belligerents.”<sup>368</sup> As a result, Sickles was quickly able to secure new concessions from the Spanish government regarding Cuban independence. On August 13, 1869, the President of the Spanish Council of Ministers, Juan Prim, informed Sickles that he would accept “the good offices of the United States” in negotiating an end to the Cuban conflict. More significantly, the President agreed to negotiate on terms that were satisfactory to the Cuban revolutionary leadership—including granting the Cuban people “a vote by universal suffrage” as soon as possible “upon the question of independence.”<sup>369</sup> Recognizing his position of strength, Sickles pressed ahead. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, he wrote to the Spanish Secretary of State proposing that Spain directly acknowledge Cuban independence and immediately abolish slavery across the island.<sup>370</sup>

Sickles’ actions that summer helped inspire one of the largest petition campaigns in nineteenth-century U.S. history.<sup>371</sup> Between September of 1869 and May of 1870, anti-slavery organizers from across the United States delivered thousands of petitions to the U.S. Congress,

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<sup>368</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Leg. 2409, 29 Oct. 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>369</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm No. 31, Roll No. 52, No. 7, 13 Aut. 1869, Daniel Sickles to Hon. Hamilton Fish.

<sup>370</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm No. 31, Roll No. 52, No. 14, 3 Sept. 1869, Daniel Sickles to Don Manuel Silvela, Legation of the United States.

<sup>371</sup> Guide to House Records, Committee on Foreign Affairs (1810-1897), Note 10.18, <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/guide/house/chapter-10.html>.

bearing hundreds of thousands of signatures.<sup>372</sup> Together, these documents called for the federal government to “accord to the republic of Cuba *the rights of a belligerent power*.” The authors of these petitions claimed that the Cuban insurgents were “organizing a constitutional representative Government” and “emancipating slaves;” in their view, these acts accorded “the infant republic...just claims to be acknowledged among the powers of the earth.”<sup>373</sup> Tens of thousands of American men and women agreed. By May of 1870, petitions from every state, some bearing as many as ninety thousand individual signatures, had reached the Congressional Committees on Foreign Affairs in both the U.S. House and Senate.<sup>374</sup>

Major Republican publications also began demanding that the Grant administration recognize the Cuban Republic. On July 16, 1869, New York City’s *The Nation* broke the news that “General Sickles has been authorized to treat with the Spanish government.” The U.S. government’s “duty,” it added, “is no longer a question. Let the administration grant belligerent rights to the Cubans and the struggle is at an end. Cuba will at once be free.”<sup>375</sup> Other national newspapers followed suit. On July 17, 1869, *The New York Herald* urged “prompt and decisive action by General Grant’s administration,” declaring that “sooner or later the independence of Cuba must come, and delay on the part of the United States will only complicate the question

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<sup>372</sup> NARA, RG 46 (Records of the U.S. Senate), Records of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 54A-H11.2, and RG 233, Records of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 41A-H4.1.

<sup>373</sup> NARA, RG 233, Records of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 41A-H4.1.

<sup>374</sup> RG 233 (Records of the U.S. House of Representatives), Records of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 42A-H5.3.

<sup>375</sup> “The Cuban Revolution—What Should We Do?” *The Nation*, 16 July 1869.

and lead to more bloodshed and devastation on the island.”<sup>376</sup> By November, *The Nation* was openly criticizing the administration for its continued failure to recognize Cuban belligerency. “To be silent about Cuba,” the Republican editors declared, “when the public mind is full of the subject and in expectation of a definite policy...would be acting like the foolish and timid ostrich, which hides its head under the sand without considering that its whole body is exposed to view. The Cuban question is too prominent and popular to be ignored.”<sup>377</sup>

During these months, the Spanish military was faring poorly. In the summer of 1869, the Cuban Liberation Army launched successful attacks on six major Spanish forts in eastern Cuba. That fall, they defeated the Spanish army in a critical battle near the city of Santa Clara, which enabled them to capture a large deposit of arms. Simultaneously, Cuban insurgents across the provinces of Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba began to adopt tactics pioneered by the General Sherman during the U.S. Civil War. Led by Adolfo and Federico Fernández Cavada, two veterans of the Union Army, Cuban soldiers burned thirty-four sugar plantations and liberated thousands of slaves, marking the beginning of the army’s direct assault on Cuban slavery.<sup>378</sup> In a July report to the U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. Consul in Santiago de Cuba noted that “twenty-five large sugar estates have been burned...producing most unfavorable results for Spain.”<sup>379</sup> That December, General Daniel Sickles wrote to Hamilton Fish from Madrid to inform him that “there is evidently much anxiety felt, and not without reason, in regard to the effect which will be produced in the United States by the failure of the present campaign in

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<sup>376</sup> “Cuba—The Time for Action by the Administration,” *The New York Herald*, 17 Sept. 1869.

<sup>377</sup> “Cuba—A Broad American Policy Required,” *The Nation*, 8 Nov. 1869.

<sup>378</sup> Guerra y Sanchez, *La guerra de los diez años*, 237, 287-288, 293.

<sup>379</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy T-55, Despatches from the U.S. Consuls at Santiago de Cuba, Roll No. 6, 10 July 1869, A.E. Phillips to the U.S. Secretary of State.

Cuba...if with the exhaustive efforts made by this government to reinforce the land and naval forces operating against the insurgents, they still, as it seems, cannot hold their own, the impression in the United States cannot” be made more favorable to their cause. “Despondency,” he added, “is already apparent here in all except official circles.”<sup>380</sup>



1. Advance of the Cuban Liberation Army, 1869. Derived from the *People's Pictorial Atlas* (New York, 1973).

*David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.*

Sickles was right. Spanish officials *were* afraid that they would lose the war. On September 3, the Spanish ambassador to the United States, Lopez Roberts, wrote to the Spanish Secretary of State to inform him that “the attitude of the current President on the Cuban question is completely hostile.” While he had “so far been able to avoid a declaration of belligerent rights,” the situation, he believed, was “grave.”<sup>381</sup> In Cuba, Spain’s strategic position was even weaker. On August 30, 1869, the Cuban Captain General, Caballero de Rodas, warned the

<sup>380</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. 31, Despatches from the U.S. Ministers to Spain, Reel 53, No. 46, 29 Dec. 1869, Daniel Sickles to Hamilton Fish.

<sup>381</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Legajo 2409, 3 Sept. 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State. Underlining in text.

Spanish Colonial Ministry that the insurgents had demonstrated “a great determination” to invade the western sugar districts of the island. The advance of the Liberation Army, in turn, encouraged enslaved men and women to be “idle and insubordinate.” Slaves, he added, knew that “the Cuban [insurgent] flag is a promise of their freedom,” and felt heartened by “the applause” that their actions received in the United States. In the Captain General’s view, if Spain wanted to win the war, there was nothing left to do but “to declare freedom.”<sup>382</sup>

As a result, Spanish officials began to weigh their options. In September of 1869, the Spanish Prime Minister, Juan Prim, called for the creation of a new parliamentary commission to develop a final resolution to Spain’s “colonial problem.” The commission gave anti-slavery liberals a second chance to legally abolish slavery throughout the Spanish Empire.<sup>383</sup> Led by the abolitionist Rafael Maria de Labra, as well as Juan Prim’s Colonial Minister, Manuel Becerra, the new commission devised legislation that would free all enslaved people after a period of paid contract labor. The bill also granted equal rights to all free men in the Spanish Empire.<sup>384</sup> Observing these developments, Sickles felt heartened. He wrote to Hamilton Fish a few days later, predicting that the fall of slavery would take place “at any moment.”<sup>385</sup>

Cuban slaveowners lived through those days in fear. Since 1868, they had dreaded that Spain would take some drastic step towards freedom and equality in order to prevent military defeat. Just weeks after the *Grito de Yara*, slaveowners had begun to petition the Spanish

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<sup>382</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 4933, Expediente 4, 30 Aug. 1869, Caballero to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>383</sup> Jordi Maluquer de Mortes, “Abolicionismo y Resistencia a la Abolición en la España del Siglo XIX,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (January 1986), 315.

<sup>384</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 321.

<sup>385</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No 31, Reel 52, No. 22, 25 Sept. 1869, Daniel Sickles to Hon. Hamilton Fish.

government, warning state officials against any “violent measure” that would free the slaves or admit them into Cuban society “as our equals.”<sup>386</sup> “The extension of rights,” these men insisted, “would be the ruin of all.”<sup>387</sup> By November of 1868, nearly one hundred Cuban proprietors had written collectively to the Spanish Colonial Ministry to warn them that Black equality “would reproduce in our flourishing provinces not only the interminable anarchy and perpetual convulsion of Santo Domingo...*but also* the exterminationist race war that has so recently shredded the entrails of the formerly admirable United States.”<sup>388</sup> Simultaneously, another Cuban slaveowner addressed a separate letter to the Spanish Colonial Minister, to inform him that “universal suffrage...without distinction of race or color” would only serve to recreate the “heartbreaking scenes of Santo Domingo [Haiti] and the Southern United States” in Cuba. In his mind’s eye, he could picture the consequences: an island “transformed into mountains of ash and rubble” and drenched in “lakes of blood.”<sup>389</sup>

In 1869, the slaveowners began to organize. Just weeks after the formation of the anti-slavery parliamentary commission, Spanish and Cuban property-owners jointly organized a *Junta Contrarevolucionaria* in Madrid. Led by the Cuban slaveowner Manuel Calvo, these men forged a plan that quickly came to dominate all Spanish discussions of abolition: that no serious

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<sup>386</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Caja 2, Expediente 5, 6 Nov. 1868, Al Gobierno Provisional de la Nación, Palma.

<sup>387</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Caja 2, Expediente 5, 10 Nov. 1868, Al Gobierno Provisional de la Nación, Santander.

<sup>388</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Caja 2, Expediente 5, 6 Nov. 1868, Al Gobierno Provisional de la Nación, Palma.

<sup>389</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3553, Caja 2, Expediente 5, 16 Oct. 1868, El Conde de Vega Mar to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

reform could take place until the insurgents had been defeated.<sup>390</sup> Over the following months, the group advocated for changes to the abolition bill that would effectively eliminate freedmen's civil and political rights.<sup>391</sup> At their urging, the general term "*derechos civiles*" (civil rights) was substituted for "*derechos de ingenuos*" (rights of the free-born), on the understanding that this language would strip Afro-descendants of full citizenship.<sup>392</sup> As the Cuban Captain General observed, the effect of such legislation in Cuba would be "more apparent than real."<sup>393</sup>

Counterrevolutionary mobilization in Spain was supported in Washington. For months, Hamilton Fish had been meeting privately with the Spanish ambassador, Lopez Roberts, to discuss the nation's war plans.<sup>394</sup> That September, Fish informed Roberts that although he "could not speak for the majority" of Grant's cabinet, he intended to personally oppose Cuban recognition in his upcoming meetings with the President. He advised Roberts to endorse legislation in Spain that would be "conducive to the abolition of slavery without damaging agriculture and property."<sup>395</sup> Gradual emancipation, in turn, would help Fish eliminate the possibility of U.S. recognition of the insurgents.

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<sup>390</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 323-324.

<sup>391</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4933, Expediente 4, 19 Sept. 1869, Caballero to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>392</sup> María Carmen Barcia Zequeira, "Táctica y Estrategia de la Burguesía Esclavista Ante La Abolición de la Esclavitud," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (January 1986), 118.

<sup>393</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4933, Expediente 4, 25 Sept. 1869, Caballero to the Spanish Colonial Minister.

<sup>394</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Leg. 1472, No. 38, 26 March 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>395</sup> AMAE, Sección Política Exterior, Leg. 2409, 4 Sept. 1869, Lopez Roberts to the Spanish Secretary of State.

That same month, Fish recruited Sumner to his cause.<sup>396</sup> In widely publicized speeches, Sumner began to argue that the Cuban insurgents were not seriously committed to emancipation.<sup>397</sup> Then, in early 1870, he worked closely with Fish to block Cuban recognition in the U.S. Senate. That June, a bill calling for President Grant to recognize the Cuban Republic passed the House of Representatives by an overwhelming majority. In the span of a few weeks, Sumner killed it. As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, he rewrote the legislation, transforming it from a “thunderous” resolution into an empty condemnation of the “outrage” unfolding in Cuba.<sup>398</sup> According to one Congressman, by the time the bill reached the floor of the Senate, it offered not “one single practical aid that can be conceived” for the Cuban insurgents.<sup>399</sup> With congressional pressure waning, President Grant finally made his position on Cuba clear. On June 14, 1870, he announced that he did not intend to recognize the “infant republic.”<sup>400</sup>

Just two weeks later, the Spanish Parliament passed a law for the final abolition of slavery in the colonies. It was an evident lie.<sup>401</sup> At the last minute, the slaveowners had forced the liberal ministry out. Manuel Becerra was removed as Colonial Minister, and a conservative took his place. Segismundo Moret’s proposal was far more regressive. The Moret Law did guarantee the eventual abolition of slavery across the empire but immediately liberated only

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<sup>396</sup> “Cuba Before Congress-The Extraordinary Position of the Administration,” *The Nation*, 17 Dec. 1869.

<sup>397</sup> “Senator Sumner’s Arraignment of President’s Foreign Policy,” *The New National Era*, 5 Sept. 1872.

<sup>398</sup> Donald, *Charles Sumner*, 419.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> Foner, *A History of Cuba and its Relations with the United States*, 217.

<sup>401</sup> Rebecca Scott, “La dinámica de emancipación y formación de la sociedad pos-abolicionista: el caso cubano en perspectiva comparativa,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (January 1968), 91.

children under the age of two, enslaved men who had served in the Spanish colonial army, and elderly slaves over the age of sixty.<sup>402</sup> Furthermore, the boundaries of that freedom were carefully limited.<sup>403</sup> Across the Spanish Empire, free-born children would be required to serve their mothers' owners until they reached the age of eighteen. As adults, they would be granted "the full enjoyment of their rights"—which excluded suffrage.<sup>404</sup> For a time, it seemed, the nightmare of the Cuban planter class was coming to an end. The tide of Atlantic Reconstruction was beginning to turn.

### III. Back Toward Slavery

For African American organizers, the Moret Law was a bitter pill to swallow. "It was not enforced," Frederick Douglass wrote of the Moret Law in December of 1872. "No movement has yet been made in that direction."<sup>405</sup> In his eyes, Sumner was to blame. That September, Douglass ran a column in *The New National Era*, condemning the "man who was so bold and radical in demanding freedom at home" for administering such a "kick to struggling liberty" abroad. Two years later, he and other Black abolitionists still held Sumner responsible for his "attack on the Cuban Patriots" in the spring of 1870. The editors of *The New National Era* considered Sumner's "denunciation of the Cubans as false to the cause of emancipation" as the crucial turning point that "broke the full tide of sympathy, which was rising here on their behalf."<sup>406</sup> For these men, Sumner's refusal to support the Cuban freedom struggle was a cruel betrayal. "The welfare and

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<sup>402</sup> Jordi Maluquer de Motes Bernet, "El problema de esclavitud y la revolución de 1868," *Hispania* 31 (January 1971), 62-64.

<sup>403</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 68.

<sup>404</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 321.

<sup>405</sup> "Cuba in the Cortes. [From the National Republican]," *The New National Era*, 19 Dec. 1872.

<sup>406</sup> "Senator Sumner's Arraignment of President's Foreign Policy," *The New National Era*, 5 Sept. 1872.

the happiness” of enslaved Afro-Cubans “has a direct bearing upon ourselves,” the editors of *The New National Era* explained. “We cannot long remain a mere idle spectator of the barbarism and oppression which is being enacted there.”<sup>407</sup>

Some Black abolitionists began to embrace annexation as the only way to secure the abolition of Cuban slavery.<sup>408</sup> In 1873, *The New National Era* began to publish letters to the editor urging Black voters to support the annexation of Cuba. In one column addressed “To the Colored People of Washington City,” a lieutenant named William Ryan argued that a U.S. military invasion would secure “the abolition of slavery and the granting [of] equal rights to all” in Cuba. The “Cubans are anxious for annexation,” he assured his readers. With “a voice and a seat in our legislative halls...can the colored people hesitate one moment to embrace the golden opportunity which is now open to them to dig the grave that will bury the whip and shackles forever?”<sup>409</sup> Other African American newspapers followed suit. In Philadelphia, the *Christian Recorder* reported that a large “Colored Men’s Convention” had been held in Pittsburgh, calling for “the annexation of Cuba and Hayti, or their acceptance of the protection of the American flag.” According to the editors of *The Christian Recorder*, the Pittsburgh resolution “has the right ring about it—the ring of Negro unity and identity.” Annexation, they believed, promised “the redemption of a whole race.”<sup>410</sup>

As a result, Cuban revolutionaries became increasingly wary of collaborating with North

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<sup>407</sup> “Cuba in the Cortes. [From the National Republican],” *The New National Era*, 19 Dec. 1872.

<sup>408</sup> On Frederick Douglass’s evolving relationship to the question of U.S. empire in the Caribbean, see: David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 520-551 and Peter Hudson, “Frederick Douglass and American Empire in Haiti,” *Boston Review*, 9 Dec. 2021.

<sup>409</sup> “To the Colored People of Washington City,” *The New National Era*, 23 Jan. 1873.

<sup>410</sup> “Pittsburgh, PA. President Colored Men’s Convention: Offered,” *The Christian Recorder*, 30 Jan. 1869.

American abolitionists. As early as May of 1869, Cubans who favored a military alliance with the United States were forced to fend off charges from within their own ranks that they supported U.S. annexation. “We ask for the intervention of the United States in support of our independence,” the editors of one Cuban revolutionary newspaper, published in New Orleans, insisted. “We remind [our critics] that the idea of annexation was born in the South, the North has never expressed that desire.”<sup>411</sup> Despite these protests, fears of annexation began to divide the Cuban revolutionary movement.<sup>412</sup> In July of 1873, when an African American corporal named Ernest Hewlett volunteered his services and those of one hundred and fifty additional men to the Cuban Liberation Army, Cuban revolutionary agents politely declined his offer.<sup>413</sup>

The insurgency, too, was flagging. The failure to secure U.S. recognition in 1870 weakened Cuban revolutionary forces. Problems of scarcity of arms and munitions escalated throughout the year and led to mounting incidences of desertion and surrender. The Spanish colonial government also began to portray the insurgency as a “race war,” arguing that Cuban independence would culminate in the “Africanization” of the island. These claims helped to undermine support for the revolution among white Cubans. As a result, Spanish forces regained towns previously under rebel control and made successful incursions into rural zones occupied by Cuban forces and their sympathizers. In the province of Camagüey, the vast majority of insurgents had surrendered to the Spanish by the beginning of 1871. In nearby Puerto Principe, rural networks that had once provided supplies to the Cuban Liberation Army now became

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<sup>411</sup> “A L’Epoque,” *La Libertad*, 5 May 1869.

<sup>412</sup> Louis Perez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 93.

<sup>413</sup> Shinn, “The Free Cuba Campaign, Republican Politics, and Post-Civil War Black Internationalism, 1869-1874,” 183.

targets of Spanish reprisals. Growing numbers of Cuban farms and houses were destroyed. The lack of arms made the early successes of the revolution difficult to repeat.<sup>414</sup> By the end of the year, the Spanish had reestablished railroad connections across the island and declared multiple regions entirely pacified.<sup>415</sup>

Still, not all hope was lost. Throughout 1871 and into 1872, Cuban leaders continued to press the Grant administration for full recognition. In January of 1872, the Cuban President, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, wrote directly to President Grant to urge him to recognize the Cuban Republic and to declare war against Spain. Any struggle, he insisted, “would soon be terminated” by the force of “right and justice.”<sup>416</sup> A few months later, his close friend and fellow revolutionary, Ramón de Céspedes, wrote to Hamilton Fish with the same proposition. “Spain is delaying the abolition of slavery in every way imaginable,” he declared, and Cuban freedpeople “must receive all the aid which can be given them.” For this reason, he implored Fish to permit “the intervention in question” to “take place.”<sup>417</sup>

Moreover, within Spain itself, pressure was mounting to end the colonial war and avoid an escalating conflict with the United States. In the summer of 1872, the Spanish Radical Party won an overwhelming victory at the polls.<sup>418</sup> Many of these men supported Cuban independence, universal suffrage, and the immediate abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico. Their victory left

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<sup>414</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 44-45, 49-50.

<sup>415</sup> Guerra y Sanchez, *La guerra de los diez años*, 241.

<sup>416</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. T-800, Notes from the Cuban Legation in the U.S. to the Department of State, Roll 1, 12 Jan. 1872, C. M. Cespedes, President of the Republic of Cuba, to Ulysses S. Grant.

<sup>417</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy No. T-800, Notes from the Cuban Legation in the U.S. to the Department of State, Roll 1, 26 Dec. 1872, Ramón Céspedes to Hamilton Fish.

<sup>418</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 402, 483.

Cuban slaveowners in a state of panic. Between October and December of 1872, planters and capitalists from across Cuba and Spain drafted hundreds of petitions imploring the government to postpone “radical reforms” until peace was established in the Antilles.<sup>419</sup> Some were signed by more than one thousand white property owners.<sup>420</sup> The Radical Party ignored their lobbying. On December 14, 1872, the leader of the new Parliament, Ruiz Zorilla, announced legislation that would grant democratic control over local government to Spanish colonial subjects in Puerto Rico. The following week, the party put forward legislation for the immediate abolition of slavery on the island.<sup>421</sup>

In the United States, this news inspired another wave of abolitionist organizing. Following the Radicals’ victory in Spain, American abolitionists launched a second petition campaign in support of “Free Cuba.”<sup>422</sup> Men and women in states ranging from Maryland to Kansas demanded that the Congress of the United States accord “to struggling, suffering Cuba the rights of a belligerent power, and at once recognize the INDEPENDENCE of her long-oppressed people.”<sup>423</sup> The Republican state legislature in Kansas—where the armed conflict over slavery had begun in the United States in the 1850s—went so far as to pass a resolution commending the “patriotic efforts” of the Cuban people, who “have for nearly four long years in

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<sup>419</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 3554, Expediente 1, 14 Oct. 1872, Resoluciones adoptadas por los Señores Delegados de los Centros Hispano-Ultramarinos en la Junta celebrada en Madrid.

<sup>420</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 3554, Expedientes 2-3.

<sup>421</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 298, 496.

<sup>422</sup> NARA, RG 46, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 54A-H11.2, File 54A-H11.2.

<sup>423</sup> NARA, RG 46, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 41A-H8, n/d, Petition of the women of the State of Maryland.

arms resisted the tyranny of Spain and borne themselves along...by their sublime devotion to the principles of self-government.”<sup>424</sup> By the end of 1872, another one hundred thousand American citizens—Black and white—had signed letters demanding that their government intervene on behalf of the Cuban freedom struggle.<sup>425</sup>

Cuban exiles joined in this campaign. That same year, the League of the Daughters of Cuba, a women’s political organization located in New York City, drafted a petition that was read out by the Republican Nathaniel Banks on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. The petition began by appealing to the history of Atlantic slavery. For many years, the petitioners claimed, slaveholders in the United States had been convinced that “the emancipation of the slaves in the Island of Cuba would strike a mortal wound into the very existence” of American slavery. As a result, the U.S. government had worked “for more than fifty years” to help Spain “prolong her sway in Cuba.” It therefore “cannot be denied,” the petitioners argued, that “the Government of the United States has long been quite convinced that the independence of Cuba would be but the forerunner of immediate emancipation of the slaves on that Island.” Given that fact, “it is out of mortal mind to understand why the Washington Government should now ally itself with Spain and against a neighboring people...who want to raise to the rank of free men half a million of human beings just now groaning under the most degrading state of slavery.”<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> NARA, RG 46, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 41A-H8, Memorial of the Legislature of Kansas favoring the recognition of the belligerent rights of the people of Cuba.

<sup>425</sup> NARA, RG 46, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 54A-H11.2.

<sup>426</sup> NARA, RG 46, Records of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, File 41A-H8. Petition of the Ladies and officers of the league of the daughters of Cuba, asking the concession of belligerent rights upon the Cuban people actually at war with the Spanish Dominion.

African Americans also continued to demand Cuban recognition. During the first weeks of 1873, *The New National Era* began calling for a “mass convention of colored citizens of the nation” to “give expression to their sympathy with the slaves of Cuba who are now fighting for their liberty.”<sup>427</sup> A few days later, the newspapers’ editors outlined an agenda for the Free Cuba campaign: first, they declared, “all the colored people who have brethren toiling in bondage” should begin meeting to “arouse public sentiment...that the Cuban negroes can take heart.” Second, they advised African Americans to publish copies of the Cuban Constitution in every Republican newspaper in the South. Finally, they urged African American men to “voluntarily surrender the great boon of American citizenship” in order to enlist in the Cuban Liberation Army—where they could “join their fortunes with those of their suffering brethren in this hour of heroic strife and sorest need.”<sup>428</sup>

Watching this movement take shape from his comfortable home in Washington, D.C., the Spanish ambassador began to worry. On October 29, 1872, José Polo de Bernabé wrote to the Spanish Secretary of State to inform him that across the United States, pressure for Cuban recognition was mounting. In past weeks, Hamilton Fish had begun to meet privately with Bernabé to ask when Spain intended to “finally abolish slavery and liberalize the government of Cuba.” Fish was worried that soon, he would no longer be able to prevent the President from recognizing the Cuban Republic, as too many Americans “believed the time had come” for the U.S. government to intervene in the war. “The American government,” he complained, “does not have a single positive fact to oppose” the arguments that Cuban recognition would be the shortest route to emancipation. Moreover, Fish feared that following the presidential election that

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<sup>427</sup> “Cuba,” *The New National Era*, 6 Feb. 1873.

<sup>428</sup> “The Cuban Republic,” *The New National Era*, 13 Feb. 1873.

November, Grant might choose a new Secretary of State—possibly even his close friend and former comrade, General Daniel Sickles.<sup>429</sup> “My job,” Bernabé whined in nearly every letter he sent to the Spanish Secretary of State, “is getting more difficult by the day.”<sup>430</sup>

In reality, however, the Spanish government had little to fear. The Republican Party was already moving in a different direction. The defeat of the Confederacy had inaugurated an enormous industrial boom in the U.S. North. Railroad mileage in the United States doubled in eight years. By 1873, capitalists had invested four billion dollars in manufacturing, a fourfold increase since 1865.<sup>431</sup> This wave of industrialization exacerbated class tensions in the North and alienated liberals—including the presidential candidate, Horace Greeley—from the Radical wing of the Republican Party. Greeley was a former anti-slavery activist turned Liberal Republican.<sup>432</sup> Throughout 1872, he ran on a platform criticizing former slaves and white laborers for threatening the free market by demanding financial benefits from the government. He opposed military expansionism as well as Radical Reconstruction, claiming that federal aid to Blacks and universal suffrage had resulted in “a government of ignorance and vice.” Although Greeley lost the election, his third-party campaign transformed the Republican Party. His nomination sent Republicans scurrying to solidify a moderate image in relation to Reconstruction.<sup>433</sup> In his

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<sup>429</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Leg. 1473, 29 Oct. 1872, José Polo de Bernabé to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>430</sup> AMAE, Correspondencia de las Embajadas, Leg. 1473, No. 58, 16 April 1872, José Polo de Bernabé to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>431</sup> Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 146.

<sup>432</sup> On Greeley’s trajectory, see Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 353-354.

<sup>433</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 503-505.

second inaugural address, Grant promised to direct his future efforts toward “the restoration of good feeling between the different sections of our common country.”<sup>434</sup> He never mentioned Cuba.

With the threat of U.S. intervention all but eliminated, Cuban slaveowners were again able to postpone the labor of reconstruction. That November, the prominent Cuban planters Julian Zulueta and Pedro Sotolongo began consolidating elite support to prevent the final abolition of slavery. On November 25, 1872, these men issued a petition—endorsed by hundreds of Spanish bankers, industrialists, landowners, journalists and military men—arguing that the free womb law was a sufficient measure to eliminate slavery in the Antilles, and that the government should abstain from implementing any further reforms that could damage future relations with Cuba. The following month, these men organized the *Junta de la Liga Defensora de la Integridad Nacional*.<sup>435</sup> The League argued that the extension of suffrage to “people of color” in the colonies risked “leaving the agriculture of the island in ruins.”<sup>436</sup> By March of 1873, the group had managed to secure major concessions from the Radicals in Parliament. Even in Puerto Rico, where slavery was far less central to the colonial economy, the final abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico would be delayed for another three years, during which time freedpeople would serve out a mandatory period of “apprenticeship.”<sup>437</sup> Suffrage, too, would be extended to only a tiny group of soldiers, government administrators, professionals, and teachers on the

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<sup>434</sup> Second Inaugural Address of Ulysses S. Grant, Tuesday, 4 March 1873, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.

<sup>435</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 480, 490-496.

<sup>436</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3554, Expediente 3, 21 Dec. 1872, Hacendados, propietarios y comerciantes de Piedras al Sr Presidente del Consejo de Ministros.

<sup>437</sup> Piqueras, *La revolución democrática*, 502.

island. Freedpeople, overwhelmingly, were barred from the polls.<sup>438</sup>

For the Free Cuba campaign, the consequences of this conservative retrenchment were devastating. By the end of March, Black abolitionists in the United States were reduced to scolding President Grant for his refusal to recognize the Cuban Republic. Just a few days after his inauguration in 1873, *The New National Era* published an article exploring the relationship between “The Cuban Question and Civil Rights.” The paper’s Black editors remarked that Grant “ought to give a listening ear” to the African American citizens “holding sympathy with their brothers in slavery.” Mostly, however, they were just grateful that Grant had been reelected, for “had it been Horace Greeley,” he would not have dared to “preach” even one word of social equality “to his Democratic friends.”<sup>439</sup> That April, the Black President of the Cuban Anti-Slavery Society in New York, Samuel Scottron, wrote a letter to the abolitionist Gerrit Smith, asking for a letter in support of his cause. Smith wrote back simply: “our Government” should have accorded Cuba belligerent rights “long ago.” “I am getting too old for this,” he added, as an afterthought.<sup>440</sup>

The war in Cuba continued for five more years, but the insurgents never advanced past the eastern part of the island.<sup>441</sup> By 1874, the Cuban regular army had deteriorated into small bands, which—while difficult to eradicate—could never recover the power to wage war on the scale achieved between 1868 and 1870. Offensives launched by the Spanish army forced these small bands of soldiers to scatter and prompted thousands of families living in “liberated

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<sup>438</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 64.

<sup>439</sup> “Views on the Cuban Question and Civil Rights,” *The New National Era*, 20 March 1873.

<sup>440</sup> “A Letter from the Hon. Gerrit Smith to the Cuban Anti-Slavery Committee, New York,” *The New National Era*, 10 April 1873.

<sup>441</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 59.

territory” to surrender to the Spanish authorities. Cuban men, women, and children abandoned insurgent zones to flee into Spanish-controlled cities, where they arrived hungry, destitute, and eager to return to their peacetime pursuits. By 1878, the armed insurgency endured only in eastern regions that were predominantly Black. One Spanish general remarked that the Cuban army in its later years resembled less a regular fighting force than a collection of maroon communities—a nuisance, but not a decisive challenge to the continuation of Spanish rule.<sup>442</sup>

In 1874, Daniel Sickles left his post in Madrid. He returned to a changed land. By the end of 1873, Republicans enjoyed undisputed control of state governments only in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia had all been “redeemed” by white Democrats, while in Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas, Republican governors confronted hostile or divided legislatures. Democratic victories depended mainly on white supremacist violence. White supremacists assassinated local Republican officeholders, disrupted court sessions, and burned Black homes.<sup>443</sup> In Colfax, Coushatta, and New Orleans, planters murdered Black workers for trying to vote.<sup>444</sup> With only a few thousand federal soldiers left in the region, many white parishes stopped paying taxes and refused to recognize state authority. Public programs, including schools, began to deteriorate across the South. By the late 1870s, illiteracy was rising throughout the region.<sup>445</sup>

Across the Atlantic World, slaveowners pointed to these events to bolster their case for a future political order grounded on white supremacy. “Nothing about this is surprising,” *El*

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<sup>442</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 59-60.

<sup>443</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 546-550.

<sup>444</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 482.

<sup>445</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 63.

*Correo de Nueva York* crowed just a few days after a white supremacist coup unfolded in New Orleans. “A war of the races,” they claimed, was the only outcome possible when “former slaves exercised public power.”<sup>446</sup> Just a few weeks later, a group of white Cuban planters wrote to the Spanish Colonial Ministry to reiterate their opposition to the expansion of “democratic institutions” on the island. They argued that “anyone who has witnessed the horrors” of Reconstruction in the United States would understand “the horrible dangers of a bloody race war” unfolding in the Spanish Empire. “Take care,” they warned, “for here too there are enemies of Spain, who are waiting to turn the freedom you grant them into a dagger; here too there are unfortunate beings who cannot understand for even a moment the duties that must arise from such a favorable change in their social condition; here too there are diverse and repulsive races.”<sup>447</sup> Would the Spanish government, they wondered, really be willing to unleash this “political monster” on its loyal white citizens?<sup>448</sup> The answer, in the end, was no.

More than a decade after the end of the U.S. Civil War, the Atlantic slave trade endured. In early 1878, a former Cuban insurgent named Fernando Lopez de Queralda travelled to the United States. Six years earlier, “during his time as a guerilla,” he had encountered three kidnapped African Americans enslaved on a sugar plantation in eastern Cuba. Now, he hoped to restore their freedom. “They spoke English and told me they came from Louisiana,” he informed

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<sup>446</sup> “La guerra de razas.—La reconstrucción del Sur—La ley de Lynch sustituye el látigo—Crímenes—las medidas del gobierno,” *El Correo de Nueva York*, 10 Sept. 1874.

<sup>447</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio del Ultramar, Leg. 3554, Expediente 3, 20 Dec. 1874, Comerciantes y Propietarios to the President of the Spanish Council of Ministers.

<sup>448</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4814, Expediente 2, 10 Jan. 1873, A la nación. Por el Centro Hispano-Ultramarino.

a U.S. judge. “They were kidnapped and sold as slaves.”<sup>449</sup> A few weeks later, John Leonard, a Republican Congressman from Louisiana, heard the news. He promptly abandoned his legislative duties to search for his missing constituents. That February, he arrived in Havana, much to the mortification of a large number of Spanish colonial officials.<sup>450</sup> These men publicly dismissed Leonard’s story as “an invented history,” and privately hoped to stop him from travelling east into the volatile “insurrectionary districts.”<sup>451</sup> They need not have worried. Before Leonard could leave Havana, he fell ill and died. There is no evidence that the U.S. government ever reopened the case.<sup>452</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

In the fall of 1879, a small group of Cuban slaveowners gathered once more in the Spanish Colonial Ministry in Madrid. More than fifteen years later, they hoped to finish what the *Junta de Información* had started: the labor of political reconstruction in the Spanish Empire. This time, their vision for the future political order was clear. The final abolition of slavery would take place gradually, through a system of apprenticeship that would go into effect the following year. Cuba would have political representation in Spain—but “special laws” would

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<sup>449</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4882, vol. IV, Expediente 11, 24 April 1878, Antonio Mantilla to the Spanish Secretary of State.

<sup>450</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4882, vol. IV, Expediente 11, 14 May 1878, Rafael Guerraz to the Spanish Colonial Minister, El Subsecretario de Estado, Rafael Guerraz to the Subsecretary of the Minister of Ultramar.

<sup>451</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativo y Remisiones, Leg. 99, No. 386, 7 March 1878.

<sup>452</sup> “Leonard, John Edwards, 1845-1878.” Biographical Dictionary, United States Congress. <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/L000247>.

govern the political rights of freedmen across the Empire.<sup>453</sup> For these men, there was no other way forward. “The race war and the ruin of production in the Southern United States present us with an example we cannot forget,” they reminded the committee. “Even during eight years of terrible warfare in Cuba...we did not suffer the terrible convulsions are the product of racial antagonisms, which emerge when the slave suddenly and violently acquires his freedom.”<sup>454</sup>

Still, Afro-Cubans were not inclined to give up. Even the marginal liberalization of Cuban politics opened up new possibilities for Black political organizing on the island. That year, Ramona Lombillo and Flora Borrell de Águila, two free women of color, organized a new mutual aid society in Cienfuegos called La Caridad (meaning, Charity). Across the island, another group of Black artisans founded La Fraternidad, which spent the next decade advocating the extension of full civil and political rights to Spanish citizens of African descent.<sup>455</sup> And in 1881, a group of men claiming to represent “the colored race on the island of Cuba” sent a petition directly to the Spanish Parliament demanding the extension of universal male suffrage to the island. “There was a time,” they wrote, “when what was right was hidden from the servants and the senators of the American Union, who divorced themselves from the democratic principles of God.” Yet now, they claimed, “the cry” of millions of former slaves “could be heard resounding in the Capitol” of the United States. To them, the lesson was abundantly clear:

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<sup>453</sup> AHN, Fondo del Ministerio de Ultramar, Legajo 4780, Leg. 2, Expediente 32, 15 Aug. 1879, Documentos de la Comisión Creada por Real Decreto de 15 de Agosto de 1879 para Informar al Gobierno Acerca de los Proyectos de ley que Habrán de Someterse a Las Cortes Sobre Reformas en la Isla de Cuba.

<sup>454</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Leg. 629, No. 35.

<sup>455</sup> Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 105-107.

“all men, regardless of race or color,” must be “full citizens of the Spanish Empire.” They concluded with the cry: “Long live freedom!”<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> AHN, Fondo Ministerio de Ultramar, Leg. 4815, Expediente 1, 15 Sept. 1881, Exposición al Congreso de los Diputados elevada á nombre de la Raza de Color de la Isla de Cuba.

## Chapter 3

### **“Reform or Be Devoured”: The Brazilian Plan for Black Disfranchisement, 1866-1881**

In October of 1877, Henry Washington Hilliard—the new U.S. ambassador to Brazil—sailed into the bay of Rio de Janeiro. “The scene which rose to view was surpassingly beautiful,” he reflected. “The whole aspect of the coast far transcended anything in sublimity that I had seen in any country.” In that moment, Hilliard felt dazed by his good luck. As an ex-slaveowner and a former Confederate general, he had spent the past ten years struggling to find work in the occupied South. Republican officials had repeatedly rejected his applications for government jobs.<sup>457</sup> It was only with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 that Hilliard’s prospects began to change. Hayes, unlike his predecessor, Ulysses S. Grant, was committed to national reconciliation.<sup>458</sup> He began appointing Confederate veterans to prominent federal positions almost as soon as he arrived in the White House. As a result, Hilliard soon found himself taking up residence at Petropolis, the summer home of the Brazilian imperial family. Once there, he began to forge close friendships among “the wealthy class of Rio.” One man in particular won his affection. That summer, Hilliard spent “day after day...walking and driving” with Joaquim Nabuco, a prominent Brazilian statesman and the future president of the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Henry Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 359.

<sup>458</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 135.

<sup>459</sup> Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad*, 381.

For Nabuco, these long walks were strategic. For the past fifteen years, Brazil had been inundated with stories of U.S. Reconstruction from the thousands of Confederate veterans who had fled the occupied South after the Civil War.<sup>460</sup> Their accounts of race war and economic catastrophe (or “*a guerra de raças*,” as Reconstruction was then known in both Cuba and Brazil) had become, in Nabuco’s opinion, a serious obstacle to the final abolition of Brazilian slavery.<sup>461</sup> For this reason, he immediately began probing Hilliard for his perspective on slave emancipation in the United States. He was delighted by his response. Hilliard was likely the first Confederate veteran to arrive in Brazil who was willing to declare slave emancipation a “happy transformation.”<sup>462</sup> Over the next two years, Nabuco coaxed Hilliard into making his views more widely known. When the U.S. ambassador finally agreed to publish a statement on the subject, Nabuco decided to organize a celebratory banquet in his honor.

On November 20, 1880, more than fifty wealthy Brazilians gathered in a large hotel in Rio de Janeiro to hear Hilliard assess the results of U.S. Reconstruction. In retrospect, Hilliard considered this speech to be “the most heroic act of my life.”<sup>463</sup> Standing under a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, he refuted what he believed to be the central myths about Reconstruction circulating in Brazil: that racial conflict had undermined plantation agriculture in the post-

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<sup>460</sup> Scholars have estimated that between eight and twenty thousand former Confederates migrated to Brazil: Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*; Judith MacKnight Jones, *Soldado descansá!*; Frank P. Goldman, *Os pioneiros americanos no Brasil*; Griggs, *The Elusive Eden*; Dawsey, *The Confederados*; Jarnagin, *A Confluence of Transatlantic Networks*; Strom, *Confederates in the Tropics*; Wolnisty, *A Different Manifest Destiny*; Saba, *American Mirror*.

<sup>461</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 14 Sept. 1871.

<sup>462</sup> “Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society Offers a Banquet in Honor of the American Minister Henry Washington Hilliard, November 20, 1880, in the Grand Salon of Hotel dos Estrangeiros” (Rio de Janeiro: Ryp. Primeiro de Janeiro, 1880), 116.

<sup>463</sup> David Durham, *A Journey in Brazil: Henry Washington Hilliard and the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2018), 116.

emancipation South. “Relations between Blacks and whites have never been better,” he assured his audience, and “the South has never been more prosperous than it is today.” At the same time, Hilliard wanted to be transparent. Racial violence *had* occurred in the postbellum South, and its roots, he felt, lay in the political enfranchisement of former slaves. During Reconstruction, he explained, “political privileges were immediately conferred on freedmen...while white men, accustomed to rule, were excluded.” As a result, “adventurers from other states came to the South to dominate the freedmen...they incited the colored race to distrust and hostility against their former masters.”<sup>464</sup> For this reason, he warned his audience, “the enfranchisement of the million and a half slaves in this country requires much and careful consideration.” “The question [of suffrage],” he advised, must rest “in the hands of wise statesmen, who will know how to treat it in all its important relations.”<sup>465</sup>

The wealthy Brazilians in the room that day heard his warning with surprising equanimity. Many of them had already drawn almost precisely the same conclusion from the radical experiment with Black suffrage in the United States. As a result, the Brazilian Parliament was at that very moment developing legislation that would disfranchise former slaves without making any reference to race. The *Lei Saraiva* would implement literacy tests as a national voting requirement for the first time in Brazilian history. Its effect, as these men knew, would be to prevent nearly all free Afro-Brazilians from voting. At the same time, the politics of silence offered white elites a concrete advantage: they would be able to proclaim racial equality

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<sup>464</sup> Joaquim Nabuco, ed., *Cartas do Presidente Joaquim Nabuco e do Ministro Americano H. W. Hilliard sobre a emancipação nos Estados Unidos* (Rio de Janeiro: G. Leuzinger & Filhos, 1880).

<sup>465</sup> “Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society Offers a Banquet,” 118.

throughout the nation.<sup>466</sup> That day, Hilliard's cautionary tale about Reconstruction prompted these men to toast to the success of the *Lei Saraiva*. The law would be a "victory" for "Brazilian democracy," one man crowed.<sup>467</sup> After its passage, Brazil would never be "reduced to the condition of the Southern United States."<sup>468</sup>

This chapter explores how and why U.S. Reconstruction (and to a lesser extent, the Cuban war for independence) shaped the Brazilian approach to Black suffrage after slavery. In the immediate aftermath of the U.S. Civil War, Brazilian slaveowners faced the same revolutionary crisis as their counterparts in Cuba. In both nations, planters enacted gradual emancipation laws as political concessions to the enslaved. Unlike Cuban planters, however, Brazilian slaveowners left the question of the franchise deliberately unresolved. For the next ten years, these men closely observed the democratic revolution unfolding in the United States. Drawing on the interpretations of their ex-Confederate friends, they became increasingly convinced that Black political enfranchisement had resulted in a violent race war across the U.S. South. Simultaneously, they began to fear that a similar conflict was possible in Brazil. By the late 1870s, economic transformations wrought by the Free Womb Law had devastated small-scale slaveholders across the Brazilian empire. For decades, free Afro-Brazilians had been a

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<sup>466</sup> On the idea of "the politics of silence" in Brazilian historiography, see Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, "Sobre os silêncios da lei: lei costumeira e positiva nas alforrias de escravos no Brasil do século XIX," *Dados* 28, no. 1 (1985), 45-60; Hebe Mattos, *Das cores do silêncio*; Chalhoub, "The Politics of Silence," 77; Fischer, Grinberg, and Mattos, "Law, Silence, and Racialized Inequalities in the History of Afro-Brazil," 130-176. Political scientists have also referred to the politics of silence as "discrimination by design." See Robert Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 44.

<sup>467</sup> "Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society Offers a Banquet," 118.

<sup>468</sup> *Gazeta da Tarde*, 23 Jan. 1881.

small but critical element of this social class.<sup>469</sup> Their rapid dispossession undermined the material basis for solidarity among free Brazilian men. As a result—and for the first time in their nation’s history—elite white Brazilians felt profoundly threatened by the prospect of mass political mobilization along racial lines. The consequence, in 1881, was the *Lei Saraiva*.

In considering the passage of this law, historians have debated why Brazil, in contrast to the United States and Europe, failed to modernize by expanding access to voting rights in the late nineteenth century.<sup>470</sup> This chapter argues that the enactment of mass Black disenfranchisement in Brazil did not represent a turning back of the historical clock. Instead, the Brazilian ruling class pioneered an important form of modern conservative politics by implementing literacy tests and heightening voter requirements in order to restrict Black suffrage. Furthermore, the politics of Black exclusion developed in Brazil in the early 1880s assumed an increasingly global significance as North American and Cuban elites embarked on similar exclusionary projects over the following two decades.

## I. Pandora’s Box Reopened II

On July 27, 1865, the provincial president of Pará, José Viera Couto de Malgahães, wrote to the Brazilian Minister of Justice with important news. Earlier that week, more than fifty

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<sup>469</sup> Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania no Império do Brasil, 349-391.

<sup>470</sup> Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras*, 159; Carvalho, *A cidadania no Brasil*, 39; Azevedo e Souza, “Direitos políticos em depuração: A Lei Saraiva e o eleitorado do Recife entre as décadas de 1870s e 1880,” (Ph.D. diss., Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2012); Dolhnikoff “Governo representativo e legislação eleitoral no Brasil do Século XIX,” 66-82. For a version of this argument that positions Latin America as a vanguard of modernity for *expanding* political rights, see James E. Sanders, “The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Contesting Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* 46, no. 2 (2011), 104-127 and James Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). For a broader overview of suffrage restrictions in the Americas, see Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, “The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World,” *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 4 (2005), 891-921.

slaves had escaped from a plantation near the capital city of Belém and made their way into a nearby forest. According to Viera Couto, these men and women believed that freedom was imminent, and that the Brazilian government would not “repress them.” To combat this “evil impression,” the provincial president had deployed the National Guard.<sup>471</sup> Over the next two days, Brazilian soldiers pursued the fugitive slaves over rivers and through forests.<sup>472</sup> By the end of the month, they had killed two enslaved people and captured several more.<sup>473</sup> Dozens, however, remained at large. Now, Viera Couto feared that the new maroon community might become the nucleus for a “general insurrection” throughout the province. Rumors of freedom were “spreading rapidly,” he warned the Minister of Justice, and despite his best efforts, Pará was far from “tranquil.”<sup>474</sup>

Brazilian officials believed that the fugitives in Pará were directly inspired by U.S. Reconstruction. Just before their escape, a local official, Raymundo Alves, had reported that slaves on plantations near Belém were reading the *Jornal de Amazonas*. On July 10, 1865, the *Jornal* had published an article about the growing Confederate migration to Brazil. With the beginning of the Union occupation, the newspaper noted, “thousands of Southern families have decided to emigrate.” These “property owners,” the article went on, “are leaving their country so that they will not be subjected to the will of their conquerors or find themselves faced with the painful necessity of sitting at the same banquet table with men who were once their slaves.” According to Alves, reading about this inverted social order had prompted enslaved Afro-

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<sup>471</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 27 Jul 1865, José Viera Couto de Malgalhães to Thomas Nabuco de Araújo.

<sup>472</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 24 Jul. 1865, Raymundo Alves da Cunha to Viera Couto.

<sup>473</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 24 Jul. 1865, Alves to Viera Couto.

<sup>474</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 27 Jul 1865 and 29 Jul. 1865, Viera Couto to Nabuco.

Brazilians to begin “dreaming...of their freedom.” Their aspirations, he believed, constituted “a threat to public security.”<sup>475</sup>

He was right. Over the next six months, more than four thousand slaves fled to the new maroon community on the outskirts of Pará. From the forest, these fugitives waged war on plantations. “One hundred armed men in canoes [arrive] to attack farms,” the Brazilian Minister of Justice, José Thomas Nabuco de Araújo, explained to the Minister of the Navy.<sup>476</sup> “These slaves, evilly inspired by the war in the United States, are deserters and criminals who, fleeing from the province, conceal themselves...and then return with the object of arming more slaves.” By that point, Nabuco had already deployed more than one hundred regular units of the Brazilian National Guard in an effort to repress the growing slave insurrection. Now, he wanted the Minister of the Navy to send a gunboat to help Brazilian soldiers regain control of the region’s waterways. “I beg you to [do so] urgently,” he concluded, “given the deadly consequences of slave flight” in the region.<sup>477</sup>

In Rio de Janeiro, state officials were growing worried. That May, they received a petition from the municipal assembly of Vigia, a small town in Pará. These local elites had held an extraordinary session of their legislature in order to draw national attention to the “precarious state...of slave property” in northern Brazil. “The insurrection is already felt here on a large scale,” they wrote, “and the lives of slaveowners are in imminent danger.” These men feared for more than their lives, however. “Commercial and agricultural interests” were also at risk, and, as

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<sup>475</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-792, 10 Jul. 1865, Alves to Viera Couto.

<sup>476</sup> José Thomas Nabuco de Araújo was the father of Joaquim Aurelio Nabuco, the famous abolitionist who became close friends with Henry Hilliard.

<sup>477</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-977, 20 Feb. 1866, Nabuco to the Brazilian Minister of the Navy.

the slaveowners put it, “perplexity and mistrust are invading property” throughout the region.<sup>478</sup> Even worse, white elites knew that the national government’s power to police their slaves was diminishing.<sup>479</sup> Since the beginning of the Paraguayan War in 1864, the Brazilian government had sent roughly 140,000 soldiers abroad, including more than 60,000 members of the National Guard.<sup>480</sup> Their absence gave slaveowners new reasons to worry. As one member of the Brazilian Council of State put it, there were at least 800,000 slaves in Brazil who were older than sixteen, all potentially “ready to take up arms against the whites.”<sup>481</sup>

As a result, many prominent slaveowners and officials began to demand reform. Between 1865 and 1866, the Brazilian Ministers of Agriculture, Justice, and Foreign Affairs all came out in support of gradual emancipation.<sup>482</sup> As the Minister of Agriculture put it, Brazil “will not cease to be dragged forward by civilized nations and threatened by a general revolt of slaves.” Under such conditions, he argued, abolition was “inevitable.”<sup>483</sup> Soon, more elite men assumed this position. In January of 1866, the *Diario do Rio de Janeiro* published an editorial urging the government to “reform or be devoured.”<sup>484</sup> A few months later, Perdigão Malheiro, the son of a

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<sup>478</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-977, 31 May 1865, Paço da Câmara Municipal da cidade da Vigia.

<sup>479</sup> Kraay, “Slavery, Citizenship, and Military Service in Brazil’s Mobilization for the Paraguayan War,” 232-233.

<sup>480</sup> Ricardo Salles, *Guerra do Paraguai: memórias e imagens* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Biblioteca Nacional, 2003), 9, 38.

<sup>481</sup> Quoted in Sidney Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis, historiador* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003) 151.

<sup>482</sup> AHI, 235.2.1, 3 Nov. 1865, Saraiva to Joaquim Maria Nascentes de Azambuja and *Jornal do Commercio*, 14 Aug. 1865. For others see de Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco*, 51.

<sup>483</sup> BMA, Arquivo Paula Souza, PS.ca.880, *Trabalho de Paula Souza sobre a libertação dos escravos*, s/d.

<sup>484</sup> *Diario do Rio de Janeiro*, 16 Jan. 1866.

former Supreme Court justice and the current president of the Institute of Brazilian Lawyers, published a pathbreaking essay advocating for freedom of the womb.<sup>485</sup> In its wake, a handful of senators began to draft legislation that promised freedom to all future children of the enslaved.<sup>486</sup> In 1866, the senator, José Antonio Pimenta Bueno, introduced five bills that would inaugurate the gradual abolition of slavery across the empire.<sup>487</sup> His rationale was clear. “In North America, where the redemption of slaves met with great resistance, waves of blood soaked the soil,” he explained. Now, the “same crisis” was unfolding in Brazil, leaving “the people in a state of intense and painful anxiety.” He believed that it was during these moments “of great crisis and terrible danger, that people need their governments the most.” His bills, he hoped, would be the nation’s “saving measures.”<sup>488</sup>

In 1867, the Brazilian Council of State gathered in Rio de Janeiro to begin the labor of reconstruction. The Council was composed of twelve elite men selected by the Emperor to provide state officials with concrete advice about how to solve difficult or controversial political problems.<sup>489</sup> On April 2, the group met for the first time to discuss the gradual abolition of slavery. José Thomas Nabuco de Araújo, the former Minister of Justice who had fought for months to suppress the slave rebellion in Pará, was the first to speak. “In Brazil,” he warned, “the danger...*is with us*; it is inside the country.” At any moment, he added, “it may surprise us and

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<sup>485</sup> Pena, *Pajens da casa imperial*, 257.

<sup>486</sup> See: *A abolição no Parlamento, 1823-1883*, 2 vols. (Brasília: Brazilian Federal Senate: 2012), i, 237—246.

<sup>487</sup> “Projeto do Marquês de São Vicente, n 1—liberdade para os filhos de mulher escrava,” in *A abolição no Parlamento*, i, 246.

<sup>488</sup> “Projeto do Marquês de São Vicente, n 1—liberdade para os filhos de mulher escrava,” in *A abolição no Parlamento*, i, 246.

<sup>489</sup> Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras*, 107.

affect the civil and public order.” He urged the Council to make its deliberations “swift” in order to “put an end to the anxiety of the slaveowners and the hopes of the slaves.”<sup>490</sup>

Yet, as in Cuba, the way forward was unclear. Almost immediately, the question of Black political citizenship became a point of contention.<sup>491</sup> The Brazilian Constitution of 1824 recognized “all who have been born in Brazil” as citizens of the Brazilian Empire.<sup>492</sup> *Ingênuos* (those born of a free womb) and *libertos* (freedmen) were explicitly included, although their rights were differentiated.<sup>493</sup> Male *ingênuos* enjoyed full civil and political rights upon reaching adulthood, as long as they could accumulate the necessary property requirements to vote. *Libertos*, on the other hand, could vote in only primary elections; they were barred from voting for senators or deputies, and from running for most public offices.<sup>494</sup> At the time, this approach made sense to the members of the Council of State. Instead of drawing a boundary along racial lines, the framers of the Brazilian Constitution had distinguished between *brasileiros* and *estrangeiros*, which had the effect of sharpening a sense of difference between Brazilian free people of color (many of whom were petty proprietors and even slaveholders) and African “barbarians.”<sup>495</sup> When Brazil declared its independence, 40 percent of its population was

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<sup>490</sup> Jose Antônio Pimenta Bueno, *Trabalho sobre a extinção da escravidão no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Nacional, 1868), 97.

<sup>491</sup> See Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império*, vol. 3, book 5, chapter 2.

<sup>492</sup> *Constituição Política do Império do Brasil*, 25 Mar. 1824.

<sup>493</sup> Afro-Brazilian women’s exclusion from political life was taken for granted. See Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women’s Rights in Brazil, 1850-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992).

<sup>494</sup> Chalhoub, “The Politics of Silence,” 77.

<sup>495</sup> Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania no Império do Brasil,” 349-391. See also José Murilo Carvalho, *Cidadania no Brasil*, 25-37; Hebe Maria Mattos, *Escravidão e cidadania no Brasil monárquico* (Rio de

enslaved, while 27 percent were free people of color.<sup>496</sup> Together, Africans and Afro-descendants were a majority. For this reason, the white elites who drafted the Brazilian Constitution of 1824 decided to keep the property requirements for voting remarkably low—in Brazil, a larger portion of the total population (10.9 percent) was eligible to vote than in England (7 percent), Italy (2 percent), or Holland (2.5 percent).<sup>497</sup> By including free-born Afro-Brazilian men in the body politic, Brazil’s founders hoped to build cross-racial support for a constitutional order that would preserve slavery for generations to come.

Now, abolition threatened the viability of the old order. As the Visconde de Jequitinhonha immediately pointed out, the Free Womb Law had the potential to “aggravate the evils...in our elections” by vastly increasing the number of free Black men eligible to vote in Brazil.<sup>498</sup> As written, the proposed law simply stated that the children born to slave mothers would henceforth be “free.”<sup>499</sup> Jequitinhonha argued that the Council of State must “clearly define their status.” He felt that these children should be “*libertos* and not *ingênuos*.” That way, the government could prevent “those lacking in moral capacity” from voting or running for

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Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2000); and Parron, “A política da escravidão na era da liberdade,” 180-187.

<sup>496</sup> Mattos, “Racialização e Cidadania no Império do Brasil,” 356. On the demographics of Brazilian slavery, see Robert W. Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888,” (Ph.D. diss, Stanford University, 1976) and Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>497</sup> Dolhnikoff, “Governo Representativo e Legislação Eleitoral no Brasil do Século XIX,” 69. For comparison, approximately 16% of the total population of the United States voted in the presidential election of 1872. See “1872,” The American Presidency Project, University of California-Santa Barbara, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections/1872>.

<sup>498</sup> Pimenta Bueno, *Trabalho sobre a extinção da escravatura no Brasil*, 106.

<sup>499</sup> “Projeto do Marquês de São Vicente, n 1—liberdade para os filhos de mulher escrava,” in *A abolição no Parlamento*, i, 246.

public office.<sup>500</sup> Several members of the Council of State shared this view. As one Council member explained, the *liberto* label had clear advantages—including that “it would deny [the free children] rights for which they are not prepared.”<sup>501</sup>

Yet, the idea of Black disfranchisement divided the Council of State. The former Minister of Justice, Nabuco de Araújo, declared that the next generation of children must be considered *ingênuos*, or else “the same [racial] antagonism that exists in the United States” would soon emerge in Brazil.<sup>502</sup> Another Councilor, José Maria da Silva Paranhos (the future Visconde do Rio Branco), agreed. “In Brazil,” he argued, it would be too risky “to create a [political] incapacity founded exclusively on racial difference.” “Up to now,” he explained, “the freedmen have seemed resigned to their fate because it is established by the Constitution.” Moreover, they were divided by “age, location, and profession,” making it difficult for them to organize. “The same would not be true,” he insisted, “for the *libertos* under the new law...who will constitute a class apart.” Paranhos could picture the next generation very clearly. He was certain that they would be numerous, educated, and well-organized. “If they were to form exaggerated ideas of their rights, they could easily become a serious danger,” he warned, “as they have for the government of the [American] Union.” For this reason, he considered disfranchisement politically unacceptable. It would mean “ending the struggle over slavery only to enter into a struggle over rights, a dangerous fight, which nothing could justify.”<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Pimenta Bueno, *Trabalho sobre a extinção da escravidão no Brasil*, 32, 106.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

<sup>502</sup> Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império*, vol. iii, bk. iv, 80.

<sup>503</sup> Pimenta Bueno, *Trabalho sobre a extinção da escravidão no Brasil*, 92, 107.

There was another possibility. Towards the end of the debate, the author of the legislation spoke up. José Antonio Pimenta Bueno informed the Brazilian Council of State that “the omission” in the law “was intentional.” He thought the Council should wait to resolve the question of the franchise. The free children, he pointed out, would not reach adulthood “for another twenty years.” Postponing the decision about their political rights would therefore provide state officials with a chance “to see how things unfold” and “to resolve the issue properly.”<sup>504</sup> His suggestion, however, was quickly shot down. Other Councilors feared that if the rights of the free children were not immediately “established in a clear and positive way,” then the resulting uncertainty would “make the slaves even more anxious.” No one wanted that. As one Councilor put it, “the more discontented they are,” the more dangerous the crisis of slavery would become.<sup>505</sup>

As a result, Nabuco’s proposal won out. The legislation drafted by the Brazilian Council of State declared that all future children born to enslaved mothers would be considered *ingênuos*. Male children of the free womb would enjoy full civil and political rights upon reaching adulthood.<sup>506</sup> Only two of the most conservative members of the Council of State raised any objections.<sup>507</sup> For most, declaring the new generation of free children to be *ingênuos* made sense. It seemed consistent with the Brazilian Constitution. At the time, it was hard for them to imagine anything different.

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<sup>504</sup> Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império*, vol. iii, 60-61.

<sup>505</sup> Pimenta Bueno, *Trabalho sobre a extinção da escravidão no Brasil*, 92.

<sup>506</sup> Nabuco, *Um estadista do Império*, vol. iii, 1.

<sup>507</sup> Yousseff, “O Império do Brasil na segunda era da abolição,” 135; Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras*, 62.

But the contest over the future of Black political citizenship in Brazil was far from over. In August of 1867, Nabuco introduced the Council's proposal to the Brazilian Parliament.<sup>508</sup> Immediately, the phrase "*havidos por ingênuos*" provoked controversy in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>509</sup> Many slaveowners, especially in the Conservative Party (which was dominated by coffee planters), objected to the prospect of slave emancipation with full citizenship rights. As one slaveowning deputy put it, declaring these children *ingênuos* would undercut his "right" to their labor. He imagined what a free Black man might say to him under this new political order: "the government could have called me a *liberto*, which would have reminded me of your rights to my labor, but instead it chose to declare me an *ingênuo*, and to make me your equal." The national government, he insisted, could not force him to "raise [these children] until the age of twenty-one" and then "throw them into society with all the rights and prerogatives of free citizens!"<sup>510</sup>

By 1869, the struggle over the Free Womb Law had brought the Brazilian Parliament to a standstill.<sup>511</sup> Meanwhile, the situation in the countryside deteriorated. That December, a group of planters from the province of São Paulo wrote to the Minister of Justice begging him to take "urgent measures to improve public security against the repeated assassinations committed by slaves." These men feared the "conflagration of the country." They blamed the Brazilian Parliament for its failure to resolve the "servile question." Apparently, news of the stalled

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<sup>508</sup> "Projeto de José Thomaz Nabuco de Araújo sobre emancipação de escravos (fusão dos cinco projectos do Marquês de São Vicente, de 1866" de 20-8-1867," *A abolição no Parlamento, 1824-1883: Vol 1* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2012), 322.

<sup>509</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 14 June 1867.

<sup>510</sup> *Annaes do Parlamento Brasileiro Camara dos Srs. Deputados* (hereafter ACD), 18 Aug. 1871, Volume IV: Discurso do Visconde do Rio Branco (Presidente do Conselho de Ministros) defendendo o Projeto, 175.

<sup>511</sup> Needell, *The Party of Order*, 255.

debates was circulating among the tens of thousands of slaves who lived in their province, where it produced “a dangerous and tremendous agitation.” They requested that the police exercise “increased vigilance,” as “the interests of the plantations are at risk.”<sup>512</sup>

In May of 1870, the young Conservative leader Teixeira Junior stood up in Parliament to confront his party. He spoke directly about the growing threat of slave revolution in Brazil. “We have in our minds the conviction that great misfortunes are close at hand,” he began. “The slaves are growing undisciplined; in the deserts where we live, surrounded by slaves, we have few guarantees.” “Alarm,” he acknowledged, “was spreading throughout the country.” White Brazilians recognized that “this sword will remain suspended indefinitely over our heads” until the government addressed “the question of emancipation.” For this reason, Teixeira Junior urged his colleagues to “face the question head on.” “Great difficulties,” he concluded, “are never avoided through the passage of time...[and] today we still have the chance to choose the way forward.”<sup>513</sup> Other planters agreed. “God save Brazil from the tremendous drama of the American Union,” one slaveowner entreated, “and from the dismal scenes that have unfolded in Cuba since 1868.”<sup>514</sup>

At Teixeira’s urging, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies converged on a new solution. The Conservative Deputy Paulino Soares da Souza articulated it most clearly. In his view, the “two greatest obstacles” to the passage of the Free Womb Law were “the political question” (emancipation) and “the social question” (racial equality). He believed that the best way to pass

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<sup>512</sup> ANRJ, IJ1-525, J. Cunha Barbora to the Brazilian Minister of Justice, 17 Dec. 1869 and João Guilherme de Aguiar to the Baron of Itaúa, 14. Jan. 1869.

<sup>513</sup> ACD, 14 May 1870, Volume I, 21- 25.

<sup>514</sup> ACD, 29 May 1871, Volume I, 112.

the legislation would be to “separate the two questions”—to “remove a social issue from the political terrain.” In other words, he wanted to pass the Free Womb Law without clarifying whether the free children would be *libertos* or *ingênuos*, which would enable Parliament to “avoid taking responsibility” for their future rights. Souza’s proposal provoked the immediate condemnation of José Maria da Silva Paranhos, the Conservative Party leader who had fought the exact same suggestion during the earlier debates of the Council of State. Paranhos remained convinced that “the tremendous lesson of the United States” was that it was impossible to prevent Black rights from becoming “a political issue.”<sup>515</sup> But this time, the politics of silence carried the day. In May of 1871, after a seven-month recess, a special commission from the Chamber of Deputies gathered to revise the Free Womb Law.<sup>516</sup> Their first act was to “cross out the words *havidos por ingênuos*.” The elimination of this phrase, they insisted, “does not alter the truly free condition of the children.” It would, however, make it possible for the Brazilian Parliament to pass the legislation, and consequently for the Brazilian government to “regain its position on the world stage” while also defusing “the many different dangers stemming from prolonged indecision.”<sup>517</sup>

Removing the term “*ingênuos*” cleared the way for the passage of the Free Womb Law in Brazil. Just a few weeks after the Special Commission concluded their work, the Chamber of Deputies voted 61 to 35 in favor of the legislation.<sup>518</sup> The Brazilian Senate did the same just a

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<sup>515</sup> ACD, 29 May 1871, Volume I, 103-112.

<sup>516</sup> The Chamber of Deputies was in recess between September of 1870 and May of 1871, which prevented the Commission from meeting until the following year.

<sup>517</sup> ACD, 30 June 1871, Volume II, 220-234. Only 26 deputies had supported Teixeira Junior’s original call for abolition in May of 1870. See Needell, *The Party of Order*, 26.

<sup>518</sup> ACD, 28 Aug. 1871, Volume IV, 316-318.

month later. The bill became law on September 28, 1871.<sup>519</sup> As in Cuba, the legislation represented an important political concession to enslaved people. Although the law did not immediately abolish slavery, it did guarantee its eventual destruction across the hemisphere. From that point on, all children born to enslaved mothers would be considered “free persons.” Once they turned twenty-one, slaveowners’ legal power over them would expire.<sup>520</sup> At the same time, the law helped the Brazilian ruling class begin to close Pandora’s Box.<sup>521</sup> By refusing to legislate on the political status of the free children, elite Brazilians temporarily silenced the debates over Black citizenship that had been raging in Brazil since the end of the U.S. Civil War. As the 1870s began, the problem seemed to disappear from view.<sup>522</sup>

At that point, one slaveowner sounded the alarm. Rodrigo Augusto da Silva was a prominent conservative senator from the province of São Paulo. Widely regarded as a brilliant lawyer, he was appointed to serve on the Special Commission that revised the Free Womb Law of 1871.<sup>523</sup> That May, he became the only member of the commission to reject the final version of the text. He worried that the “doubt” over the political status of the free children “could have far-reaching effects” in Brazilian society. Specifically, he feared the consequences of raising “a great mass of citizens” on plantations where their parents were still enslaved. Under the current

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<sup>519</sup> *Annaes do Senado do Império do Brasil* (hereafter AS), 28 Sept. 1871, 289.

<sup>520</sup> Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*, 157-171.

<sup>521</sup> See El Youssef, “O Império do Brasil na Segunda Era da Escravidão, 1861-1881,” 197.

<sup>522</sup> The early 1870s was a time of relative inactivity for the Brazilian abolitionist movement. Between 1868 and 1871, more than 25 anti-slavery societies were founded in Brazil. Between 1872 and 1877, only 6 more were organized. See Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 68, 81, 120.

<sup>523</sup> Maria Fernandes Martins, “O Círculo dos grandes: Um estudo sobre política, elites e redes no segundo reinado a partir da trajetória do visconde do Cruzeiro (1854-1889),” *Locus: Revista da história* 13, no. 1 (2007), 108.

political order, free Afro-Brazilians could live peacefully “alongside slaveowners” because they “lacked connections with slaves.” As a result, “their presence on plantations does more to guarantee order than to cause conflicts.” The Free Womb Law, he predicted, would change that. Under the “new system,” free Afro-Brazilians “would be legally obligated to remain on plantations” until the age of twenty-one, where they would “live alongside slaves, have close ties with them, and see their families held daily in captivity.”<sup>524</sup> As a result, free and enslaved Afro-Brazilians would—for the first time—“*belong to the same race*.”<sup>525</sup> da Silva dreaded this possibility almost more than anything else. To understand why, we have to look to the revolution that was unfolding simultaneously in the North Atlantic World.

## II. Nightmares of the North Atlantic

As the progress of the revolution slowed in Brazil, it accelerated in the United States. In January of 1867, the U.S. Congress granted all African American men over the age of twenty-one the right to vote in the District of Columbia.<sup>526</sup> Two months later, the U.S. government passed the Military Reconstruction Acts, which established universal male suffrage across the former Confederate South.<sup>527</sup> The Brazilian planter class followed this news attentively. Throughout 1866, the *Jornal do Commercio* had tracked the efforts of Radical Republicans to secure the franchise for former slaves.<sup>528</sup> That February, the paper had reported that the U.S.

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<sup>524</sup> “Voto em separado de Rodrigo da Silva (membro da Comissão encarregada de dar Parecer sobre o elemento servil),” in *A Abolição no Parlamento, 1823-1883: Volume I*, 400-427.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid, 422. My emphasis.

<sup>526</sup> Kate Masur, *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 130.

<sup>527</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 277.

<sup>528</sup> See, for example, *Jornal do Commercio*, 30 May 1866; 5 Jan. 1867.

Congress was weighing “an amendment that would invest Congress with the power to make electoral laws for all the states.” “It has already conferred the right to vote on all Black men in the District of Columbia,” the paper went on, “and is considering broader projects to eliminate civil and political distinctions based on race, condition or color” throughout the nation. For the editors of the *Jornal do Commercio*, “the men of the North were the real revolutionaries [in the U.S.], not the men of the South.”<sup>529</sup> Most elite Brazilians agreed. From his office in Washington, D.C., the Brazilian ambassador, Joaquim Maria Nascentes de Azambuja, was continuously forwarding copies of new legislation “that put all [U.S. citizens] on equal footing.” “Under this order of things,” he wrote, no legal “restrictions were placed on people of color, even those who were recently emancipated.”<sup>530</sup>

The political enfranchisement of former slaves drove thousands of ex-Confederates to migrate to Brazil. According to the Brazilian Embassy, nearly two thousand white Southerners made the journey from New York City to Rio de Janeiro between April of 1867 and January of 1868.<sup>531</sup> Another fifteen hundred travelled from New Orleans to Brazil during the same period.<sup>532</sup> As James McFadden Gaston, a former slaveowner from South Carolina, explained, these men could not “submit to the new order of things and live on a footing of equality with their slaves.”<sup>533</sup> Gaston felt that the new “relations of the emancipated negro to the white” had made life in the South intolerable. He yearned for a country “where we may be free from the

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<sup>529</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 28 Feb 1866.

<sup>530</sup> AHI, 233.4.3, Joaquim Maria Nascentes de Azambuja to Antonio Coelho de Sá e Albuquerque, 21 Jan. 1867.

<sup>531</sup> AHI, 258.3.9, Luiz H. Ferreira d’Aguiar to José Maria da Silva Paranhos, 3 Oct. 1868.

<sup>532</sup> AHI, 258.3.9, Luiz H. Ferreira d’Aguiar to Antonio Coelho de Sá e Albuquerque, 25 March 1868.

<sup>533</sup> Gaston, *Hunting a Home in Brazil*, 60.

trials and vexations incident to coming in contact with those who now control the country.”<sup>534</sup>

His compatriots felt the same way. As one prospective migrant put it in April of 1867, “the political situation of the South is as bad as our worst enemies could wish, or as our most gloomy fears had foreboded.”<sup>535</sup> These men congratulated themselves on escaping a society where Black men voted but “lived in idleness.”<sup>536</sup>

Confederate migrants enjoyed the active support of the Brazilian state. Upon arrival, almost every white Southerner met with the Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Paula Souza.<sup>537</sup> He quickly established a reputation as their “best friend.”<sup>538</sup> Between 1865 and 1866, Souza ceded millions of acres of land to Confederate settlers at no cost.<sup>539</sup> In August of 1866, he granted the former Confederate general, Charles Gunter, control of between four and five million acres in the province of Espírito Santo.<sup>540</sup> A few months later, he issued another land grant “about the size of Rhode Island” to the North American planter Alfonso Buhlaw.<sup>541</sup> In 1865, he gave the Reverend Ballard Dunn control of more than six hundred thousand acres along the

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<sup>534</sup> SHC, James McFadden Gaston Papers, Series 3.1, Box 3, Folder 23.

<sup>535</sup> SHC, John D. Porter Letters, 30 Aug. 1867, John D. Porter to Charles Nathan.

<sup>536</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, 12 Dec. 1867, Godfrey B. to George S. Barnsley.

<sup>537</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 3.1, Box 1, Folder 23, “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1888.”

<sup>538</sup> SHC, Gunter and Poellnitz family papers, 23 Aug. 1866, C. G. Gunter to W. A. Gunter.

<sup>539</sup> Arquivo do Estado de São Paulo (hereafter AESP), Secretaria de Agricultura: Terras, colonização, e imigração, C.O.6111, 28 Oct. 1867, Guilherme Bowen to the Minister of Agriculture of the Empire of Brazil. See also SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 3.1, Box 1, Folder 23, “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1888.”

<sup>540</sup> SHC, Gunter and Poellnitz Family Papers, 23 Aug. 1866, C. G. Gunter to W. A. Gunter.

<sup>541</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 3.1, Box 2, Folder 25, “Original of Reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederate emigrants, April 1915.”

Ribiera de Iguape in Paraná.<sup>542</sup> Souza hoped that the *Confederados* would use these lands to jump-start cotton production in Brazil. For this reason, he committed vast “expenditures of time and money” to their success. In addition to free land, he provided the settlers with subsidized travel, personal translators, and temporary lodging in the *Hotel dos Estrangeiros* in Rio de Janeiro, where they could eat for free.<sup>543</sup>



2. A partial image of the *Hotel dos Estrangeiros* (on the left), circa 1865.  
Image courtesy of the Instituto Moreira Salles.

As a result, the ex-Confederates quickly developed close ties with the Brazilian elite. In Rio de Janeiro, “rich and prominent” Brazilian citizens often invited white Southerners to stay with them until they could purchase plantations or find residences of their own.<sup>544</sup> Southerners ate at their restaurants, joined their social clubs, and even married into their families.<sup>545</sup> As one

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<sup>542</sup> AESP, Secretaria de Agricultura: terras, colonização, e imigração, C.O. 7217, 9 Nov. 1867, Guilherme Bowen to the President of the Province of São Paulo.

<sup>543</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 3.1, Box 1, Folder 23, “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1888.”

<sup>544</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 3.1, Box 2, Folder 25, “Original of Reply to a Circular asking for information of Ex-Confederate emigrants, April 1915.”

<sup>545</sup> Wolnisty, *A Different Manifest Destiny*, 85.

former Confederate remarked, “[in Brazil] we found a better class...who sympathized with us and the South, who extended every courtesy and made us feel at home.”<sup>546</sup> Most importantly, the *Confederados* felt that Brazilian planters shared their commitment to elite white rule. In 1867, James McFadden Gaston concluded his travelogue, *Hunting a Home in Brazil*, by reflecting that “the empire of Brazil embodies a character and sentiment among the better class of citizens, very much in keeping with our standard.” This was because elite white Brazilians were dedicated to maintaining “the same relative status of races that was formerly a line of distinction...with us.” Gaston was certain that “the elements of society which have resulted from the mastery of the white man will never be erased entirely” in Brazil, and that knowledge helped him feel at home.<sup>547</sup>

In time, many *Confederados* managed to become slaveowners again. Some began enslaving people almost as soon as they reached Rio de Janeiro. In August of 1866, one Confederate doctor purchased “a large sugar Fazenda, 130 negroes & all” on credit for “135 *contos* (about \$57,000 dollars) payable with interest at five percent.”<sup>548</sup> Another Confederate veteran, who had managed to retain some of his wealth, purchased a coffee plantation with “thirty slaves and 95,000 coffee trees” just a few months later.<sup>549</sup> By 1867, the Confederate minister, Ballard Dunn, could reasonably boast that he knew “many southern gentlemen, who have bought large numbers of slaves” in Brazil.<sup>550</sup> Not all migrants, however, could afford slave

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<sup>546</sup> SHC, Andrew McCollam Papers, Subseries 3, Folder 100, 4 Oct. 1865, Newspaper clipping from “The Civic Guard, Journal of the Parish of Terrebonne, Louisiana.”

<sup>547</sup> Gaston, *Hunting a Home in Brazil*, 374.

<sup>548</sup> SHC, Gunter and Poellnitz Family Papers, 24 Aug. 1866, Harris Gunter to Brother.

<sup>549</sup> Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*, 53.

<sup>550</sup> BMA, IN.1866/6, Obras Raras e Especiais, Ballard S. Dunn, *Brazil, The Home for Southerners*, 40.

labor. The Judkins family of Louisiana rented enslaved people to work on their farm in São Paulo instead of purchasing them. David Riker, the son of a former railroad president from South Carolina, only managed to accumulate human property again after he married into a wealthy Brazilian family.<sup>551</sup>

Some of these men worried about the future of slavery in their new home, such as Andrew McCollam, a prospective migrant from Louisiana. When he arrived in Rio de Janeiro in July of 1866, he was alarmed to hear “much talk about liberating the slaves.” Over the next few months, he made a point of asking Brazilian planters about the future prospects of slavery in their country. They were not encouraging. One slaveowner, Senhor Julia of the *fazenda* Santa Cruz, predicted that “slavery would be abolished [in Brazil] in less than thirty years.” Another Brazilian planter informed McCollam that “the negro will disappear from Brazil in twenty-five years” due to the “wish on the part of the people to abolish slavery and the great preponderance of males over the females.” By the end of the year, McCollam was convinced that “with slavery abolished this Empire...will be the poorest country on the face of the earth.” Unlike many of his counterparts, he chose to return to the United States at the end of 1866.<sup>552</sup>

Most, however, were confident that their future was brighter in Brazil than in the United States. Charles Gunter, who founded the Confederate colony in Espirito Santo, insisted throughout the late 1860s that he “would rather have [his] children here naked than with ten thousand dollars apiece in any part of the U.S.”<sup>553</sup> His son Harris—who could afford clothes—

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<sup>551</sup> Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*, 29, 53.

<sup>552</sup> SHC, Andrew McCollam Papers, Series 2.1, Box 4, Folder 44, “The Brazilian Diary of Andrew McCollam, of Ellendale Plantation Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana.”

<sup>553</sup> SHC, Gunter and Poellnitz Family Papers, C. G. Gunter to Brother, 5 Sept. 1866.

claimed to share his father's view. He joked in September of 1866 that the only things to fear in Brazil "were the ants and a spirit of democracy," which he considered "no great evils in comparison with free negro labor, radicalism, and taxes."<sup>554</sup> Ballard Dunn, who founded a Confederate settlement in Espirito Santo, spent much of 1866 reminding homesick Southerners of the "thefts, rapes and murders" that were purportedly taking place in their "native states." He conjured images of white women "whipped and scourged" by Black men, and "sisters [who felt] afraid to venture out to take an evening walk, lest they should encounter a band of colored marauders, with arms in their hands." For Dunn, returning to "the land where negro superiority is just now prevailing" was unthinkable.<sup>555</sup>

Ex-Confederates attributed racial conflict in the post-emancipation South to the political enfranchisement of former slaves. In the summer and fall of 1867, tens of thousands of freedmen registered to vote for the first time in U.S. history.<sup>556</sup> Many simultaneously began organizing armed militias to protect their rights.<sup>557</sup> For former slaveowners, these months were traumatic. Godfrey Barnsley, an impoverished planter in Louisiana, wrote repeatedly to his sons in Brazil to lament the dawn of "radical and negro rule."<sup>558</sup> "Ignorant negroes" now controlled the state legislature, he reported.<sup>559</sup> "Carpetbaggers and scalawags" were working with former slaves to

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<sup>554</sup> SHC, Gunter and Poellnitz Family Papers, Harris Gunter to Brother, 14 Sept. 1866.

<sup>555</sup> BMA, IN.1866/6, Obras Rares e Especies, Ballard S. Dunn, *Brazil, The Home for Southerners*, 19-20.

<sup>556</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 283.

<sup>557</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 273.

<sup>558</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley, 14 Sept. 1868.

<sup>559</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 15, 15 May 1870, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley.

“pass outrageous laws” and “squander the peoples’ money.”<sup>560</sup> In his view, “the whole governing machinery” had become “one mass of corruption,” and justice for white people was “a mockery.”<sup>561</sup> Under such conditions, he felt, white men had no choice but to physically assault Blacks. After all, he pointed out, “the Rads” had deliberately enfranchised Black men in order to provoke “a collision of the races.”<sup>562</sup>

Most *Confederados* believed that the “collision of the races” made the restoration of plantation agriculture impossible. In December of 1867, Barnsley wrote again to his son in São Paulo to report that his workers were defying him. He had paid a Black man named Moses one hundred dollars “to get good hands,” but just when “the prospects both for corn and cotton were promising,” Moses “began to feel independent.” Soon, all of his workers “became troublesome, particularly after going to vote for the Constitution.” Even worse, the government would not force his field hands to work. “Under an absolute radical military despotism,” Barnsley explained, “there is no certainty of obtaining justice.”<sup>563</sup> Nearly all Confederate migrants were inundated with similar stories from their friends and family members back home. In October of 1867, John Porter, a prospective migrant writing to a friend in Brazil, explained that “the feeling that the negroes will take this country and the whites will have to abandon it is taking hold of the

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<sup>560</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, 14 Sept. 1868, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley.

<sup>561</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 1.4, Box 1, Folder 15, 14 Sept. 1870, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley.

<sup>562</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, 14 Sept. 1868, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley.

<sup>563</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Subseries 1.4, Box 1, Folder 13, 12 Dec. 1867, Godfrey Barnsley to George S. Barnsley, and 15 May 1870, Godfrey to George.

minds of our people.” This was because “the enfranchisement of the negroes...has had the most demoralizing effect on them...[they] will not pick what has been produced.”<sup>564</sup>

Moreover, many white Southerners were growing convinced that the same fate awaited the Cuban planter class. After the outbreak of the Cuban revolution in 1868, Godfrey Barnsley informed his sons in Brazil that sugar prices were increasing, “owing to the trouble in Cuba.” A “Civil War” has existed there “these some five or six months,” he added. “Republican insurgents” in Cuba “are liberating the slaves—the consequence of which will be the same as here—a great decrease of labor.”<sup>565</sup> “It may be fairly inferred,” he concluded, that “the great mass of the [white] population is demoralized.”<sup>566</sup>

As the *Confederados* arrived in Brazil, this narrative of Reconstruction began to gain traction among the Brazilian elite. Brazilian diplomats were among the first to embrace the Confederate account of racial conflict in the post-emancipation South. On May 22, 1867, the Brazilian consul in New York reported to the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs that “conflicts between the white and colored populations of Richmond, Charleston, New Orleans, and Mobile have surfaced. These bloody disorders have all been generated by emissaries of the radical party, who organize political meetings in order to turn the freedmen against their old masters.”<sup>567</sup> The Brazilian ambassador, Antonio Borges, similarly blamed Radical Republicans

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<sup>564</sup> SHC, John D. Porter Letters, 14 Oct. 1867, John D. Porter to Charles Nathan.

<sup>565</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 14, Godfrey B. to George, undated, late 1860s.

<sup>566</sup> SHC, George Scarborough Barnsley Papers, Series 1.4, Box 1, Folder 15, 15 May 1870, Godfrey B. to George.

<sup>567</sup> AHI, 233.4.3, 22 May 1867, Henrique Cavalcanti de Albuquerque to Conselheiro Antonio Coelho de Sá e Albuquerque.

for instigating a “race war” in the American South.<sup>568</sup> In November of 1871 he explained the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to the Brazilian Secretary of State. “The KKK is a secret organization...trying to alter the existing order of things in the Union,” he wrote.<sup>569</sup> “Considerable numbers of whites, well-armed and determined, attack Blacks...unleashing horrific carnage upon them.”<sup>570</sup>

The Brazilian press quickly began to advance the same narrative. Throughout 1867 and 1868, the *Jornal do Commercio* provided detailed coverage of the elections taking place in the post-emancipation South. “A profound and dangerous social transformation” had begun, the editors warned in a full-page cover story on U.S. Reconstruction published in January of 1867.<sup>571</sup> “The misery of the Southern states is horrible...the great mass of farmers are ruined.”<sup>572</sup> The paper was clear about why. “Where Black voters are in the majority,” it explained, racial violence was exploding. “In Alabama, whites who refused to vote stoned [Blacks] on the way to the polls.”<sup>573</sup> In Georgia, the newspaper reported a few months later, “a resolution revoking the expulsion of Black and brown members from the House of Representatives was postponed,” sparking another violent conflict between “[white] police and the Blacks.”<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> AHI, 233.4.5, 21 April 1873, Antonio P. Carvalho Borges to the Brazilian Secretary of State.

<sup>569</sup> AHI, 233.4.5, 21 Nov. 1871, Antonio P. Carvalho Borges to the Brazilian Secretary of State.

<sup>570</sup> AHI, 233.4. 5, 21 April 1873, Antonio P. Carvalho Borges to the Brazilian Secretary of State.

<sup>571</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 3 Jan. 1867.

<sup>572</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 3 Jan. 1867.

<sup>573</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 17 Nov. 1867.

<sup>574</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 17 Mar. 1869 and 26 Mar. 1869.

The perception of the United States as a society riven by racial violence persisted in Brazil long after the Southern plantation economy began to recover. By the early 1870s, the Southern cotton economy had returned to full production.<sup>575</sup> Brazilian newspapers reported this, noting as early as March of 1869 that “cotton production has risen significantly, and the next crop will be fertile.”<sup>576</sup> Yet the “*guerra de raças*,” according to the Brazilian press, continued. For the *Jornal do Commercio*, the massacre of more than one hundred African Americans at Colfax, Louisiana in April of 1873—the bloodiest single act in the history of Reconstruction—was a critical example.<sup>577</sup> For the next two years, the paper continued to detail the “atrocities” committed by the Ku Klux Klan “prior to elections...to intimidate Blacks and get them away from the polls.”<sup>578</sup> “These conflicts are the sad but inevitable consequences of revolutionary emancipation,” the newspaper concluded.<sup>579</sup> “The profound racial hatred in the South” was the natural result of the federal government’s decision “to recognize the political rights” of free Blacks.<sup>580</sup>

For many Brazilians, the racial violence unfolding in the United States stirred old memories of the Haitian Revolution. In both nations, slave emancipation had prompted waves of

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<sup>575</sup> Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South*, 58, 118. In Brazil, this caused cotton prices to fall drastically. See Robert Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery,” 190.

<sup>576</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 26 Mar. 1869.

<sup>577</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 17 May 1873.

<sup>578</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 21 Oct. 1874. Emphasis in text.

<sup>579</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 2 Jan 1875.

<sup>580</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, 21 Oct. 1874. Emphasis in text.

Black revolutionary activity that spanned the hemisphere.<sup>581</sup> As a result, white Brazilians elites had quickly begun describing U.S. Reconstruction as the “second act” of the Haitian Revolution.<sup>582</sup> But by the late 1870s, a different parallel between the two events was beginning to worry them. Prior to the Haitian Revolution, the French revolutionary government had declared its intention to exclude freepeople from the body politic.<sup>583</sup> This decision drove thousands of free Afro-descendants on the island of Saint Domingue—including many slaveowners—to renounce the French state and forge a new alliance with Black slaves.<sup>584</sup> For decades, the image of *libertos* massacring white families had weighed heavily on the minds of Brazilian slaveowners.<sup>585</sup> During the 1820s, the framers of the Brazilian Constitution had deliberately chosen to include free Afro-Brazilians in the body politic in order to prevent a similar alliance from taking shape within their own society.<sup>586</sup> Now, however, the *guerra de raças* unfolding in the United States threatened to undermine their old logic. If both political inclusion and exclusion could lead to a race war, then what was Brazil’s way out?

At first, elite Brazilians were inclined to ignore this problem. They had managed to enact the Free Womb Law in 1871 by refusing to resolve the question of Black citizenship, and after

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<sup>581</sup> Mott, “A revolução dos negros do Haiti e o Brasil,” 3-10; Gomes, “Experiências transatlântica e significados locais,” 226-237; João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, “Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Brazil” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, 284-315.

<sup>582</sup> Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco*, 45.

<sup>583</sup> Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 187.

<sup>584</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, 64, 71-72, 163-172.

<sup>585</sup> On efforts among elite Brazilians to prevent black racial consciousness from emerging in Brazil, see Keila Grinberg, *O fiador dos brasileiros: cidadania, escravidão, e direito civil no tempo de Antonio Pereira Rebouças* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2002), 48-53; Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania no império do Brasil,” 380-381.

<sup>586</sup> Parron, “A política da escravidão na era da liberdade,” 170.

the law's passage, they preferred to celebrate their escape from violent revolution. As a result, the passage of the Free Womb Law in 1871 inspired celebrations throughout the nation.<sup>587</sup> In Rio de Janeiro, jubilant crowds filled the galleries of the Brazilian Parliament. Barred from speaking, spectators cheered, applauded, and threw flowers down onto the Senate floor when the final vote was cast in favor of gradual emancipation. The U.S. ambassador to Brazil, James R. Partridge, spent the day collecting these abandoned bouquets. He informed the Brazilian Prime Minister that he planned to deliver them to the U.S. Congress, as proof that "it was possible to accomplish in peace what had cost [the United States] so much blood."<sup>588</sup>

Ten years later, this sense of triumph was beginning to fade. The silence, in Brazil, was becoming deafening.

### **III. The Limits of Silence**

The early 1870s was a time of relative optimism for Brazilian slaveowners. As they had hoped, the Free Womb Law diminished the threat of revolution by opening new legal pathways for enslaved people to pursue their freedom. In addition to liberating the womb, the law granted all slaves who possessed adequate funds the right to purchase their manumission. This was a customary right that slaves had fought to establish for generations.<sup>589</sup> Once it became enshrined in law, more enslaved people, especially women, turned their attention to pursuing manumission for themselves and their children through the courts.<sup>590</sup> Abolitionists also began using the courts to accelerate emancipation. Since the legal abolition of international slave trade in 1831, almost

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<sup>587</sup> Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations in Brazilian Citizenship*, 53.

<sup>588</sup> Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 81.

<sup>589</sup> Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*, 158-171.

<sup>590</sup> Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom*, 13.

one million enslaved Africans had been illegally imported to Brazil.<sup>591</sup> In the late 1860s, a former slave and self-taught lawyer, Luis Gama, began helping these men and women sue for their freedom.<sup>592</sup> But as abolitionists and enslaved people worked to take advantage of these new institutional possibilities, political pressure for immediate emancipation declined. Between 1868 and 1871, Brazilians had founded more than twenty-five abolitionist societies; between 1871 and 1877, they organized only six.<sup>593</sup> The new focus of the movement on achieving manumission through the law enabled slaveowners to stabilize the Brazilian state. Control of the Brazilian Parliament had changed hands more than half a dozen times during the five-year struggle over the Free Womb Law. After its passage, the Conservative Party ruled unchallenged for almost a decade.<sup>594</sup>

With the crisis of slavery seemingly resolved, Brazilian planters turned their attention to expanding the coffee frontier. Since the 1830s, Brazil had been at the center of world coffee production.<sup>595</sup> By the 1850s, three states in the southeast—Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São

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<sup>591</sup> For this estimate, see <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/PkjNF7MD>. On the freedom suits of illegally enslaved Africans, see: Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*; Mamigonian, *Africanos livres*; Beatriz G. Mamigonian, “O estado nacional e a instabilidade de propriedade escrava: a Lei de 1831 e a matrícula dos escravos de 1872,” *Almanack* 2 (2011), 20-37; Keila Grinberg, “Slavery Manumission and the Law in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: Reflections on the Law of 1831 and the ‘Principle of Liberty’ on the Southern Frontier of the Brazilian Empire,” *European Review of History* 16, no. 3 (2009), 401-411; and Keila Grinberg, “Illegal Enslavement, International Relations, and International Law on the Southern Border of Brazil,” *Law and History Review* 35, no. 1 (2016), 31-52.

<sup>592</sup> Bruno Rodrigues de Lima, “‘We Have Laws and I Know What I Will’: Luiz Gama and the Normative Production of Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” (PhD diss., Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, 2022).

<sup>593</sup> Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 120-121.

<sup>594</sup> El Youssef, “O império do Brasil na segunda era de escravidão,” 203.

<sup>595</sup> Marquese, “Capitalismo, escravidão, e a economia cafeeira do Brasil no longo século XIX,” 294.

Paulo—were producing over half the world’s coffee.<sup>596</sup> Yet in many regions, coffee production had begun to stagnate. In particular, planters in the *Vale do Paraíba* in Rio de Janeiro struggled with declining productivity and rising transportation costs, as soil exhaustion forced them to move farther and farther away from public roads and markets.<sup>597</sup> To resolve this problem, the imperial government under Conservative Party leadership began to finance railroad construction at an unprecedented rate. During the 1870s, new rail lines opened up across the state of São Paulo. Towns including Santos, Campinas, and Jundiaí were connected to a regional transportation network for the first time.<sup>598</sup> As a result, coffee production boomed. Between 1871 and 1885, Brazil’s annual coffee exports rose from 174,000 metric tons to 322,000 metric tons.<sup>599</sup> Over the next fifty years, total coffee production increased sixfold in Brazil. By the end of the century, the state of São Paulo alone produced half the world’s total coffee.<sup>600</sup>

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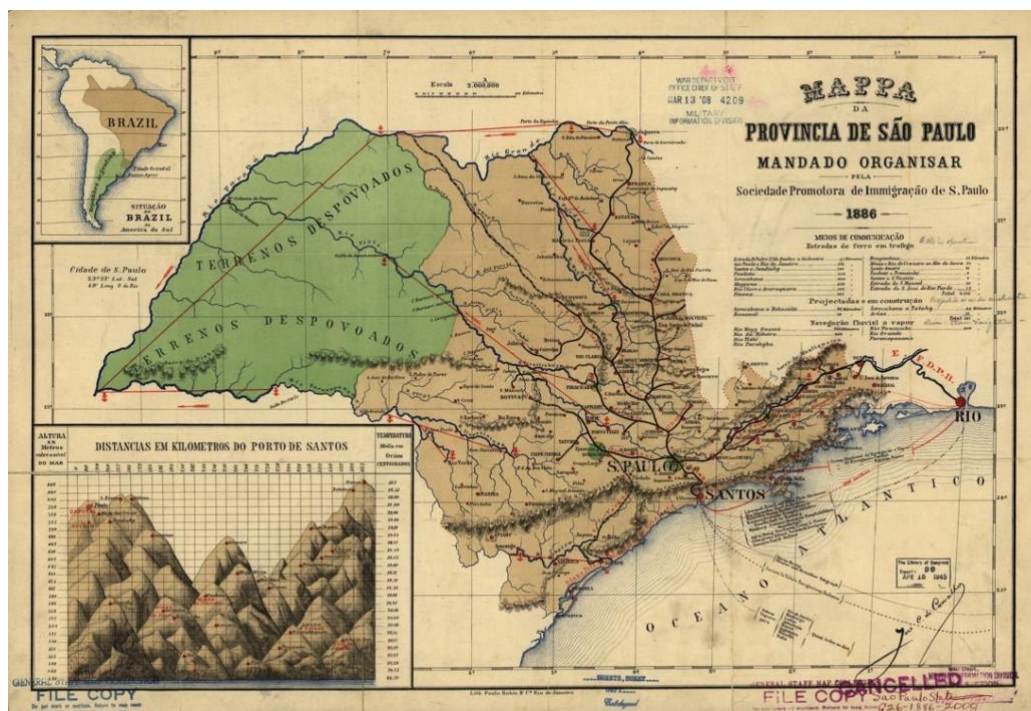
<sup>596</sup> Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*, 31.

<sup>597</sup> Stanley J. Stein, *Vassouras, a Brazilian Coffee County, 1850-1900: The Roles of Planter and Slave in a Plantation Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 95-103, 213-250; Warren Dean, *Rio Claro*, 41.

<sup>598</sup> Da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia*, 158-159; Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery,” 188; El Youssef, “O império do Brasil na segunda era da abolição,” 217.

<sup>599</sup> Rafael de Bivar Marquese, “The Legacies of the Second Slavery: The Cotton and Coffee Economies of The United States and Brazil during the Reconstruction Era, 1865-1904,” in *Reconstruction across the Americas*, ed. William Link (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2019), 24.

<sup>600</sup> Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*, 33, 35.



3. Map of the expanding rail networks in São Paulo, 1886 (railroads marked in Black).  
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

U.S. government policy also helped inaugurate the coffee boom in São Paulo. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Congress had eliminated all tariff duties on coffee, making it the only nation in the Atlantic World to import coffee tax-free.<sup>601</sup> Consequently, per capita consumption of coffee in the United States skyrocketed from one eighteenth of a pound per head in 1787 to nearly thirteen pounds per head by 1900. The simultaneous explosion of the U.S. population meant that national coffee imports grew by 2400 percent during the same period; half the growth in world coffee consumption in the nineteenth century was the result of U.S. purchases.<sup>602</sup> Brazil became the nation's leading supplier.<sup>603</sup> By the middle of the century,

<sup>601</sup> Parron, "A política da escravidão na era da liberdade," 226-227; Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*, 27.

<sup>602</sup> Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*, 37.

<sup>603</sup> Marquese, "Capitalismo, escravidão, e a economia cafeeira do Brasil no longo século XIX," 301.

Brazilian slave plantations supplied more than 90 percent of all U.S. coffee. But during the Civil War, the U.S. government reversed its favorable policy toward Brazilian slave-grown imports.<sup>604</sup> Tariff hikes in 1861 led to the first decline in Brazilian coffee exports in nearly half a century. By 1863, they had dropped by nearly 50 percent. It was not until 1872—after the passage of the Free Womb Law—that Brazilian diplomats succeeded in having duty-free imports restored.<sup>605</sup> This policy shift helped stimulate the new wave of coffee production in Brazil. Between 1870 and 1880, coffee consumption in the U.S. nearly doubled, rising from 105,000 to 205,000 metric tons. Coffee exports from the province of São Paulo grew even more quickly, with production rising from three million *arrobas* in 1854 to more than ten million in 1886.<sup>606</sup>

The expansion of coffee production in São Paulo stimulated the forced migration of tens of thousands of captives across nearly all of Brazil. Since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1850, the Brazilian slave population had been declining steadily.<sup>607</sup> As a result, slave prices tripled between 1850 and 1860.<sup>608</sup> In northern Brazil, drought and declining sugar prices prompted thousands of slaveowners to begin selling enslaved workers south into the more prosperous coffee zones.<sup>609</sup> Between 1850 and 1870, thousands of slaves departed northern Brazil to begin new lives laboring on coffee plantations. After the passage of the Free Womb

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<sup>604</sup> *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America*, 24 Dec. 1861, 71.

<sup>605</sup> *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America*, 26 March 1872, 432.

<sup>606</sup> Odilon Nogueira de Matos, *Café e ferrovia: a evolução ferroviária de São Paulo e o desenvolvimento da cultura cafeeira* (Campinas: Pontes, 1981), 46-48.

<sup>607</sup> Klein, *Slavery in Brazil*, 188.

<sup>608</sup> Dean, *Rio Claro*, 54.

<sup>609</sup> Peter Eisenburg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco: Modernization without Change, 1840-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 157.

Law, this number spiked. Coffee planters in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro felt renewed confidence that their adult workers would remain enslaved for life. Over the next ten years, annual slave purchases in some coffee districts rose by more than 200 percent.<sup>610</sup> Roughly one hundred thousand enslaved Afro-Brazilians, overwhelmingly from the north and northeastern Brazil, endured the forced migration south.<sup>611</sup> This vast expansion of the internal slave traffic transformed the demographics of slavery in Brazil. Between 1870 and 1880, the number of slaves in the northern states of Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, and Ceará fell by nearly 15 percent. In Ceará, roughly 40 percent of all enslaved workers between the ages of one and thirty-nine were sold to the south.<sup>612</sup> By the middle of the 1870s, 57 percent of the enslaved population was concentrated in the southeastern coffee zones, compared with just over 33 percent in 1819. By contrast, only 35 percent of all slaves remained in northern Brazil, compared with 55 percent fifty years earlier.<sup>613</sup>

The internal slave trade sparked new unrest among the enslaved population. In coffee zones throughout the southeast, the homicide rate on slave plantations began to rise. Between 1830 and 1850, only four slaves killed or assaulted overseers or planters in the coffee town of Campinas (in São Paulo), but between 1860 and 1880, that number jumped to twenty-eight.<sup>614</sup> In Vassouras, a coffee town in the province of Rio de Janeiro, the number of homicides rose from

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<sup>610</sup> Robert Slenes, “Grandeza ou decadência? O mercado de escravos e a economia cafeeira da província do Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1888,” *Brasil, história econômica e demográfica* (1986), 121.

<sup>611</sup> Marquese, “Capitalismo, escravidão, e a economia cafeeira do Brasil no longo século XIX,” 306; Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery,” 140, 142.

<sup>612</sup> Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery,” 124, 207.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

<sup>614</sup> Maria Helena P. T. Machado, *Crime e escravidão: trabalho, luta e resistência nas lavouras paulistas, 1830-1880* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987), 34.

six to fourteen over the same period. There, the crime wave peaked between 1876 and 1878, when seven slaveowners were attacked by slaves in less than fourteen months. The same pattern held true in other frontier towns like Bananal, Catagalo, Juiz da Fora, and Nova Friburgo.<sup>615</sup> Historians have long speculated that these homicides were committed by enslaved Afro-Brazilians who had been uprooted by the internal traffic.<sup>616</sup> More recent research, however, has complicated this picture. In her study of slavery and crime in Campinas, Maria Helena Machado demonstrated that while most slaveowner homicides were committed by creole slaves from other states, the vast majority of enslaved criminals had been residents of Campinas for at least six years.<sup>617</sup> Frequently, the immediate cause of these killings was the intensification of labor regimes on coffee plantations. In one town, for instance, eight out of seventeen slave homicides targeted new overseers who were charged with increasing worker productivity.<sup>618</sup>

Simultaneously, the growing demand for slave labor on coffee plantations inaugurated the collapse of small-scale slaveholding in Brazil. During the first half of the nineteenth century, smallholders—not planters—constituted the majority of slaveowners in nearly all regions.<sup>619</sup> In the Bahian Recôncavo, for instance, most enslaved people lived on properties with twenty slaves

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<sup>615</sup> Marcelo Rosanova Ferraro, “A economia política da violência na era da segunda escravidão,” 262-265, 280-281. See also Maria Chinelatto Alves, “Cativeiros em conflito: crimes e comunidades escravas em Campinas, 1850-1888,” (Ph.D. diss, FFLCH-USP, 2015), 34-39; Elione Silva Guimarães, “Criminalidade e escravidão em um município cafeeiro de Minas Gerais: Juiz de Fora, século XIX,” *Justiça e História* 1 (2001), 1-23.

<sup>616</sup> For the original argument, see Slenes, “Grandeza ou decadência? O mercado de escravos e a economia cafeeira da província do Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1888,” 136.

<sup>617</sup> Machado, *Crime e escravidão*, 49.

<sup>618</sup> Ferraro, “A economia política da violência na era da segunda escravidão,” 284-286.

<sup>619</sup> Mattos, *Das côres do silêncio*, 36.

or less.<sup>620</sup> Bahia had once been an important center of colonial sugar production in northern Brazil but by the middle of the nineteenth century its economy was in decline.<sup>621</sup> Eighty percent of all slaveowners in the province owned fewer than ten captives.<sup>622</sup> Many of these men were Afro-descendants. In Brazil, freedpeople and their children often purchased slaves, partly as a way to safeguard their status as free persons.<sup>623</sup> During the 1860s and 1870s, however, rising prices made petty slaveholding increasingly inaccessible to free Afro-Brazilians.<sup>624</sup> As a result, many free Afro-descendants—especially from northern Brazil—began to search for work. In 1876, more than four thousand free Afro-Brazilian workers from the northern provinces entered Rio de Janeiro in the span of just six months.<sup>625</sup> Many of these men and women eventually became wage workers on coffee plantations and began working side by side with slaves. The vast majority of these migrants were desperately poor, landless, and unorganized; some, in time, were re-enslaved.<sup>626</sup>

For decades, this class had served as the linchpin of Brazilian slave society. When Brazil declared its independence in 1822, Afro-descendants outnumbered whites by more than two to one.<sup>627</sup> But unlike in North Atlantic slave societies, these men and women never universally

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<sup>620</sup> Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania,” 357.

<sup>621</sup> Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 85-86, 188.

<sup>622</sup> Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania,” 357.

<sup>623</sup> Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*, Kindle, chapter 4; Mattos, *Das cores do silêncio*, 37.

<sup>624</sup> Dean, *Rio Claro*, 54.

<sup>625</sup> Da Costa, *Da senzala a colônia*, 116.

<sup>626</sup> Mattos, *Das cores do silêncio*, 106-110; Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*, Kindle, chapter 9.

<sup>627</sup> Anthony Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 66.

identified as Black. Through the entire colonial period and into the nineteenth century, the terms *negro* and *preto* (both meaning Black) were used almost exclusively to refer to African and Afro-Brazilian slaves. Free-born Afro-Brazilians tended to identify themselves as *pardos*, a term that reflected their status as free citizens while still distinguishing them from whites. *Pardos* enjoyed full civil and political rights. Those who made an income of more than two hundred mil reis per year (which excluded only the very poorest members of the Brazilian working-class) were permitted to vote in local and national elections.<sup>628</sup> The political rights of free Afro-Brazilians therefore rested on the same principle as slavery: property ownership. As a result, *pardos* rarely mobilized in support of abolition. Unlike in the United States, no mass abolitionist movement emerged in Brazil during the first half of the nineteenth century. *Pardos*, for the most part, were not interested.<sup>629</sup>

With the decline of small-scale slaveholding, however, this began to change. For many *pardos*, laboring alongside slaves on coffee plantations was a transformative experience. Enduring planter domination led some free Afro-Brazilians to perceive personal autonomy, rather than property, as the most basic element of freedom.<sup>630</sup> This shift in the *pardo* political imaginary opened up new possibilities for racial solidarity in Brazil. During the late 1870s, free Afro-Brazilians began to organize in support of the abolition of slavery. *Pardos* in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro held more than forty public protests demanding immediate emancipation between 1878 and 1884. Most often, these events took the shape of plays, concerts, and festivals, which

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<sup>628</sup> Azevedo e Souza, “Direitos políticos em depuração,” 99.

<sup>629</sup> For this interpretation of race and citizenship in Brazil, see Mattos, “Racialização e cidadania no Império do Brasil,” 349-391 and Mattos, *Escravidão e cidadania no Brasil monárquico* (2000).

<sup>630</sup> Mattos, *Das cores do silêncio*, 114.

enabled *pardo* political organizers to reach new mass audiences of Afro-Brazilian people who had long remained outside of formal politics.<sup>631</sup> Their success frightened the Brazilian elite. According to the census of 1872, Afro-descendants vastly outnumbered whites in Brazil. That year, 57.8 percent of the total population was considered Black or *pardo*; only 38.1 percent was considered white.<sup>632</sup>

Around the same time, Afro-Brazilians achieved an unexpected political victory. Throughout the first half of the 1870s, the imperial government had maintained an official silence on the future of Black voting rights in Brazil. Nearly all state documents referred to the children of the free womb as “*filhos livres de mulher escrava*” (free children of slave women) rather than publicly declaring them either *libertos* or *ingênuos*. In 1877, however, a sea change occurred. In just two years, the first generation of free children would be turning eight. At this point, planters had the legal right to surrender the children of their slaves to be raised and educated by the national government. State officials feared that tens of thousands of Black children would suddenly be thrust into their hands. Anticipating this possibility, Tomás José Coelho de Almeida—then the Minister of Agriculture—published a report in June of 1877 outlining an official plan for the free children. It was titled “The Education of the *Ingênuos*.” Simultaneously, bureaucrats working for Coelho de Almeida in the Ministry of Agriculture forwarded a case to the Brazilian Council of State, asking if planters were legally obligated to educate *free-born* children. In the span of just a few weeks, the six-year silence on the question

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<sup>631</sup> Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 126-128.

<sup>632</sup> Chalhoub, *A força de escravidão*, chapter 9.

of Black political citizenship in Brazil was broken.<sup>633</sup> As adults, the children of the free womb would—it seemed—be allowed to vote.

For the first time, it became possible for white plantation owners to imagine their nation ruled by free Black people. And at precisely the same moment, Afro-Brazilian abolitionists were beginning to advocate what they called “rural democracy.” This idea—best articulated by the *pardo* political organizers André Rebouças and José do Patrocínio—was a comprehensive plan to end rural poverty in Brazil. In abolitionist newspapers like the *Gazeta da Tarde* (which reached thousands of readers), Rebouças and Patrocínio called for the breakup of large plantations and the redistribution of private lands to former slaves. In their vision, Black men and women would support themselves after slavery by growing raw agricultural products on small plots of land and selling them directly to large central processing plants, which in turn would ship agricultural goods out for sale on the world market.<sup>634</sup> At the heart of these calls for rural democracy was a vision of freedom in which former slaves would exercise direct control over the land. To Brazilian planters, the idea was alarming. Suddenly, Black abolitionists seemed to threaten not only slavery, but the entire foundation of plantation agriculture in Brazil. It was at this moment, therefore, that the lessons of U.S. Reconstruction began to weigh most heavily on Brazilian planters’ minds.

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<sup>633</sup> On this important moment, see Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis: historiador*, 265-274; and Chalhoub, “The Politics of Silence,” 78-84. For the Council of State ruling, see ANRJ, 1R.COD.783., Volume 1, Doc. 27, 3 June 1877.

<sup>634</sup> On the idea of rural democracy, see Sergio Pinto Handler, “The Dream of Rural Democracy: U.S. Reconstruction and Abolitionist Propaganda in Rio de Janeiro, 1880-1888,” 2018 Conference Paper, Freedoms Gained and Lost: Reinterpreting Reconstruction in the Atlantic World (March 16-18, 2018), College of Charleston. For the circulation of the *Gazeta da Tarde*, see Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 121.

#### IV. The Brazilian Plan for Black Exclusion

A small number of elite Brazilians had grasped this problem from the beginning. Since the late 1860s, the white politician and journalist Tavares Bastos had been warning the Brazilian political class against following the U.S. path to emancipation. Bastos dreaded the emergence of a “*guerra de raças*” in Brazil. He expected that the children born to the free womb would become adult “proletarians” given to “laziness, vagrancy, and banditry” and felt certain that these men and women would be “ready to organize themselves [politically],” just as freedpeople had in the United States.<sup>635</sup> For this reason, he began advocating electoral reform almost immediately after the passage of the Free Womb Law.<sup>636</sup> In a book titled *Os males do presente e as esperanças para o futuro* (The Evils of The Present and The Hopes For The Future), he outlined a detailed plan for Black disfranchisement in Brazil, in which he made no explicit reference to race. “Men who do not know how to read and write” should be “excluded from voting,” he announced in a full draft of the legislation. “This restriction,” he predicted, would effectively bar “peasants, *capoeiras*, [and] vagrants” from the polls.<sup>637</sup>

North American capitalists, too, began to issue warnings to elite Brazilians based on Reconstruction. With the expansion of the Brazilian coffee trade to the United States, a new group of American merchants and capitalists was beginning to arrive in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>638</sup> Like Hilliard, these men supported the Republican Party but had become disaffected with federal

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<sup>635</sup> *A Reforma: Órgão Democrático*, 2 Jul. 1871.

<sup>636</sup> Tavares Bastos, *Os males do presente e as esperanças para o futuro: parte 2* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1872), 181.

<sup>637</sup> Bastos, *Os males do presente e as esperanças para o futuro*, 149, 181, 235. On *capoeira*, see Carlos Eugenio Líbano Soares, *A capoeira escrava e outras tradições rebeldes no Rio de Janeiro (1808-1850)* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2001).

<sup>638</sup> Saba, *American Mirror*, 171-218.

intervention in the South. Andrew Jackson Lamoreaux was one such man. Born in Michigan in 1850, he studied at Cornell University before moving to Rio de Janeiro to work for *The British and American Mail*.<sup>639</sup> In 1877, he founded his own commercial newspaper, *The Rio News*. As a Republican and an abolitionist, Lamoreaux used his paper as a platform to advocate for the end of slavery in Brazil. His work rapidly caught the attention not only of “American and English merchants and capitalists” but also of Brazilian politicians and abolitionists, including Joaquim Nabuco, André Rebouças, and José do Patrocínio.<sup>640</sup> Although Lamoreaux quickly built a reputation in Brazil as a “resolute champion of the cause of emancipation,” he staunchly opposed the political enfranchisement of former slaves.<sup>641</sup> “It would not only be folly, but it would be positively criminal to suddenly free a million or more ignorant slaves, and at once endow them with the privilege of voting,” he wrote on November 15, 1880. In the United States, he explained, Black enfranchisement had been a “cunning” scheme by the Republican Party to maintain political power, and “it led to huge evils; and to an almost utter demoralization of the whole country.” In his opinion, “the intelligent, well-to-do people of Brazil who have heretofore governed, slaveowners and non-slaveowners, must continue to govern” after the abolition of slavery.<sup>642</sup>

By 1878, this question had taken on new urgency. That summer, more than four hundred planters and state officials gathered in Rio de Janeiro to discuss the future of agriculture and democracy in Brazil. The members of Brazil’s first “Agricultural Congress” intended to “face

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<sup>639</sup> See Andrew Jackson Lamoreaux correspondence, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU Library, <http://archives.lib.byu.edu/repositories/14/resources/11954>.

<sup>640</sup> *The Rio News*, 5 May 1881.

<sup>641</sup> *The Rio News*, 17 Sept. 1880 and Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, 68.

<sup>642</sup> *The Rio News*, 15 Nov. 1880.

head on” the problem of Black political rights.<sup>643</sup> These men could not enact laws, but they could propose legislation directly to the Brazilian government.<sup>644</sup> Overwhelmingly, they feared the new vision of rural democracy that was taking shape among their workers. As one planter, Senhor Vergueiro, put it, Afro-Brazilian workers seemed to have acquired “hopes of one day being able to call [the land] their own.”<sup>645</sup> Such aspirations, these men believed, “could ultimately annihilate Brazilian agriculture.”<sup>646</sup> For this reason, the stated purpose of the Congress was to devise “legislative remedies” to the “great evils that afflict us” and to prevent “the decline of large property” in Brazil.<sup>647</sup> In contrast to the Brazilian Council of State, the planters who attended the Agricultural Congress had little doubt that the *filhos livres de mulher escrava* were now considered free-born citizens by the imperial government. As one slaveowner explained, “the *ingênuos* are a new and growing class of individuals, for whom there must be special regulations. As long as [we have] no recourse to make them work, they will constitute an element of disorder” in Brazilian society.<sup>648</sup>

In just a few days, a general consensus emerged: safeguarding Brazilian coffee plantations required Black disfranchisement. Manoel Furtado da Silva Leite, a slaveowner from the province of Minas Gerais, put it most bluntly: “direct elections...excluding the scum of the people from the urn” would “force everyone to work.” “Freedpeople and those who are

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<sup>643</sup> José Murilo Carvalho, ed., *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1988), 128.

<sup>644</sup> Azevedo, “Direitos Políticos em Depuração,” 40.

<sup>645</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 244.

<sup>646</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 46.

<sup>647</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 44, 127.

<sup>648</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 238.

becoming free must be included in this measure,” he insisted. “Once they are disciplined, there will be no great corruption” of Brazilian agriculture.<sup>649</sup> Other planters agreed. “This class is reproducing and growing in an astonishing and terrifying way,” the slaveowner Ricardo José Guimarães of Rio de Janeiro observed. “Idle workers abound...all the villages of the Empire are infested with parasites.” He proposed enacting a vagrancy law and a new measure that would “prohibit rural dependents from voting” in order to prevent them from leveraging the franchise to improve their economic standing.<sup>650</sup> These laws, he felt confident, would ultimately help “protect life and property” in Brazil.<sup>651</sup>

Yet, the Brazilian planter class remained worried about fomenting racial divisions. Although da Silva Leite advocated disfranchising free-born Afro-Brazilians, he also worried about “demoralizing the slaves and intensifying the hatred they feel for their masters.” He believed that the new political order must at the very least *appear* liberal in order to prevent “the slaves...from becoming rancorous.” He proposed drafting a law that would seem “perfectly humanitarian, generous and equal for...the current and future generations [of Afro-Brazilians].” Only in “that way,” he felt, “can we restore the good harmony” between the races.<sup>652</sup> Another slaveowner, João Baptista Braziel from Rio de Janeiro, articulated the same concern even more directly. “The extinction of slavery among us is only a matter of time,” he announced on the first day of the Agricultural Congress. “We need to take care during this transition...to avoid the scenes [that unfolded] in the United States, and to save ourselves from the insanity and conflicts

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<sup>649</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 47-48.

<sup>650</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 52, 154.

<sup>651</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 54.

<sup>652</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 46-47.

that may occur” after emancipation. As he concluded his speech, dozens of slaveowners in the audience cheered.<sup>653</sup>

For these men, literacy tests seemed to provide the perfect solution. That winter, the planter Galdino Fernandes Pinheiro was the first to float this idea. “Illiterates...do not have the [intellectual] capacity to vote,” he argued on the third day of the Congress. A number of other slaveowners embraced the idea immediately.<sup>654</sup> Since the 1872 census, they had known that the overwhelming majority of Brazilian adults were illiterate. That year, only 15 percent of the total population of 8.4 million was able to read or write. Among adult men, that number rose only to 20 percent.<sup>655</sup> Literacy tests would therefore immediately disfranchise 80 percent of the adult male population, including nearly all free Afro-Brazilians. Just as importantly, the Council of State had recently ruled that white slaveowners would not be required to educate the free-born Black children who were growing up on their plantations.<sup>656</sup> This meant that hundreds of thousands of *ingênuos*—who otherwise would be considered full Brazilian citizens upon reaching adulthood—would be effectively barred from the franchise. Literacy tests would enable white Brazilian planters to retain their overt commitment to racial equality, while in reality ensuring the political exclusion of the vast majority of Black people in Brazil.

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<sup>653</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*, 142.

<sup>654</sup> *Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878*,

<sup>655</sup> Carvalho, *Cidadania no Brasil*, 39.

<sup>656</sup> The ruling took place in July of 1877. See: Consultas do Conselho de Estado, Secção de Agricultura. 1R.COD.783. Vol. 1. (1876-83), Doc. 27. *Parecer da seção de agricultura do Conselho de Estado sobre a intelligencia do artigo 67 do Regulamento aprovado pelo Decreto n. 5135 de 13 de novembro de 1872. Aviso de 18 de Julho de 1877. 1 doc. Fls 206-211*, for the original decision. See also Chalhoub, “The Politics of Silence.”

The idea quickly gained traction among the Brazilian elite. In November of 1878—just three months after the Agricultural Congress met in Rio de Janeiro—the Council of State began debating the constitutionality of the proposal. The Visconde de Abaeté wrote that “while those who do not know how to read or write are not expressly prohibited from voting [by the Brazilian Constitution], the literacy requirement seems very convenient to me, not only for the obvious reasons of high social interest, but also because it guarantees an intelligent, thoughtful, and considerate vote.” Other Councilors agreed. The final opinion published by the Council of State asserted that “it is indispensable to establish the ability to read and write as an essential condition to vote.”<sup>657</sup> By April of 1879, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies was debating new legislation that would make literacy tests a mandatory voting requirement across the nation. Those in favor of the law argued that “the electoral system [we] live in now cannot endure” after emancipation. The reform, they believed, would effectively “eliminate the brutal mass of the people” who were “the primary cause of evil” in Brazilian elections.<sup>658</sup>

Some objected to this law as a direct violation of the Brazilian Constitution. On May 28, 1879, the abolitionist deputy José Bonifácio—the grandson of the famous Brazilian independence leader, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva—denounced the legislation for “excluding the masses of the people from electoral politics in the name of democracy.” “This project is unjust and violent,” he declared. “It wounds the vast majority of the Brazilian nation” by creating “an electoral aristocracy...and a liberalism that does not honor our forefathers or the

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<sup>657</sup> José Honório Rodrigues, ed., *Atas do Conselho de Estado: Terceiro Conselho de Estado, 1875-1880* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 1975), Ata da Conferência de 7 de Novembro de 1878, 92.

<sup>658</sup> ACD, 30 May 1879, Volume I, 488 and ACD, 21 May 1879, Volume I, 340.

Constitution.”<sup>659</sup> The abolitionist deputy from Pernambuco, Joaquim Nabuco, agreed. “I do not want universal suffrage,” he admitted.<sup>660</sup> Yet he felt strongly that “giving [a man] the right to vote...will make him an element of the social order.” He worried that the new law would cause “entire classes of our co-citizens”—especially the men who “were unhappily once slaves”—to “renounce their country.” The government, he feared, was on the verge of “burning its own ships.”<sup>661</sup>

Others, however, pointed to political exclusion as the foundation of liberal constitutionalism in the Americas. Lafayette Rodrigues Pereira, the Brazilian Minister of Justice in 1878, was the first to point out that “the first written Constitution” in the Americas—the federal Constitution of the United States—did not make voting a “personal or individual” right. Rather, it granted “ordinary legislatures” the power to reform. “Legal reform,” Pereira insisted, “is not anti-liberal...[and] if eight tenths of the Brazilian population are illiterate, then they should be governed by the two tenths who know how to read and write.”<sup>662</sup> Others echoed this argument. On June 5, 1880, the deputy Correa Rabello, representing the province of Minas Gerais, noted that “the Constitution of the United States—the first to enumerate the sacred and inviolable rights [of individuals]—does not include voting among those rights.”<sup>663</sup> To these men,

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<sup>659</sup> ACD, 28 May 1879, Volume I, 434-438.

<sup>660</sup> ACD, 6 April 1879, Volume I, 13.

<sup>661</sup> ACD, 23 June 1879, Volume II, 202.

<sup>662</sup> ACD, 28 May 1879, Volume I, 453-454.

<sup>663</sup> ACD, 5 June 1880, Volume II, 65.

the silences in constitutional law were all-important. The fact that “the Brazilian Constitution did not explicitly permit [political] exclusion” did not make it any less legitimate.<sup>664</sup>

By 1881, the opposition to the new electoral law was dwindling. The new Liberal Prime Minister, Antonio Saraiva, secured additional votes for the legislation by explicitly granting *literate* former slaves the right to vote.<sup>665</sup> The *Lei Saraiva*, he explained, was consciously color-blind: if implemented, it would actually expand Black voting rights by “establishing conditions of equality for all.”<sup>666</sup> Other white liberals eagerly embraced this view. “The eligibility of freedpeople is the ray of light that gilds the top of this reform,” the anti-slavery deputy, Rui Barbosa, proclaimed. “It levels the playing field between us and the progeny of former slaves.”<sup>667</sup> Another liberal parliamentarian praised the law for “opening the doors of political life to diverse classes of our society.”<sup>668</sup> Few members of Parliament were willing to accuse party leadership of barefaced hypocrisy. Saldanha Marinho, an abolitionist deputy from Minas Gerais, was one. After examining data from the archives of the Chamber of Deputies, he concluded in June of 1880 that the new law would establish direct elections in which only 400,000 men might participate out of a total population of 8.4 million.<sup>669</sup> “Universal suffrage is the true principle of

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<sup>664</sup> ACD, 6 April 1879, Volume I, 14.

<sup>665</sup> See Lei Saraiva, Decreto no 3.029, 9 January 1881, Reforma a legislação eleitoral, Capítulo I, “Dos Eleitores,” Art 2., No. 1. URL: <https://www.tse.jus.br/eleitor/glossario/termos/lei-saraiva>.

<sup>666</sup> For quote, see 6 June, 1880, Volume III, 35. See also ACD, 6 April 1879, Volume II, 35, 43. See also ACD, 6 July 1880, Volume II, 91-92.

<sup>667</sup> ACD, 21 June 1880, Volume II, 358.

<sup>668</sup> ACD, 19 June 1880, Volume II, 321.

<sup>669</sup> Chalhoub, “Politics of Silence,” 83.

[racial] equality,” he insisted on the Chamber floor.<sup>670</sup> But his voice was quickly drowned out. According to the law’s supporters, “difference” in Brazil was “disappearing.”<sup>671</sup>

## V. The Horizon Changes Again

As 1880 drew to a close, Brazilian abolitionists celebrated their achievements. In the past twelve months, activists across Brazil had organized more than a dozen new anti-slavery societies. Together, these organizations had held hundreds of public rallies calling for the immediate abolition of slavery in provinces ranging from Ceará to Paraná.<sup>672</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the President of the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society, Joaquim Nabuco, had coaxed the official representative of the U.S. government into publicly endorsing emancipation. Hilliard’s speech on Reconstruction, delivered at the *Hotel dos Estrangeiros* that November, had been a resounding success. The *Gazeta da Tarde* had printed more than two thousand copies of the speech, which was portrayed in the anti-slavery press as a “brilliant” contribution to “the cause of freedom for the slaves in Brazil.”<sup>673</sup> André Rebouças, the famous Afro-Brazilian abolitionist, publicly expressed his “indescribable feelings of gratitude” for Hilliard’s “rare act of virtue.”<sup>674</sup> Joaquim Nabuco, who had organized the banquet, declared Hilliard’s actions to be yet another example of Anglo-Saxons’ outstanding commitment to “bringing to all lands a freedom superior to anything that has ever existed before.”<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> ACD, 1 June 1880, Volume I, 333.

<sup>671</sup> ACD, 3 June 1880, Volume II, 16.

<sup>672</sup> Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 437-438.

<sup>673</sup> *Gazeta da Tarde*, 20 Nov. 1880.

<sup>674</sup> *Gazeta da Tarde*, 17 Nov. 1880 and 22 Nov. 1880.

<sup>675</sup> *Gazeta da Tarde*, 22 Nov. 1880.

North American abolitionists also applauded Hilliard's efforts. Andrew Jackson Lamoreaux, the editor of *The Rio News*, published a lengthy piece praising the banquet in honor of the U.S. ambassador as "a brilliant affair."<sup>676</sup> Hilliard "is exceptionally well fitted to give a correct opinion," Lamoreaux explained, "having lived all his life up to the Civil War in a slave-holding community, having seen and felt the one great blow which gave freedom to four millions of slaves, and then having seen the work of recovery and assimilation growing out of the disorganization caused by civil war and unconditional emancipation."<sup>677</sup> Lamoreaux's account was reprinted in various newspapers across the United States, including *The New York Times*.<sup>678</sup> In the eyes of the international abolitionist community, Hilliard's speech represented a major "mark of progress" for their cause.<sup>679</sup>

Soon, however, the abolitionist movement faced a serious setback. In June of 1884, Dom Pedro II chose the senator Manoel Pinto de Souza Dantas to form a new ministry. Dantas was a Liberal Party leader from Bahia who had travelled widely in Europe and supported anti-slavery reform.<sup>680</sup> He put forward a program that included immediate liberation for slaves over the age of sixty, an increase of the emancipation fund through taxes, and—most importantly—land reform. For the first time in Brazilian history, the leader of one of the major political parties was

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<sup>676</sup> *The Rio News*, 24 Nov. 1880.

<sup>677</sup> *The Rio News*, 15 Dec. 1880.

<sup>678</sup> *The New York Times*, 20 Dec. 1880. See also, for example, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 Dec. 1880 and *The Daily Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), 5 Jan. 1881.

<sup>679</sup> Intriguingly, the speech was also covered in the Canadian press. See *The Gazette* (Montreal, CA), 27 Dec. 1880, which also noted that "fear seems to be felt [in Brazil] lest the slaves should come to entertain the notion that the American government was exercising pressure on the Brazilian authorities in their favor."

<sup>680</sup> Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, 250.

advocating the redistribution of small plots of land to Afro-Brazilian freedpeople. Dantas also proposed establishing a minimum wage for agricultural workers.<sup>681</sup> His project, as one historian put it, “quickly descended into hell.”<sup>682</sup> Across the nation, speculators and slaveowners panicked. The price of slaves plummeted. On August 4—the day that Dantas read the legislation aloud to the Chamber of Deputies—violence broke out in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. The law was defeated by a bipartisan vote of fifty-eight to fifty-two, prompting Dom Pedro II to call for new elections to be held that December. Across the nation, abolitionists mobilized in support of Dantas. Between August and December, anti-slavery societies held more than 587 events endorsing his program. Rui Barbosa took to the streets to defend his proposal as a deliberate fulfillment of André Rebouças’ vision of “rural democracy.” Joaquim Nabuco assumed the penname of William Lloyd Garrison to promote the legislation in the press. But soon, all hope was lost. Because of the *Lei Saraiva*, only 121,226 men were able to vote in the December elections. Antonio Saraiva, bent on appeasing the Brazilian planter class, returned to power.<sup>683</sup>

The *Lei Saraiva* made Afro-Brazilians’ vision of rural democracy impossible. The following year, the Brazilian Parliament enacted a completely neutered version of the “Sexagenarian Law.” The plots of land Dantas had imagined redistributing to freedpeople were transformed into “agricultural colonies, regulated through military discipline” for “former slaves without employment.” The agricultural minimum wage was removed from the bill. Instead, the national government offered indemnification for slaveowners whose elderly slaves were now

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<sup>681</sup> Joseli Maria Nunes de Mendonça, *Entre a mão e os anéis: a lei dos sexagenários e os caminhos da abolição no Brasil* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 1999).

<sup>682</sup> Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 245.

<sup>683</sup> Toplin, *The Abolition of Brazilian Slavery*, 102-105 and Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas*, 247-283.

declared free. Although the final destruction of slavery was only a few years away, the mood among Brazilian abolitionists darkened. Some bitterly compared the new legislation to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.<sup>684</sup> A year later, Joaquim Nabuco published his seminal work, *O eclipse do abolicionismo*.<sup>685</sup>

After the final abolition of slavery in 1888, some Afro-Brazilian abolitionists continued the struggle. André Rebouças persevered in his campaign for rural democracy. A few months later, the provincial police forcibly evicted over one hundred freedpeople from their provisions grounds (*roças*) in Tatuí, São Paulo. Two Afro-Brazilian men were killed in the struggle. Immediately, Rebouças began organizing on their behalf. He publicly denounced the violent eviction of the men and women who were “established on *roças* on the plantation...which they had lived upon and maintained as small farms for a period of fifty years.” He rallied other abolitionists, including João Clapp and Luiz de Andrade of the *Confederação Abolicionista*, to advocate for the *libertos*. Together, these men petitioned the President of São Paulo asking him to grant the former slaves control of the land. Most likely, these protests led to nothing. In 1890, Rebouças departed for Europe, in bitter disappointment.<sup>686</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

Scholars have known that the passage of the *Lei Saraiva* marked a turning point in the history of the Brazilian nation-state.<sup>687</sup> But its repercussions were also felt across the Atlantic

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<sup>684</sup> Pinto-Handler, “The Dream of Rural Democracy,” 32-34.

<sup>685</sup> Joaquim Nabuco, *O eclipse do abolicionismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de G. Leuzinger & Filhos, 1886).

<sup>686</sup> Pinto-Handler, “The Dream of Rural Democracy,” 32-34.

<sup>687</sup> Brodwyn M. Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 56-59.

World. In the 1880s, *Confederados* began to abandon Brazil and return to the U.S. South.<sup>688</sup>

These men, frightened by the imminence of emancipation, felt safe to return home as word of Southern Redemption spread across the Atlantic World.<sup>689</sup> “The liberals and pro-slaves may any day break out in war,” James McFadden Gaston Jr., the son of a famous *Confederado*, noted in his diary in November of 1882. “Brazil just now is a very good place to get away from.”<sup>690</sup> A few months later, the Gaston family departed for Atlanta, Georgia. They brought new ideas about Black political exclusion with them.

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<sup>688</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 April 1890.

<sup>689</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 61-65.

<sup>690</sup> SHC, James McFaddon Gaston Papers, Subseries 3.2, Box 3, Folder 26 (journal July 1, 1882- April 1, 1883).

## Chapter 4

### **“Brazil Did A Sensible Thing”: The Latin American Roots of the Mississippi Plan, 1881-1898**

On October 28, 1888, the *Augusta Chronicle*—one of Georgia’s oldest newspapers, edited by a former Confederate officer—ran an article titled “A Wanderer Returns to the Old Homestead.” The wanderer was George Scarborough Barnsley, a white Southerner and Confederate veteran who had spent the past twenty-two years living in Brazil. According to the *Chronicle*, the “elderly gentlemen” returned to his plantation in Georgia “to find everything just as it was, except that the trees and the people have grown.” “For days it seemed like a dream,” Barnsley remarked in his interview with the newspaper. “It was as if I had gone back to the time when I left home just after the war and went to Brazil.”<sup>691</sup>

Everything, of course, was not the same. Just as the fictional Rip Van Winkle had dozed through the American Revolution, waking to find the portrait of George III in his local tavern replaced by one of Washington, Barnsley had been absent during the “Second American Revolution,” Reconstruction.<sup>692</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, white elites—including the Barnsley family—had faced poverty and disfranchisement for the first time in Southern history. Radical Republicans, including former slaves, took control of state governments and used their power to help the poor.<sup>693</sup> They raised taxes on corporations, opened new schools, and in some cases redistributed land to former slaves. But within five years, white elites had begun to restore their power. As the U.S. army began its long withdrawal from the

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<sup>691</sup> “A Wanderer Returns to the Old Homestead: A Modern Rip Van Winkle,” *The Augusta Chronicle*, 28 Oct. 1888.

<sup>692</sup> Downs, *The Second American Revolution*, 1-11.

<sup>693</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 53-54.

South, the Ku Klux Klan and other vigilante organizations toppled local governments.<sup>694</sup> Once in power, the Democratic “Redeemers” reversed progressive tax policies, subsidized corporations, and cut public education.<sup>695</sup> Their watchword was “retrenchment.” Wages fell and illiteracy rose.<sup>696</sup> The overwhelming majority of the African American population was forced to take up labor on plantations.<sup>697</sup> The Redeemers, in many ways, were the ones who made it possible for Barnsley to feel as if he had “gone back” in time.

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<sup>694</sup> Downs, *After Appomattox*, 212-215 and Foner, *Reconstruction*, 550-560.

<sup>695</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 60-65.

<sup>696</sup> Gavin Wright, *New South, Old South*, 12.

<sup>697</sup> Omar Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 18.



4. *Many white Southerners still enjoy this feeling. George Scarborough Barnsley's plantation, Woodlands, is now a popular wedding destination for white people in Georgia.*

*Image courtesy of the Barnsley Resort and Gardens, 2012.*

But one legacy of Radical Reconstruction endured. The Redeemers did not succeed in disfranchising former slaves.<sup>698</sup> Black men could still vote according to the Fifteenth Amendment and many continued doing so at great risk to their lives. In 1880, at least 40 percent of all voters in seven out of eleven former Confederate states voted against the Democratic Party in both state and national elections. In six of the former Confederate states, more than 60 percent of all adult men participated in these elections. In Georgia, more than 40 percent of Black men continued to vote into the 1890s.<sup>699</sup> By that point, Black voting was beginning to pose a serious

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<sup>698</sup> Steven Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 81.

<sup>699</sup> Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of a One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 17, 27, 212.

problem for the planter class. In the late 1880s, poor farmers and agricultural laborers began organizing politically across racial lines. They opposed austerity and demanded the nationalization of the railroads, cooperative markets, better credit, and the redistribution of corporate lands.<sup>700</sup> African Americans also called for higher wages, the abolition of the convict lease system, expanded funding for public education, and direct federal oversight of elections.<sup>701</sup> In 1891, these men organized the interracial Populist Party, which threatened the economic foundations of the New South.

Barnsley returned to the United States just as the planter class was renewing its struggle against rural democracy. He had new lessons to share. Over the past ten years he had born witness to one of the most successful antidemocratic movements in the history of the Americas. The Brazilian planter class had enacted the *Lei Saraiva* seven years before he departed for the United States. Barnsley had watched turnout in Brazilian national elections plummet from 1,100,008 in 1873 to 142,852 in 1882.<sup>702</sup> In the late 1880s, he and many of his ex-Confederate comrades chose to return to the United States because slavery was finally coming to an end in Brazil. As these men reintegrated into their old social class, they began to advocate the importation of the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion to the United States. The Brazilian politics of racial silence, they believed, would solve the problem posed by the Fifteenth Amendment, which only prohibited disfranchisement on the basis of race. Between 1888 and 1898, Barnsley and other *Confederados* collaborated with some of the most prominent members of the Southern elite to promote literacy tests and educational qualifications as a constitutional way to ensure the

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<sup>700</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 243-262.

<sup>701</sup> Omar Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 9.

<sup>702</sup> Azevedo e Souza, "Direitos políticos em depuração," 60.

mass disfranchisement of former slaves. Their success ultimately ended the dream of rural democracy in the Southern United States.

U.S. historians typically portray the rise of Jim Crow as an exceptional moment in American history. Black disfranchisement brought the “unique” experiment of Reconstruction to an end.<sup>703</sup> The result was an enduring color caste that was “adopted, forwarded, and approved” by agents of U.S. empire the world over.<sup>704</sup> This chapter reveals that the politics of Black exclusion that emerged in the late nineteenth-century United States had important legal precedents in Latin America. The Redeemers embraced the Brazilian plan because of their close connections with the Brazilian elite and because racial silence suited their political needs. Jim Crow was therefore part of an international counterrevolutionary movement that swept across the Atlantic World after the fall of the second slavery.

### **I. The Political Economy of the New South**

The retreat from Radical Reconstruction began just a few years after George Scarborough Barnsley left for Brazil. In 1872, Congress passed an amnesty law restoring the right to hold office to nearly all former Confederates. This law and the growing effort of the Republicans to distance themselves from Black radicalism paved the way for the “redemption” of the South. Between 1873 and 1874, the Democratic Party solidified their hold on state and local governments. They won over two-thirds of Southern House seats, redeemed Arkansas, and gained control over Florida’s legislature. Almost every election during this period was marked

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<sup>703</sup> Foner, *Nothing But Freedom*, 6.

<sup>704</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 30. For elaborations of this thesis, see Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009); Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*; Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution*; and Peter Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), among others.

by rampant violence and pervasive fraud.<sup>705</sup> White supremacist terrorism made it difficult for African Americans to vote. Between 1876 and 1888, Black turnout in South Carolina plunged from 96 percent to 36 percent. In Georgia, it dropped from 53 to 18 percent.<sup>706</sup>

Once in power, the Redeemers forged new ties with Northern capitalists. Most “Bourbon” Democrats favored business interests and aligned themselves overwhelmingly with factory owners, railroad men, and merchants. They understood that the Southern plantation economy had been eviscerated by the Civil War and could not be restored without Northern investment. As a result, they lowered tax rates on corporations, financed railroad construction, and subsidized the corporate purchase of public lands.<sup>707</sup> With their support, Northern investors bought up millions of acres of valuable land in the Mississippi Delta.<sup>708</sup> Black convicts stripped these lands of lumber and laid thousands of new miles of railroad track that connected this region to the eastern seaboard.<sup>709</sup> Their labor paid enormous dividends: cotton varieties in the Delta often commanded prices that were nearly twice as high as those produced in other parts of the South.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 510, 537-550.

<sup>706</sup> Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 84.

<sup>707</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 60-61 and Emma Teitelman, “The Properties of Capitalism: Industrial Enclosures in the South and the West after the American Civil War,” *Journal of American History* 106 (2020): 879–900.

<sup>708</sup> Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10.

<sup>709</sup> Edward Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century American South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso Press, 1995); Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*; Scott Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>710</sup> Woodruff, *American Congo*, 19.

The results, for poor farmers, were devastating. Between 1860 and 1880, the number of plantations across the region climbed.<sup>711</sup> These plantations were generally worked by sharecroppers who did not own their land or tools.<sup>712</sup> Instead, tenant farmers relied on the lien system to secure credit. Under this system, farmers would pledge their future crops to a single merchant in order to purchase food and clothing for the year. Once a lien was executed, it was nearly impossible for them to make another purchase, as they had already surrendered their only form of security. High tariff rates exacerbated the debts of agricultural workers by raising the prices of consumer goods. Simultaneously, falling cotton prices made it harder and harder for these workers to pay off their creditors. As a result, many went hungry and watched their children grow up in poverty. The lack of state support for public education made their situation even more unbearable. Farmers knew that their illiterate children would be unqualified for work outside the region and the cycle of poverty would continue into the next generation. According to one observer, “haggard despair prevailed everywhere.”<sup>713</sup>

For freedpeople, the situation was even worse. In 1890, 90 percent of African Americans lived in the U.S. South.<sup>714</sup> Of these, only 8 percent owned land. The remainder were sharecroppers (27 percent) and agricultural laborers (65 percent). Sharecroppers—despite their highly precarious position—possessed certain rights that agricultural laborers did not. According to the law, sharecroppers had the right to “go on the land to plant, work, and gather the crop.”

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<sup>711</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 179.

<sup>712</sup> Barbara Fields, “The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture: The New South in a Bourgeois World,” in eds. Thaviola Glymph and John J. Kushma, *Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 74-89.

<sup>713</sup> Woodward, 177-185 and Wright, *Old South, New South*, 79-80, 110-114.

<sup>714</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), xvii.

Most sharecroppers worked with their families in highly local labor markets. Agricultural workers did not. Most were young and single Black men who were routinely forced to move long distances to find employment. They lived in a constant state of fear and uncertainty because many planters only hired wage hands during spring cultivation and winter harvest.<sup>715</sup> Their constant movement made them vulnerable to the police, who preyed on young Black men in order to secure convict labor for state governments and private enterprise. Once a Black man had been incarcerated, his risk of death increased exponentially. In the 1880s, the annual mortality rate for the convict population in Mississippi ranged from 9 to 16 percent. Black prisoners also perished at higher rates than whites. In 1882, 126 out of 735 Black state convicts died, as opposed to 2 out of 83 whites.<sup>716</sup>

As a result, these men and women began to organize. Between 1880 and 1886, more than sixty thousand African Americans joined the Knights of Labor.<sup>717</sup> The Knights were an interracial labor union. Their members believed that corporate capitalism threatened republican ideals by undermining the economic independence of workers.<sup>718</sup> They fought for higher wages, better credit, and the end of the convict lease system. By 1886, Black rural workers had organized more than 400 all-Black locals that averaged 150 members each, including sixteen all-female locals in Virginia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, and North Carolina. These locals led the cotton pickers' strike of 1887, which ended in massacre of more than thirty African American workers at the hands of the state. The massacre undermined the strength of the Knights of Labor

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<sup>715</sup> Wright, *Old South, New South*, 94-96.

<sup>716</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 46.

<sup>717</sup> Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 35.

<sup>718</sup> Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

throughout the South, but it did not bring a halt to Black rural organizing. By 1890, Black field hands had founded new political organizations in Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. These included the Colored Agricultural Wheels, the Cooperative Workers of America, and the Colored Farmers' Alliance. By 1891, these organizations boasted more than one million members, including three hundred thousand women.<sup>719</sup>

Black political organizing posed a direct threat to plantation capitalism in the South. By the early 1890s, rural laborers were becoming involved in electoral politics. African American organizers hoped to win elections by building coalitions with white farmers and independents. With this goal in mind, many African Americans embraced the Populist Party, which was founded by white farmers in 1891. The Populists called for legislation that would destroy the great Northern land syndicates. They wanted to ban crop speculation, tax and control railroads, establish interstate commerce regulation, expand the currency, and give farmers direct control over their land and goods.<sup>720</sup> In particular, they sought to combat the lien system by creating agricultural cooperatives that would provide members with reasonably priced credit and supplies.<sup>721</sup> By the mid-1890s, the Populist Party had won important electoral victories in North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.<sup>722</sup> White elites were terrified.<sup>723</sup> The New South was under attack.

## **II. The Confederados on Peachtree Street**

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<sup>719</sup> Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 78-81.

<sup>720</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 189-222.

<sup>721</sup> Wright, *Old South, New South*, 117.

<sup>722</sup> Gerald Gaither, *Blacks and the Populist Movement: Ballots and Bigotry in the New South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 44, 128 and Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 112.

<sup>723</sup> Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 219.

If there was one man who was determined to solve this problem, it was Henry Woodfin Grady. Grady was widely considered the “prophet” and the “pioneer” of the New South.<sup>724</sup> He was born in Georgia just eleven years before the Civil War. His father enlisted in the Confederate army in 1861 and was killed in battle in 1864. As a result, Grady spent his teenage years living with his mother in an enormous Greek Revival mansion that had been abandoned by a wealthy slaveowner. As a young adult, he attended the University of Georgia and then the University of Virginia, where he studied history, politics, and the law. After graduating in 1871, he abandoned the legal profession to pursue a career in journalism. He got his big break while working for the *New York Herald* in 1876.<sup>725</sup> Shortly after his twenty-sixth birthday, Grady discovered that the Republican-controlled electoral board of Florida had destroyed ballot boxes for entire Democratic counties. The actions of the electoral board had swung the presidential election of 1876, which the Republican Party had won by a single electoral vote. Grady’s journalism thus paved the way for the Compromise of 1877. White Southerners considered him a hero. His investigation helped bring the Union military occupation to a close.<sup>726</sup>

After 1876, Grady became a national celebrity. He often spoke publicly of the “foresore Confederate soldier,” who returned home from the Civil War to find “his house in ruins, his farm devastated, his slaves free, his stock killed, his barns empty, his trade destroyed, his money worthless, his social system, feudal in its magnificence, swept away.” Yet he also offered a clear

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<sup>724</sup> Joel Chandler Harris, a white journalist who published the famous Uncle Remus stories, described Henry W. Grady as “the very embodiment of the spirit that he aptly named ‘The New South’...[Grady was] its prophet, if not its pioneer.” See Joel Chandler Harris, *The Life of Henry W. Grady: Including His Writings and Speeches* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1972), 59.

<sup>725</sup> Gentry Dugat, *Life of Henry W. Grady* (Edinburg, TX: Valley Printery, 1927), 13-15, 149.

<sup>726</sup> Scott Reynolds Nelson, “The Bourbon South,” (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming 2023).

vision for a peaceful and prosperous future. He predicted that the political economy of the New South would be grounded on “industry and thrift.” In his speeches and writing, he conjured up images of “valleys tranquil in the white and gold of the harvest,” fueling “whirring spindles” in growing Southern cities. His particular blend of technological optimism and racist nostalgia made him an appealing figure for the capitalist elite.<sup>727</sup> As a result, white men invested in Grady. In 1879, Cyrus W. Field, a corporate capitalist from Massachusetts, loaned Grady twenty-five thousand dollars to purchase the *Atlanta Constitution*. Within a few years, Grady had turned the *Constitution* into the most widely read newspaper in the South. By 1890, he had more than 200,000 subscribers located at every stop along the region’s rapidly expanding railway network.<sup>728</sup>

The *Atlanta Constitution* brought Grady into the heart of the New South. He moved to Atlanta in 1880. It was then the largest city in Georgia, with a population 20 percent larger than the state capital of Savannah. Slightly over 40 percent of its residents were Black. Only three miles of its streets were paved, so every time it rained, the city turned into an enormous mudbowl.<sup>729</sup> Little urban planning took place in the nineteenth-century South.<sup>730</sup> Instead, investors erected homes, businesses, and government buildings next to one another. In Atlanta, most of these buildings were located within a half-mile radius of the railroad depot downtown. In this area, Black and white renters lived in close proximity to wealthy white homeowners and

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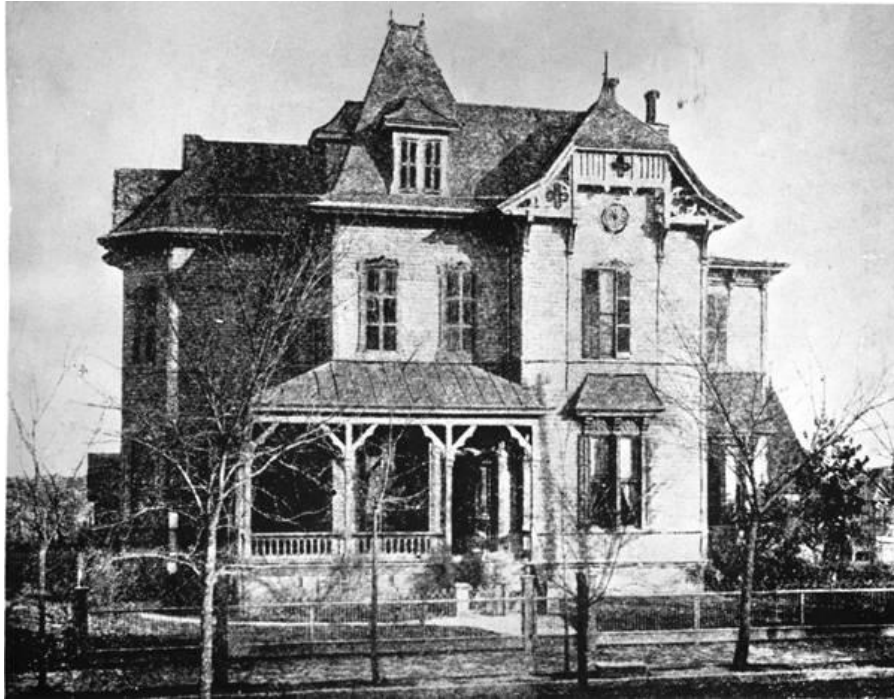
<sup>727</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 258.

<sup>728</sup> Harris, *The Life of Henry W. Grady*, 65; Dugat, *Life of Henry W. Grady*, 40-45.

<sup>729</sup> Jonathon Booth, “Dethroning Justice: Race, Law, and Police after Slavery,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2021), 313-315.

<sup>730</sup> James M. Russell, “Politics, Municipal Services, and the Working Class in Atlanta, 1865 to 1890,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (Winter 1982), 467-491.

professionals. Only one zone of the city—the northern corridor surrounding Peachtree Street—was reserved exclusively for the white elite.<sup>731</sup> Unsurprisingly, this was the area where Grady chose to purchase a home.<sup>732</sup>



5. Henry Grady House at 353 Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia.

*Courtesy of the Atlanta History Photograph Collection, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.*

It was also where he met the *Confederados*. Between 1881 and 1888, Henry Washington Hilliard, James McFadden Gaston, and George Scarborough Barnsley all moved into the neighborhood.<sup>733</sup> Hilliard was the first to settle in. He returned from Brazil to the United States at

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<sup>731</sup> Lands, “To Rend the City,” 107. Investors in late nineteenth-century Atlanta paid little attention to race and class when erected rental housing in the city’s center. Rather, duplexes, shot-gun homes, and rows of “negro” tenements were constructed alongside the larger homes of professionals and white-collar workers.

<sup>732</sup> Henry Grady House at 353 Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Atlanta History Photograph Collection, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta GA.

<sup>733</sup> Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad*, 404-408; “Dr. J. M. F. Gaston. A Distinguished Accession to the Medical Profession of Atlanta,” *Southern World*, January 1, 1884; and “A

the end of 1881. After making brief stops in Paris and New York, he purchased a new mansion just down the street from Grady.<sup>734</sup> James McFadden Gaston arrived three years later, and George Scarborough Barnsley followed in 1888. Both Gaston and Barnsley had chosen to depart from Brazil because of the impending abolition of slavery. In 1882, Gaston's son, James Gaston Jr., noted in his diary that "sixty-four slaves of Leniz de Portes' *fazenda* in January came at about 6AM to give themselves up to the police, telling that they had killed a *feitor* (overseer) who had treated them badly; also a whole family living upon the way to the city...this shows the crisis slavery has come to in Brazil." A few months later, Gaston Jr. reported that "we have been talking about going to the U.S. soon as Pa can collect enough of his money...the liberals and the pro-slaves may any day break out in war, as the negroes have done against their owners three times in the last two months, in this province."<sup>735</sup>

Grady was delighted to have these men come home. They suited his political needs. The *Confederados*, in his view, embodied the spirit of the New South. They had fled Reconstruction because they refused to be humiliated by the Union occupation. Now, they returned to the South as investors. In 1885, Grady invited Henry Washington Hilliard to deliver the opening remarks at the National Commercial Convention in Atlanta, which the two men had organized together to promote economic development in the region.<sup>736</sup> In 1887, James McFadden Gaston co-founded

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Wanderer Returns to the Old Homestead: A Modern Rip Van Winkle," *The Augusta Chronicle*, 28 Oct. 1888.

<sup>734</sup> "Atlanta, Georgia, City Directory, 1888," in *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995*, Ancestry.com, accessed 29 July 2020.

<sup>735</sup> SHC, James McFaddon Gaston Papers, Subseries 3.2, Box 3, Folder 26, Diary of James McFadden Gaston Jr., 1 Jul. 1882 - 1 April 1883.

<sup>736</sup> "The Opening of the Commercial Convention. Special to the Chronicle," *Augusta Chronicle*, 20 May 1885.

the Southern Medical College, one of the first medical schools in the South and a forerunner of the Emory University School of Medicine.<sup>737</sup> Grady advertised these commercial exploits in the *Atlanta Constitution* alongside stories about Confederate adventures in Brazil. In April 1890, the *Atlanta Constitution* ran an article about Hilliard's efforts to bring another *Confederado*, William Earle Yancey, back to the United States. William Earle was the son of William Lowndes Yancey, who had been one of the most notorious fire-eaters in the antebellum United States. Before the Civil War, he and Hilliard had been open enemies because of their divergent views on slavery (Hilliard was a Whig who supported gradual emancipation). But in Brazil, these political divisions were forgotten. Hilliard was delighted to encounter Yancey Jr. in the streets of Rio de Janeiro and considered it a privilege to give him his passport to return to the United States. In an interview with the *Atlanta Constitution*, the former ambassador to Brazil proclaimed that he and Yancey were "always rivals but always friends."<sup>738</sup> Reconciliation, for Hilliard, was a labor of hemispheric proportions.

With Grady's support, the *Confederados* became active proponents of the Lost Cause. A year after his return to the United States, Barnsley began giving lengthy interviews to various Southern newspapers describing the "terror, indifference, recklessness, hope and despair" that had seized the Confederates after Robert E. Lee's surrender in 1865. "The question of slavery was but the foam which covered the deep waters of agitation," he insisted. What was truly at stake in the Civil War was "constitutional, state, and individual liberty."<sup>739</sup> Hilliard and Gaston

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<sup>737</sup> "Atlanta's Medical College," *The Morning News*, 3 Oct. 1888.

<sup>738</sup> "W. M. L. Yancey," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 April 1890.

<sup>739</sup> "Confederate Colonists. Who Left Their Native Land for a Home in Brazil," *The Cartersville Courant*, 16 May 1889.

echoed these views. In 1883, Hilliard began fundraising for the Ladies' Confederate Memorial Association. He commended the group for "paying tribute to the memory of the brave and true men who died for the South in her great struggle for independence."<sup>740</sup> He spent the next two years delivering lectures about his time in Brazil in order to raise money for the Confederate Monument Fund.<sup>741</sup>

Henry Grady put the *Confederados* in an ideal position to advocate for Black disfranchisement in the United States. Throughout the 1880s, they used the *Atlanta Constitution* as a venue to promote the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion.<sup>742</sup> Hilliard was the most outspoken supporter of this plan. He had spent years in Brazil monitoring the progress of the *Lei Saraiva*. Almost immediately after his arrival in 1879, he began sending routine reports on the legislation to the U.S. Secretary of State. In May of 1879, he reported that the Brazilian Liberal Ministry was considering "an important change in the electoral law." "As it stands," he went on, "the privileges of suffrage are but little restricted [in Brazil]." The new legislation would limit "the right of suffrage" to "those who can read and write" and who possessed "a certain income amounting to two hundred dollars."<sup>743</sup> Hilliard cheerfully reported the passage of the law to the U.S. government in 1881. This "important measure is a great step in advance for Brazil, and

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<sup>740</sup> "Memorial Day," *The Augusta Chronicle*, 20 April 1883.

<sup>741</sup> "Hon. Henry W. Hilliard to Deliver a Series of lectures in Alabama for the Benefit of the Confederate Monument Fund," *Augusta Chronicle*, 5 Nov. 1885.

<sup>742</sup> "Revolution in Brazil: Distress Among Coffee Planters Causing Reaction," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 Nov. 1888; "Author of a Republic: President of Brazil, the New Republic," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17 Nov. 1889; "Slavery in Brazil: The Story of Its Abolition Told Anew," 28 Sept. 1890; "What about Brazil? Interview with Hon. Henry W. Hilliard, Ex-Minister. A Representative of The Chronicle," *Augusta Chronicle*, 27 Nov. 1889.

<sup>743</sup> FRUS, United States Department of State, Index to the executive documents of the House of Representatives for the third session of the forty-fifth Congress, 1878-1879, No 79, 3 May 1879, Hilliard to Evarts.

must contribute greatly to its prosperity,” he wrote. For him, the prospect of the mass disfranchisement of Afro-Brazilians “brightened the closing years of the nineteenth century.”<sup>744</sup>

The Brazilian revolution of 1889 offered the *Confederados* an unprecedented opportunity to promote this agenda. Suddenly, the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion qualified as international news. That November, a coalition of disgruntled Brazilian planters (including former slaveholders) and ambitious urban liberals had overthrown the Brazilian monarchy. They characterized this coup as a progressive revolution.<sup>745</sup> In its aftermath, the Brazilian elite inaugurated a republican government and drafted a new liberal Constitution. During the Constitutional Convention of 1890, they transformed the political exclusions established by the *Lei Saraiva* into the fundamental law of the land. Article Seventy of the Federal Constitution of Brazil barred all illiterate Brazilians from the polls.<sup>746</sup> The founders of the new republic also eliminated the state’s obligation to provide primary education to Brazilian citizens, which had been enshrined in the previous Constitution for more than fifty years.<sup>747</sup>

In the months that followed, Grady helped the *Confederados* spread the word of this new Constitution across the U.S. South. Between November of 1889 and August of 1890, the editors of the *Atlanta Constitution* interviewed all three ex-Confederates about the ongoing revolution in Brazil. In these interviews, Gaston, Hilliard and Barnsley endorsed the “educational qualification

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<sup>744</sup> FRUS, United States Department of State, Index to the executive documents of the House of Representatives for the third session of the forty-sixth Congress, 1880-1881, No 72, 22 Jan. 1881, Hilliard to Evarts.

<sup>745</sup> Toplin, *The Abolition of Brazilian Slavery*, 255.

<sup>746</sup> “Constituição da República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil,” 24 Feb. 1891.

<sup>747</sup> Carvalho, *Cidadania no Brasil*, 62.

for suffrage” established in the new republic.<sup>748</sup> They drew explicit connections between the rise of the Brazilian Republic and the downfall of the Confederacy, noting that in both cases, the problem of “millions of ignorant negroes, recently emancipated” led to a social crisis that demanded the rewriting of an outdated Constitution.<sup>749</sup> Gaston personally translated and published the Brazilian Constitution of 1890 under the headline “A Good Constitution: The United States of Brazil is Starting off Right.” He also added an introduction explicitly highlighting the suffrage restrictions for his readers.<sup>750</sup> A few weeks later, he delivered another lengthy interview praising the “immaculate revolution and exemplary constitution” of Brazil.<sup>751</sup> These interviews reached hundreds of thousands of readers across the South. In them, the *Confederados* also took to boasting about their friendship with Brazil’s new president, Deodoro da Fonseca.<sup>752</sup>

The idea of literacy tests quickly gained traction among the Southern elite. On November 21, 1889, the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* published an article noting that “because of the mixed character of the population in Brazil,” many Brazilian elites favored “the imposition of a requirement in the new constitution that voters must be able to write their names or read.” This,

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<sup>748</sup> See: “Revolution in Brazil: Distress Among Coffee Planters Causing Reaction,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 Nov. 1888; “Author of a Republic: President of Brazil, the New Republic,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17 Nov. 1889; “Slavery in Brazil: The Story of Its Abolition Told Anew,” 28 Sept. 1890; “What about Brazil? Interview with Hon. Henry W. Hilliard, Ex-Minister. A Representative of The Chronicle,” *Augusta Chronicle*, 27 Nov. 1889.

<sup>749</sup> “The Reaction in Brazil,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 9 July 1890.

<sup>750</sup> “A Good Constitution: The United States of Brazil is Starting off Right,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23 July 1890.

<sup>751</sup> “The New Constitution under which the Republic of Brazil Will Exist. The First Translation of that Important Document Which Has Been Published in America,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 31 Aug. 1890.

<sup>752</sup> “Author of a Republic: President of Brazil, the New Republic,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17 Nov. 1889.

the paper reported, would likely “stimulate popular education and cause the uneducated people to avail themselves of the free schools which already abound in Brazil.”<sup>753</sup> On December 7, 1889, the *St. Landry Democrat*, of rural Louisiana, published a similar article, noting that in Brazil “voters must at least be able to write their names or read.”<sup>754</sup> In the final months of 1890, Gaston’s translation of the Brazilian Constitution was reprinted in multiple newspapers across the South.<sup>755</sup> Elite Southerners seemed to agree: “Brazil did a sensible thing...in limiting suffrage to those who can read and write.”<sup>756</sup>

Occasionally, misinformation about the Brazilian Constitution circulated in the South. In November of 1889, the editors of the *Charleston News & Courier* inaccurately reported that “universal suffrage” had been granted “in the new republic.” “A big blunder in Brazil,” the newspaper crowed. “No warning taken from the misfortunes of the Southern states, but ex-slaves, the ignorant and vicious given the ballot without qualification.”<sup>757</sup> A few weeks later, they corrected their mistake. “Suffrage will be universal,” the *News & Courier* noted, “with the exception of persons who cannot read or write.”<sup>758</sup> In Tennessee, *The Maryville Times* mistakenly reported that “the republic of Brazil is extending suffrage to ‘all citizens who can

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<sup>753</sup> “Affairs Abroad,” *The Daily Picayune*, 21 Nov. 1889.

<sup>754</sup> “Views of the Brazilian Minister,” *St. Landry Democrat*, 7 Dec. 1889.

<sup>755</sup> See, for examples: “Brazil’s Constitution. The Instrument Very Much Like that of This Country,” *The Yorkville Enquirer*, 23 July 1890 and “The New Constitution of Brazil,” *The Abbeville Press and Banner*, 6 Aug. 1890.

<sup>756</sup> “Article 2—No Title,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 29 Nov. 1889.

<sup>757</sup> “A Big Blunder in Brazil. Universal Suffrage Granted in the New Republic. No Warning Taken from the Misfortunes of the Southern States, but Ex-Slaves, the Ignorant and the Vicious Given the Privilege of the Ballot without Qualification,” *The Charleston News & Courier*, 22 Nov. 1889.

<sup>758</sup> “The Constitution of Brazil,” *The Charleston News & Courier*, 24 July 1890.

read and write,”” including women.<sup>759</sup>

But for most white Southerners, the news of the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion came at just the right time. Just two months before the Brazilian revolution began, Black workers in Mississippi threatened to rebel. That summer, a Black Populist named Oliver Cromwell had arrived in Leflore County, at the heart of the Mississippi Delta. Cromwell was determined to organize farm workers throughout the region. He promised to lift these men and their families out of poverty and encouraged them to defy the local elite. As a result, Black workers began refusing to trade with local merchants. When planters threatened Cromwell, these laborers rallied to his defense. That August, they published a manifesto titled “Three Thousand Armed Men.” The sheriff of Leflore County cried “race war” and called in the state militia to crush the nascent rebellion. According to one observer, white soldiers shot Black men, women, and children “like dogs.” Black delegates in Jackson called on the federal government to intervene.<sup>760</sup> A few months later, the Republican Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge proposed the “Force Act,” which threatened to establish federal oversight of voter registration and national elections in the Southern states.<sup>761</sup> For the Southern elite, it was time to act.

### **III. The Brazilian Plan as the American Way**

In the summer of 1890, the state of Mississippi called a constitutional convention to eliminate Black suffrage. That August, 133 delegates from across the state gathered in Jackson. Only one of them was Black. Over the next four weeks, these men debated the best way to “settle

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<sup>759</sup> “New Notes for Women,” *The Maryville Times*, 5 Feb. 1890.

<sup>760</sup> William F. Holmes, “The Leflore County Massacre and the Demise of the Colored Farmers’ Alliance,” *Phylon* 34, no. 3 (1973), 267-274. See also Gaither, *Blacks and the Populist Movement*, 27; Willis, *Forgotten Time*, 131-137.

<sup>761</sup> On the “Force Bill,” see Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 30-32.

the race question” once and for all.<sup>762</sup> On the tenth day of the convention, twenty-one men appointed to serve on the convention’s Judiciary Committee issued a report considering the legality of Black disfranchisement under the Reconstruction Constitution. The Fifteenth Amendment, they pointed out, “was engrafted...for the single purpose” of preventing Southern states from discriminating “against the colored man, because of race or previous condition of servitude.” For this reason, the politics of silence seemed to offer the perfect solution. The committee knew that 50 percent of all Black Southerners were illiterate, and even small tax requirements would present a huge deterrent to poor voters.<sup>763</sup> They believed that both property and educational qualifications would be considered constitutional, provided they “applied alike to both races.”<sup>764</sup> Just a few weeks later, an overwhelming majority of delegates voted to enshrine literacy tests and poll taxes in Mississippi’s constitutional law.<sup>765</sup> After 1890, fewer than 9,000 out of 147,000 voting-age Black men in Mississippi remained registered to vote.<sup>766</sup>

Over the next decade, the Brazilian plan became—to borrow C. Vann Woodward’s famous phrase—“the American Way.” Mississippi was only the first state to ratify Black disfranchisement through a new constitution. South Carolina was next in 1895, followed by Louisiana in 1898, North Carolina in 1900, Alabama in 1901, Virginia in 1901-1902, Georgia in 1908, and Oklahoma in 1910. During these same years, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, and Texas

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<sup>762</sup> Dorothy O. Pratt, *Sowing the Wind: The Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1890* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2019), 10.

<sup>763</sup> Alex Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 89 and Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*.

<sup>764</sup> *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: 1890), 85.

<sup>765</sup> *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: 1890), 244.

<sup>766</sup> Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 91.

imposed other forms of suffrage restrictions through state law.<sup>767</sup> In every case, legal disfranchisement required white elites to reduce electoral dissent through violence, intimidation and fraud. Only then could they call constitutional conventions that would eliminate political opposition entirely.<sup>768</sup> After the disfranchising conventions, the number of Black voters plummeted. In Louisiana, the total number of Black voters dropped from 130,000 in 1896 to 1,342 by 1904.<sup>769</sup> In Florida, Black turnout dropped by 86 percent, in Alabama, 96 percent, and in Virginia by close to 100 percent. White turnout also fell in these states by 19, 31, and 48 percent respectively.<sup>770</sup>

These laws were entirely constitutional. As the *Confederados* had anticipated, the Supreme Court sanctioned the politics of racial silence. In 1896, an African American man named Henry Williams was found guilty of murder by a grand jury in Mississippi composed entirely of white men. Because Blacks had been excluded from jury service when they were disfranchised, Williams appealed his case on the grounds that his right to a fair trial had been denied by the 1890 literacy tests. *Williams vs. Mississippi* went all the way to the Supreme Court. In 1898, the Court ruled unanimously that literacy tests were constitutional because they “reach weak and vicious white men as well as weak and vicious Black men, and whatever is sinister in their intention, if anything, could be prevented in both races by the exertion of that duty which voluntarily pays taxes and refrains from crime.” In other words, if the Mississippi Constitution prohibited Black people from voting, it was because of their individual characteristics and not

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<sup>767</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 321.

<sup>768</sup> Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 243.

<sup>769</sup> Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 91-92.

<sup>770</sup> Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 241.

because of their race. Over the next ten years, this rationale was repeated in constitutional conventions held across the U.S. South.<sup>771</sup>

The restriction of the franchise destroyed the dream of rural democracy in the Southern United States. The concentration of political power in the hands of white elites crushed Black dreams of landownership and land redistribution and paved the way for the rise of Jim Crow. For a few years after slavery, it had briefly been possible for former slaves to work their way up an “agricultural ladder.”<sup>772</sup> Prior to disfranchisement, more than half of all landowners in seven out of nine counties in the Mississippi Delta were Black.<sup>773</sup> Following the ratification of the Constitution of 1890, Black landownership in the Delta declined for the first time since emancipation. By 1910, more than 90 percent of the Delta’s farmland was being worked by tenants, 95 percent of whom were Black.<sup>774</sup> The average size of plantations in the region grew to 4,216 acres, with a value of more than one hundred thousand dollars.<sup>775</sup> On Delta plantations, Black workers endured almost continuous violence. Between 1885 and 1900, more than two thousand lynchings took place in the Southern United States.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> *Williams v. Mississippi*, 170 U.S. 213 (1898). *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: State Printer, 1895); *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, held in New Orleans, Tuesday, February 8, 1898* (New Orleans: H.J. Hearsey, Convention Printer 1898); *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia. Held in the City of Richmond, beginning June 12, 1901* (Richmond, VA: JH O’Bannon, 1901-02). See also C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 322–25; Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 121.

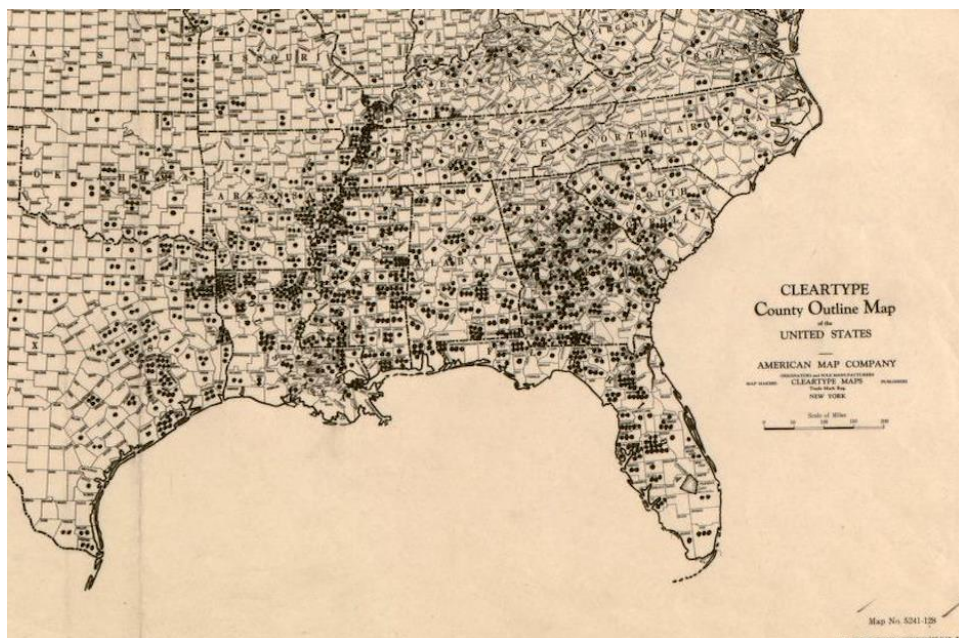
<sup>772</sup> Willis, *Forgotten Time*, 2.

<sup>773</sup> Woodruff, *American Congo*, 22.

<sup>774</sup> Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery*, 115.

<sup>775</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 407.

<sup>776</sup> Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xvii.



6. *Lynchings by States and Counties in the United States, 1900-1931.*

*Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Poverty deepened across the region. Workers were less productive and less educated in the South than anywhere else in the United States. In 1906, each agricultural worker in South Carolina produced approximately \$147.46 in value, compared to \$1,088 produced by each farm worker in the state of Iowa. In North Carolina, the average annual productive power of a single worker was only \$159.75; in Alabama, \$150.98.<sup>777</sup> During these years, public education also lagged. Between 1900 and 1910, Alabama public schools spent an average of \$3.10 per child per year. This was less than a tenth of the amount spent per child in New England and New York during the same period. In North Carolina, the expenditure per child was \$4.56 and in South Carolina, \$4.62. During the first decade of the twentieth century, no Southern state spent half as much as the national average of \$21.14 per student. Black students received even less—the average school system in the South spent \$4.92 on each white child and only \$2.21 on each

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<sup>777</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 408.

Black child. Most children did not regularly attend school. Many worked on farms instead. By 1900, more than three million Southerners did not know how to read or write.<sup>778</sup>

It was in this context that many African Americans began to look for a way out. African American leaders like T. Thomas Fortune, Alexander Crummell, Bishop Turner and others began to argue for racial separatism and Black expatriation.<sup>779</sup> Some considered migration to the Guianas, Argentina, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.<sup>780</sup> Others lodged their hopes for freedom close to home.<sup>781</sup> Just before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that disfranchisement was constitutional, Cuban revolutionaries declared their independence. Between 1895 and 1898, they waged another war for freedom premised on the notion of a *raceless cubanidad*. This was an idea that was forged in direct opposition to the United States. Afro-Cuban exiles watched and experienced the rise of Jim Crow alongside their African American counterparts. Many of them lived in segregated housing and attended segregated schools. They wanted to found a Republic that was “with all and for all”—where social and political unity would stem from a shared set of democratic values and beliefs.<sup>782</sup> In 1898, they were about to succeed. Across the United States, Afro-descendants again hailed their revolution as a harbinger of freedom.<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1912*, 398-400.

<sup>779</sup> Gaither, *Blacks and the Populist Movement*, 55.

<sup>780</sup> “A Dangerous Scheme,” *The Rio News*, 5 March 1888.

<sup>781</sup> Horne, *Race to Revolution*, 183-185.

<sup>782</sup> For the best account of the origins of the Cuban ideology racial fraternity in the nineteenth-century United States, see Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 72-151. See also Hoffnung-Garskof, “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg,” 12-13.

<sup>783</sup> See, for example, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 Aug. 1895; 14 Dec. 1895; 21 Dec. 1895; 16 May 1896; and 17 April 1897, among others.

Republican imperialists were determined to defeat their project. Among the Northern capitalist class, support for an independent Cuban Republic had all but disappeared since 1873. The idea of annexing Cuba remained. Since the 1870s, capitalists from New York and Massachusetts had invested heavily in Cuban sugar production. As in the Southern United States, these men played a critical role in the economic reconstruction of the island. They provided credit to capital-starved planters, who in turn became “the local agents of American capital and the instruments of American economic penetration of Cuba.”<sup>784</sup> Both Cuban and North American capitalists adamantly opposed the so-called “Africanization” of the island. They were convinced that Afro-Cuban leaders would lead the nation to economic ruin. As a result, when the Cuban Liberation Army was finally on the verge of winning its independence, many of these men called for U.S. intervention. Republican Party officials began to repeat arguments for annexation that had been pioneered by slaveowners more than fifty years earlier. One Senator even quoted the quoted the Confederate Secretary of War, Judah P. Benjamin, who had warned in 1859 that “we shall be ever insecure against a hostile attack until this important geographical and military position”—Cuba—“is placed under our protection and control.”<sup>785</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion was gaining traction across the Atlantic World. After the ratification of the Mississippi Constitution in 1890, white elites across the United States began imposing educational qualifications for suffrage at state constitutional conventions. Over the next twenty years, more than thirteen states in the North and West implemented literacy tests, which were designed to bar both African American

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<sup>784</sup> Louis Perez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 28.

<sup>785</sup> Quoted in Horne, *Race to Revolution*, 146.

and immigrant workers from the polls.<sup>786</sup> In the early twentieth century, U.S. government officials began trying to impose the Brazilian plan for Black exclusion in the new Cuban Republic. The struggle for a democratic Atlantic World was not over yet.



7. Jimmy Carter, on a state visit to Brazil in 1972, stands with two fifth generation Confederado children at the base of a Confederate monument in São Paulo.  
*Image courtesy of Eugene C. Harter, The Lost Colony of the Confederacy.*

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<sup>786</sup> Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 91-92.

## Chapter 5

### **“They are taking the land from us”: The Defeat of Radical Reconstruction in Rural Cuba, 1898-1912**

On May 23, 1912, an alarming report reached the U.S. ambassador in Havana. Seven hundred Afro-Cuban rural laborers were burning cane fields in Guantánamo.<sup>787</sup> Less than a week later, it was reported that Evaristo Estenoz, organizer of the Afro-Cuban political party, the *Partido Independiente de Color*, was leading thousands of Black workers in a massive rural revolt that swept across the eastern part of the island, the *Oriente*.<sup>788</sup> Just ten years previously, Cuban freedpeople had owned or controlled at least 40 percent of this land.<sup>789</sup> Now, they took to burning it, specifically targeting the foreign-owned sugar mills, railroads, bridges, telegraphs, and sugar plantations that dominated the landscape.<sup>790</sup> In response, the Cuban Congress authorized one million pesos and as much armed force as necessary to crush the revolt. By the end of July, the *independientes* were routed. Evaristo Estenoz lay dead. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of Black rural workers lay with him.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> NARA, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 837.00/525-792, 23 May 1912, A. M. Beaupré to U.S. Secretary of State.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid, 22 May 1912, Beaupré to U.S. Secretary of State.

<sup>789</sup> Louis Pérez, “Politics, Peasants, and People of Color: the 1912 ‘Race War’ in Cuba,” in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (1986), 513.

<sup>790</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, 29 May 1912, Beaupré to Secretary of State.

<sup>791</sup> Cuban historians still debate the number of Afro-Cubans who lost their lives during the summer of 1912. Traditionally, scholars have used estimates of between two and three thousand dead. See Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 225. More recently, María de los Angeles Meriño Fuentes has challenged these numbers, asserting that “only” hundreds of Black people likely died. See María de los Angeles Meriño Fuentes, *Una vuelta necesaria a mayo de 1912* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2007), 58-60. It remains indisputable that in 1912, many poor Black workers were killed by Cuban soldiers.

For many years, comparative historians have debated whether the massacre of the *Partido Independiente de Color* marked the triumph of racism in post-emancipation Cuba. In 1995, Aline Helg argued that the *independientes* were exceptional not only in Cuba but across the Atlantic World as the first broad-based, cross-class, and all-Black political party organized to combat racial discrimination.<sup>792</sup> In her view, the violent destruction of the *independientes* was driven by anti-Black racism among the white Cuban political class. What distinguished Cuba on the world stage, then, was not the absence of race-based legal discrimination but rather the turn to official anti-Black violence.<sup>793</sup> Since then, Alejandro de la Fuente and Rebecca Scott have argued powerfully against her interpretation. In their telling, the majority of Black people in the Cuban Republic opposed race-based political organizing as unpatriotic; the party's core support came from a relatively small, urban group of Afro-Cubans who sought political patronage and embraced a middle-class politics of respectability.<sup>794</sup> Although their massacre was a tragic illustration of just how sharply the color line could be drawn in Cuba, it was not a turning point in Cuban history.<sup>795</sup> After all, Afro-Cubans, unique among formerly enslaved peoples in the Atlantic World, retained the right to vote in the early twentieth century, and continued to press

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<sup>792</sup> Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 4-5 and Aline Helg, "Race and Black Mobilization in Colonial and Early Independent Cuba: A Comparative Perspective," *Ethnohistory*, 44, no. 1 (1997), 60.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5, 194.

<sup>794</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, 71; Alejandro de la Fuente, "Myths of Racial Democracy: Cuba 1900-1912," *Latin American Research Review*, 34 (1999): 64; Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 229-231, 239, 243. Thomas Orum and Louis Pérez have also held this position, "The Politics of Color: The Racial Dimension of Cuban Politics during the Early Republican Years, 1900-1912," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975), 220 and Louis Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, and People of Color," 529.

<sup>795</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 55, 78; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 251, 252.

their claims for full incorporation into the Cuban Republic on the basis of a broad-based national commitment to a raceless *cubanidad*.<sup>796</sup>

This chapter recasts the history of the *Partido Independiente de Color* within the framework of Atlantic Reconstruction. As historians have long established, freedpeople across the Atlantic World fought to free themselves from lives as dependent wage laborers in the aftermath of the destruction of slavery. By the turn of the century, this contest was all but over in Brazil and the U.S. South. Planters had regained control of land and labor through the legal exclusion of Black people from democratic politics. In the early twentieth century, Afro-Cubans were acutely aware of the counterrevolution unfolding across the Atlantic and the possibility of its extension to the Cuban Republic. Confronted with their rapid removal from the land and facing the constant threat of political exclusion at the hands of white Cubans elites and U.S. imperialists, Black Cubans organized the *Partido Independiente de Color* in 1908. For the next four years, the party's members fought to achieve the vision of freedom that was at the heart of Black politics in the post-emancipation Atlantic World: personal autonomy, landed independence, and democratic political power. Their massacre in 1912 was the result of the profound threat their movement posed to the expansion of capitalism into eastern Cuba in the early twentieth century. While their organization was shaped by the particular historical

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<sup>796</sup> Within the national historiography, Cuban scholars have also debated whether the PIC represented a democratic precursor to socialist revolution, or an aberration from the Cuban radical tradition of interracial organizing. For important contributions to this literature, see: Serafin Portuondo Linares, *Los Independientes de Color: historia del Partido Independiente de Color* (Havana: Editorial Librería Selecta, 1950), 281; Joel James Figarola, *Cuba 1900-1928: la República dividida contra sí misma* (Santiago: Editorial Oriente, 1976), 161; Tomás Fernández Robaina, *El Negro en Cuba, 1902-1958* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 1990), 75, 102. For useful surveys of the existing literature on the PIC, see: Alexander Eastman, "The Neglected Narratives of Cuba's Partido Independiente de Color: Civil Rights, Popular Politics and Emancipatory Reading Practices," *The Americas* 76, no. 1 (2019), 46 and Tomás Fernández Robaina, "Hacia el Centenario de la Fundación del Partido Independiente de Color," *Caribbean Studies* 36, no. 1 (2008), 131-138.

conditions and possibilities of the Cuban Republic, their violent destruction in 1912 spelled the end of a much larger, longer historical struggle. I argue that, while the massacre of the *independientes* did not foreclose the possibility of Black liberation in the twentieth century, it did mark the final collapse of the project of rural democracy—understood here as the efforts of freedpeople and their children to build a new, democratic Atlantic World ruled by a class of free and independent smallholders.

### **I. The Contest over Black Exclusion: Occupied Cuba, 1898-1902**

At the beginning of 1898, the Cuban countryside was devastated from almost thirty years of continuous warfare. Three years earlier, Cuban insurgents led by the white revolutionary José Martí and the mulatto general Antonio Maceo had launched the third and final war for independence against Spain. The fighting had quickly turned brutal. The Spanish state, bent on eradicating the Cuban insurgency once and for all, appointed General Valeriano Weyler to lead a war of extermination against the Cuban peasantry in 1896. That year, all noncombatant men and women suspected of supporting the uprising were arrested and imprisoned in the world's first concentration camps. Under the guise of "protection," the Spanish army exposed the *reconcentrados* to devastating epidemic diseases; the effect in rural Cuba was mass death and complete economic paralysis. In the field, Spanish soldiers destroyed any independent cultivation they could find. Cuban insurgents, meanwhile, began burning the cane fields. In September of 1897, rebels destroyed seven major sugar mills in Cruces, leaving close to seven thousand people out of work. Few homes or buildings in the surrounding area remained standing.<sup>797</sup> By the end of the war, sugar fields were destroyed across the island. The insurgents

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<sup>797</sup> Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 143-145.

ensured that half a million acres, cultivated in 1895, would not return to production after the war.<sup>798</sup>

It was under these conditions that U.S. President McKinley ordered General Leonard Wood to assume military command of the island in 1900. He could hardly have chosen a man with better credentials. “A Cape Cod boy” born to a wealthy New England family, Wood graduated from Harvard in 1882 with a degree in medicine. In 1883, he enlisted in the U.S. army in time to see action in the last campaign of a nearly fifty-year war against the Apaches. Wood was, by all accounts, a dedicated imperial soldier: in 1886, he received the Congressional Medal of Honor for pursuing the Apache medicine man and guerrilla leader, Geronimo, one hundred and thirty-six miles across the deserts of what was then known as “Old Mexico.”<sup>799</sup> With the consolidation of U.S. sovereignty across continental North America, his ambitions turned outward with the U.S. imperial project.<sup>800</sup> In the spring of 1898, when it became clear to President McKinley that Spain was not going to be able to defeat the Cuban Liberation Army, he

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<sup>798</sup> Louis Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 63.

<sup>799</sup> William Herbert Hobbs, *Leonard Wood, Administrator, Soldier and Citizen* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920), 46-47, 85-86.

<sup>800</sup> On the “Greater Reconstruction” of the trans-Mississippi West, see Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); William Deverell, “Redemptive California? Re-thinking the Post-Civil War,” *Rethinking History* 11, no. 1 (March 2007), 61-78; Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Steven Hahn, “Slave Emancipation, Indian Peoples, and the Projects of a New American Nation-State,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 3 (2013), 307-330; Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in An Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016); Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during the Gilded Age and Reconstruction, 1865-1896* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

called for 125,000 volunteers to assist in the U.S. takeover of the island. Wood acted swiftly. By the end of May, he was headed to Cuba with the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Volunteer Cavalry (the “Rough Riders”), with Theodore Roosevelt as his second-in-command. By mid-July, the Spanish had surrendered control of key cities and towns in the Oriente to the U.S. in a treaty process that completely excluded the Cuban civil and military leadership.<sup>801</sup> Wood was rewarded for his efforts in the renamed “Spanish-American war” with military command of the Province of Santiago de Cuba. Two years later, he assumed control of the entire occupation government as the Military Governor of Cuba.

As Military Governor, Wood’s first task was to secure the permanent exclusion of poor Black people from Cuban politics. In April of 1898, the U.S. Congress had passed the Teller Amendment, which barred the U.S. government from annexing the island of Cuba. Backed by a combination of beet sugar industrialists and racist Democrats who opposed increasing the Black population of the United States, the Amendment checked the explicit annexationist goals of the U.S. executive branch.<sup>802</sup> As a result, Wood’s administration set about building a Cuban Republic run by the “best men”—namely, elite white Cubans, many of whom had become U.S. citizens while operating Cuban sugar plantations and refineries out of New York City over the last few decades.<sup>803</sup> The possibility of Black political enfranchisement in Cuba was considered dangerous for the interests of North American capital. As Wood wrote in February of 1900, “giving the ballot to the [absolutely illiterate] element means a second edition of Haiti and Santo

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<sup>801</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902*, 178, 208.

<sup>802</sup> Library of Congress (hereafter LOC), Leonard Wood Papers, Box 29, 22 April 1901, D. E. Sickles to Elihu Root.

<sup>803</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 26, 27 Nov. 1898, Wood to William McKinley and Box 28, 23 Feb. 1900, Wood to Root.

Domingo in the near future.”<sup>804</sup> On April 18, 1900, Wood issued General Order No. 164, which laid out suffrage provisions for the upcoming municipal elections. The order was clear. Voters must be free of felony conviction, and “possess one or more of the following qualifications: A) ability to read or write; b) ownership of real or personal property to the value of two hundred and fifty dollars, American gold; or c) service in the Cuban army prior to July 18, 1898.”<sup>805</sup> Census data, published that same month, had guided Wood’s decision. Afro-Cubans, it turned out, represented at least a third of the potential electorate; of these, more than 75 percent were illiterate.<sup>806</sup>

This project was understood by U.S. imperialists as the culmination of a century-long effort to destroy the revolutionary politics of former slaves in the Atlantic World. That June, the U.S. Secretary of War, Elihu Root, congratulated Wood on a job well done. He wrote, “Of course most people will assume that this is one of the things which happens as a matter of course, *but as we know better here*, and when the history of the new Cuba comes to be written, the establishment of popular self-government, based on limited suffrage, excluding so great a proportion of the elements which have brought ruin to Hayti and Santo Domingo, will be regarded as an event of the first importance.”<sup>807</sup>

Wood’s sense of triumph, however, was short-lived. Throughout 1900, Cuban revolutionaries challenged the U.S.-imposed suffrage restrictions. The first force Wood had to contend with was the majority-Black Liberation Army. Over the past two years, the Military

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<sup>804</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, 23 Feb. 1900, Wood to Root.

<sup>805</sup> NARA, Record Group 350, Entry 1-3 5-A, Box 188, File 1327.

<sup>806</sup> NARA, RG 350, Box 188, File 1327, Report to the U.S. Senate, Table IIIa. Males 21 years of age and over according to Citizenship, Literacy, and Education.

<sup>807</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, 20 June 1900, Root to Wood.

Governor had devoted every effort to disarming this revolutionary body. He spent the fall of 1898 working to buy back arms from more than eleven thousand Cuban soldiers stationed throughout the Oriente region.<sup>808</sup> That November, however, the remaining forty-eight thousand Cuban soldiers refused to disband. In April of 1899, the U.S. government sent two warships carrying three million dollars in a final attempt to buy the weapons and equipment of the Liberation Army. Soldiers were offered \$75 backpay in exchange for their guns.<sup>809</sup> The effort was only partially successful, however. In June of 1899, Black officers again defied U.S. occupying forces by refusing to disarm their regiments.<sup>810</sup> In January of 1900, Wood met with the most important leaders of the Liberation Army to defend his stance: that illiterate Black men must be deprived of political rights. The general and former president of Cuba Libre, Bartolomé Masó, balked at his proposal. He informed the Military Governor that universal male suffrage was an essential condition of Cuban independence.<sup>811</sup> After that, Wood was forced to concede the franchise to all veterans. For those who had fought for Cuba Libre, however, such a concession would hardly suffice. That same month, the Territorial Council of Independence Veterans in Matanzas demanded in a written petition that “all Cubans take part in the organization of the country.” In their view, the “humble Cuban citizen...had enough wisdom and courage to enter into the political struggle” for Cuban independence. For this reason, they

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<sup>808</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 247.

<sup>809</sup> José Muñiz, *El movimiento obrero durante la primera intervención* (Santa Clara: Universidad Central de las Villas, 1976), 76, 193.

<sup>810</sup> Cathy Duke, “The Idea of Races: The Cultural Impact of American Intervention in Cuba, 1898-1912,” in ed. Blanca G. Silvestrini, *Politics, Society and Culture in the Caribbean Selected Papers of the XIV Conference of Caribbean Historians* (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1983), 100.

<sup>811</sup> Rafael Ortiz, *Cuba: Los primeros años de la independencia* (France: Imprimerie Artistique “Lux,” 1921), 102.

concluded, “no one can deny him the right to vote.”<sup>812</sup>

The veterans’ opposition was reinforced by protests across the island. Labor organizations echoed calls for universal male suffrage.<sup>813</sup> Between January and April of 1900, scores of petitions demanding universal suffrage poured into U.S. Military Headquarters from across the island.<sup>814</sup> In February of 1900, the secretary of the *Ayuntamiento* (town council) of Esperanza informed the Military Governor that “this Corporation immediately took up the news published by the press in regard to the intention of the Government of Intervention not to allow” certain Cubans “to vote at the next elections.” The petition added that “it was agreed, by unanimity, that all Cubans, without distinction, having attained their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday should be allowed to vote; and that this resolution should be communicated” to the Military Governor.<sup>815</sup> In March, the *Ayuntamiento* of Melena del Sur registered further opposition. “Last Wednesday,” they informed Wood, “the body in session agreed...that it is the spirit of all to fight for free suffrage in the next elections.”<sup>816</sup> Over the next few weeks, the towns of Cuevitas, Camajuani, Ranchuelo, Lajas, Abreus, Mendez Capote and Aguacate sent in nearly identical petitions.<sup>817</sup> These protests wore on for months. On April 5, 1900, the secretary of the *Ayuntamiento* of Viñales sent a long message to the Military Governor. First, he declared, the town Council had

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<sup>812</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 64, File 729, 12 Jan. 1900.

<sup>813</sup> Muñiz, *El movimiento obrero*, 197.

<sup>814</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 72, File 1305.

<sup>815</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 72, File 1298, 12 Feb. 1900, Antonio Aleman to the Military Governor.

<sup>816</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 72, File 1305.

<sup>817</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 72, File 1305, 15 March 1900, Diego Tamayo, enclosing documents relative to the resolutions adopted by the *Ayuntamientos* of Cuevitas, Camajuani, Ranchuelo, Lajas, Abreus, Mendez Capote and Aguacate, requesting that universal suffrage be granted in the coming elections.

resolved, “the elections must be by universal suffrage. Second, the restriction of the vote and the privileged vote are the foundation of discord and are in contradiction to the principles sustained by the revolution, to which we all adhere.”<sup>818</sup>

These protests made it clear to U.S. occupiers just how difficult it would be to counter the general expectation that Afro-Cubans would take part in governing an independent Cuba. Just weeks after the municipal elections were announced, the military government called for new elections in September, to choose delegates for a constituent assembly to draft a Constitution. Wood had a clear vision for the Cuban Constitution: as he explained, “the government should be completely organized as a Cuban government with the exception of the Governor of the Island, who should remain for the present an American commanding the Military Forces of the occupation and holding an absolute power of veto. Such a form of government would not differ materially from the present, the only distinction that it would be under a definite constitution and we could throw upon these people the burden of making their own laws.”<sup>819</sup> To secure this outcome, it was essential that elite white conservatives dominate the upcoming Constituent Assembly. These men “generally approved” limited suffrage, and, as Wood perceived, were “beginning to talk about a long protectorate, if not annexation; they are all pretty well stirred up...upon the negro question.”<sup>820</sup> Even with a majority of Black Cubans effectively barred from the polls, Wood spent all summer campaigning to ensure a conservative victory.<sup>821</sup>

Despite his best efforts, Wood’s worst fears were realized. On September 26, 1900, the

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<sup>818</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 72, File 1305, 5 April 1900, Ciudadano José Ramoro Gutierrez, Secretario Contador del Ayuntamiento de Viñales.

<sup>819</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, 3 June 1900, Wood to Root.

<sup>820</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, 10 April 1900, Wood to Root.

<sup>821</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 313.

Military Governor informed Elihu Root that “I am disappointed in the composition of the Convention...I hoped they would be the very best men. They have done so in many instances, but they have also sent some of the worst agitators and political rascals in Cuba.” As Wood noted, his desired political class had been largely excluded; the “highly intelligent Cubans of the land owning, industrial and commercial classes” would not be represented at the Convention. Instead, the delegates were of a lower tier: “doctors without patients, lawyers without practice and demagogues living on the subscriptions of the people and their friends.”<sup>822</sup> Even worse, two of the chosen delegates, Martín Morúa Delgado and Juan Gualberto Gómez, were Black.<sup>823</sup> In Wood’s assessment, Delgado and Gómez represented “the worst political element in the Island and they will bear careful watching.”<sup>824</sup>

In the Constitutional Convention, not even the most conservative Cuban delegates dared to publicly oppose the principle of universal suffrage. In December of 1900, three white delegates submitted written proposals for suffrage restrictions to be included in the Constitution. Leopoldo Berriel, from Havana, hoped to disenfranchise illiterates, beggars and the unemployed.<sup>825</sup> Yet, on the floor of the Constitutional Convention that January, he refused to defend his proposal. On January 29, 1901, he began a speech, “I do not raise my voice to oppose suffrage,” and suggested instead that universal male suffrage simply be postponed until it could become a matter of electoral law, rather than a constitutional principle. Standing, quite literally, in front of the masses, no member of the Constitutional Convention would openly oppose the

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<sup>822</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, 26 Sept. 1900, Wood to Root.

<sup>823</sup> For the full list of delegates by province, see, Cuba, Convención Constituyente, *Diario de Sesiones* 1 (November 5, 1901), 7.

<sup>824</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 28, Wood to Senator O.H. Platt, December 6, 1900.

<sup>825</sup> Cuba, Convención Constituyente, *Diario de Sesiones* 15 (January 21, 1901), xvii.

Cuban revolutionary principle of universal male suffrage. As the delegate Miguel Sanguily put it, “it is very difficult to improvise with a question like this,” in part “because—I admit it—I would like, like all the world, to deserve the sympathies of the majority.”<sup>826</sup>

By the time the Constitutional Convention approved universal male suffrage, the military government was already preparing to act. Ten days before the Convention voted to extend the franchise, Leonard Wood warned the U.S. Secretary of War that “the men on top now are, politically speaking, a danger to the island and its future.” He recommended that the U.S. Congress “be told very plainly that the men who have been elected to positions of authority in Cuba are in no way competent to protect the present interests or develop the future prosperity of the island.” Congress must “tell these people frankly that we...will not turn the island over until competent men come to the front, men whose abilities and character give reasonable guarantee of the stability of the coming government.”<sup>827</sup> Within a month, Congress had reached an agreement. The U.S. government would pursue a third course: permit Cuban self-government but deny the new state’s sovereignty.<sup>828</sup> In late February of 1901, Senator Orville Platt proposed an amendment to the U.S. Army Appropriations Bill (“the Platt Amendment”), which granted the U.S. government authority to intervene militarily on the island in order to protect “life, property, and individual liberty.” On February 26, 1901, Leonard Wood forwarded a copy of this amendment to the Cuban Constitutional Convention, which was expected to approve it as an appendix to the new Constitution.<sup>829</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> Cuba, Convención Constituyente, *Diario de Sesiones* 20 (January 29, 1901), 276, 278.

<sup>827</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 30, 19 Jan. 1901, Wood to Root.

<sup>828</sup> Louis Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 322-323.

<sup>829</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 30, 26 Feb. 1901, Wood to Tamayo.

This time, the U.S. imperial government proved unshakeable. On March 2, 1901, protesters bearing torches converged on Wood's home in Havana to oppose the amendment. In Santiago de Cuba, in the east, veterans called for a return to arms.<sup>830</sup> As before, petitions and letters of opposition poured into U.S. military headquarters from across the island.<sup>831</sup> The Black delegate Juan Gualberto Gómez emerged as a leading figure in the campaign against the Platt Amendment, and refused to vote for it in the final count of the Constituent Assembly. His efforts, and those of other "anti-american Negroes," were of no avail.<sup>832</sup> In April, delegates from the Constituent Assembly travelled to Washington. There, their options were made clear to them: accept the amendment, or continue the occupation.<sup>833</sup> As Wood reported, "I told them flatly" that the United States was prepared to show "the strong hand of authority...if necessary."<sup>834</sup> The position of the Cuban delegates was further weakened later that month when the Cuban bourgeoisie—represented by the *Círculo de Hacendados* and the *Sociedad Económica*—came out publicly in support of the Platt Amendment. On June 12, by a vote of sixteen to eleven with four abstentions, the Constituent Assembly voted to accept the Platt Amendment as an appendix to the new Cuban Constitution.<sup>835</sup>

For the remainder of the military occupation, the U.S. government continued working to disenfranchise Afro-Cuban voters. In April of 1901, General Wood received a petition signed by

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<sup>830</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 324.

<sup>831</sup> See, for examples, NARA, RG 140, Letters Received, 1901, Box No 192, Files 3050-3051.

<sup>832</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 171, File 1901-1948, 13 April 1901, Mayor to General Wood.

<sup>833</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 326.

<sup>834</sup> LOC, Leonard Wood Papers, Box 30, 27 Feb. 1901, Wood to Root.

<sup>835</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 327.

“four whites and seven negroes” demanding that a representative of the Cuban Populist Party be allowed to sit on the electoral Boards of Registration in Santiago de Cuba.<sup>836</sup> Wood cabled immediately: the Governor of the Province had “no authorization whatever” to grant the Populist Party representation.<sup>837</sup> Moreover, he informed the Governor that the military government would be sending additional rural guards to the region, “to keep order and see that the right to vote be accomplished.”<sup>838</sup> Over the next few months, General Juan Bravo, a veteran leader of the Liberation Army, led the Populist Party effort to secure electoral board representation and to oppose police repression of voters. On April 22, he telegraphed the U.S. Department of State that “Police despotically repel voters compelling them to stand within one block of places of registration to hinder registration, clubbing people, majority Boards appointed by [the town Council] refuse registration under futile pretext, demand birth certificate;” the Boards were even requiring that “voters write English.”<sup>839</sup> Bravo complained so much that the U.S. government eventually appointed a commission to investigate the voter registration process in Santiago de Cuba. Unsurprisingly, the investigation found that 107 out of 130 grievants had been “rightfully rejected” by the municipal board of voter registration.<sup>840</sup>

Yet, for the moment, the politics of Black exclusion had failed. On May 20, 1902, the first U.S. occupation of Cuba came to an end. The new Cuban Constitution granted all men over

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<sup>836</sup> NARA, RG 140, Letters Received, 1901, Box 170, File 1846, 18 April 1901, Whitside to Wood.

<sup>837</sup> NARA, RG 140, Letters Received, 1901, Box 170, File 1846, 17 April 1901, Wood to Governor Castillo.

<sup>838</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 169, File 1846, 3 May 1901, Carlos E. Lynn to Mr. Frank McCoy.

<sup>839</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 170, File 1846, 22 April 1901, Translation, Telegrams received at the Department of State.

<sup>840</sup> NARA, RG 140, Box 170, File 1846, 15 May 1901, Whitehead to James E. Shelley, Inspector Rural Guard.

the age of twenty-one the right to vote. Just a few years after white elites in Brazil and the U.S. South secured the legal exclusion of Black people from democratic politics, Afro-Cuban freedmen, against all odds, attained the right to vote. After almost half a century of struggle, the question of Black political power in the newly independent Cuban Republic remained open.

## II. The Destruction of the Black Peasantry in Rural Cuba

After the end of the final Cuban war for independence in 1898, many Black veterans returned to the land. In particular, they traveled east, to the *Oriente*—known by the occupying government as the Province of Santiago de Cuba. In 1899, no other region had a larger population of Black farmers. There, Afro-Cubans owned and operated 41 percent of all farms. 26 percent of total land in use in the region was cultivated by Black people. In addition, nowhere else on the island was land more *available*—only 22 percent of the total area of the province was privately owned in 1899.<sup>841</sup> This relatively egalitarian system of land distribution was a legacy of the Spanish colonial government. Under Spanish rule, Cuban lands had been divided into large, communal *mercedes* (grants) or *realengos* (crown lands). According to the law of the Indies, owners of *mercedes* could not pass their estates onto an heir and all heirs had to share the land in common. In 1819, royal orders had provided for a shift to fee simple ownership on the island, but this transition occurred much faster in the western part of the island (along the nineteenth-century sugar-slave frontier) than in the east, where the low commercial value of property enabled smallholders to maintain control of their plots. As a result, in 1899, the Oriente contained 35 percent of all Cuban farms, 60 percent of which were smaller than eight acres.<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> Pérez, “Politics, Peasants, and People of Color,” 513, 515.

<sup>842</sup> Robert Hoernel, “Sugar and Social Change in the Oriente,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 8, no. 2 (May 1976), 223-225.

The east, as historian Louis Pérez has written, “promised a new beginning, and new freedom” for freedpeople in Cuba—and by 1907, the population had increased almost 40 percent, by more than 127,000.<sup>843</sup>

For Afro-Cubans, the land in the Oriente was of special significance. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it had been a key site of exchange between enslaved Cubans and the broader Atlantic World. Between 1796 and 1844, numerous uprisings inspired by the Haitian Revolution had unfolded there.<sup>844</sup> It was in the east that fugitive slaves had first enlisted in the Cuban Liberation Army, and after the end of the first Cuban war for independence, a large free Black population lived there.<sup>845</sup> After the treaty of Zanjón, signed in 1878, freed Afro-Cuban veterans moved into the war-torn region and laid claim to the land. Over the next few years, they built numerous small towns in the areas between Santiago, Bayamo and Manzanillo.<sup>846</sup> When the Spanish Empire decreed the legal abolition of slavery in 1886, many more freedpeople followed in their footsteps.<sup>847</sup> For these families, access to eastern lands provided a path to self-sufficiency. By cultivating food, Black families gained access to subsistence and a form of work not directly controlled by plantation owners.<sup>848</sup> Although some of these peasants engaged in seasonal labor as cane cutters, they achieved an important increase in autonomy relative to the Black rural workforce in the sugar provinces of Havana and Matanzas. By contrast, in the

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<sup>843</sup> Pérez, “Politics, Peasants, and People of Color,” 516.

<sup>844</sup> García, *Conspiraciones y revueltas*, 25, 44, 55, 114.

<sup>845</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 258.

<sup>846</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 101.

<sup>847</sup> Rebecca Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane: Cuba, Brazil and Louisiana after Emancipation,” *American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (February 1994): 81-87.

<sup>848</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 246, 258.

regions where sugar plantations continued to dominate the landscape, emancipation brought little change in the daily lives of Black rural workers.<sup>849</sup>

At the same time, U.S. corporations began to target this land. By 1880, the North American market was absorbing over 80 percent of Cuba's sugar exports. The position of the Cuban planter elite was therefore entirely dependent on U.S. tariffs and U.S. markets.<sup>850</sup> Local credit in Cuba was almost non-existent, and worse, world sugar prices were plummeting. As a result, Cuban planters at that moment began exchanging property titles for ownership of stocks in U.S. corporations and positions on corporate boards of directors. Over the course of the 1880s, many Cuban planters found it convenient to acquire U.S. citizenship, which they hoped would provide a military hedge against the destruction of their property by local bandits.<sup>851</sup> Thus, by the time the U.S. Army invaded Cuba in 1898, the extension of U.S. corporate power over Cuban lands had already begun. After the invasion, it accelerated. Between 1898 and 1902, Wood's government transformed the structure of Cuban landownership to support North American corporations and land speculators. In 1901, the U.S. Military Government eliminated a moratorium on debts and imposed a new tax on Cuban productive lands, leaving impoverished Cuban landowners vulnerable to hungry creditors. In addition, Wood passed Civil Order 62, which allowed any plaintiff to commission a judicial survey to fix the boundaries of a tract of crown land. Suddenly, Cuban smallholders needed literacy skills to defend their land, as well as money to pay lawyers, land surveyors, and judges.<sup>852</sup> As a direct result of policies imposed

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<sup>849</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 158.

<sup>850</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 206.

<sup>851</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 20, 28.

<sup>852</sup> Gillian McGillivray, *Blazing Cane: Sugar Communities, Class and State Formation in Cuba, 1868-1959*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 76.

during the first U.S. military occupation, twenty-eight U.S. corporations acquired thousands of acres in the province of Puerto Principe alone.<sup>853</sup>

Cuban dispossession accelerated even more dramatically after the ratification of the Platt Amendment in 1902. Everywhere in Cuba, property owners had emerged from the war in debt, without access to capital or credit. As one North American capitalist observed, “the Cubans have lands but no money.”<sup>854</sup> The ratification of a reciprocity treaty in 1903 thus had far-reaching consequences for the structure of landownership in Cuba, immediately because it created favorable trade conditions that permitted Cubans to sell damaged estates, and in the long-term by increasing the investment value of all Cuban land. Between 1903 and 1905, Cuban landowners started selling out, often at great losses. One plantation owner in San José de las Lajas complained that “Land is sold at \$100 to \$200 per *caballeria*...its real value being \$1,000 for first class.” By 1905, some thirteen thousand North Americans had acquired land titles in Cuba, with a value of more than fifty million dollars. In the Camagüey province, seven thousand American land titles had an estimated purchase price of \$28 million. Americans now owned vast tracts of land in Sancti Spiritus, Havana, Cienfuegos, and all along the north coast of the Oriente. In sum, foreign corporations owned an estimated 60 percent of all rural property in Cuba, with another 15 percent controlled by resident Spaniards. Cubans were reduced to ownership of 25 percent of the land.<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>853</sup> United States, 57<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, House of Representatives. *Congressional Edition, Volume 4489*, 3 Dec. 1902, “Purchase of Land by Nonresidents in Cuba since date of American Occupation, etc. Letter from the Acting Secretary of War. Response to the Inquiry of the House as to Purchases of Land by Nonresidents in Cuba,” 2-3.

<sup>854</sup> Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS), Boston, Edwin Atkins Papers, Letterbooks, Volume II, No. 18, Feb 7. 1902, Edwin Atkins to Sam McCall.

<sup>855</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 68, 72-74. Plantation owner quoted on page 70.

For the Afro-Cuban peasantry in the east, the experience of dispossession was especially rapid and intense. Between 1900 and 1905, North American settlers and corporations established twelve agricultural colonies in the Oriente, accounting for tens of thousands of acres.<sup>856</sup> During these years, the total number of farms in the region fell by 50 percent, from 21,550 to 10,854. In some municipalities, such as San Luis and Alto Songo, the process of land concentration was even more severe, with the number of independent farms declining between 70 to 90 percent.<sup>857</sup> In their place, foreign sugar estates consolidated control over the land. Companies like the Guantánamo Sugar Company (incorporated in New Jersey in 1905) bought up numerous estates, in this case, the plantations Isabel and Los Caños. At the same time, the population in the region was exploding. An influx of men into the region had followed the disbandment of the Liberation Army, resulting in a baby boom.<sup>858</sup> For Afro-Cuban freedpeople and their descendants, the implications were clear: the next generation would be landless.

U.S. corporations and plantation owners simultaneously began lobbying for the state-sponsored importation of contract laborers. As early as 1899, Edwin Atkins, owner of the Soledad estate in Cienfuegos, wrote to Elihu Root to request that the U.S. Military Government take up the “labor question” in Cuba. He forwarded a petition signed by five North American capitalists who owned a total of seven million dollars of industrial property in Cuba. These men argued that an additional twenty thousand workers “will be required to take off the crop of the sugar estates” that year and pointed to “an abundance of unoccupied labor in Spain and in the

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<sup>856</sup> Pérez, “Politics, Peasants and People of Color,” 517.

<sup>857</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 106.

<sup>858</sup> Pérez, “Politics, Peasants and People of Color,” 521, 522.

Canary Islands” as the ideal solution.<sup>859</sup> The lobbying continued well into the following decade. In 1906, the Guantánamo Sugar Company sent a similar petition to the Cuban Secretary of the Hacienda, requesting permission to contract five hundred Puerto Rican laborers to cut cane on the company’s sugar plantations. The response of the Cuban state was shaped by the racist preferences of the white Cuban elite. The Cuban Secretary of the Hacienda granted permission to the Guantánamo Sugar Company to import contract laborers, but on the condition that these workers be exclusively “of the Caucasian race.”<sup>860</sup>

This corporate lobbying campaign culminated in the passage of a new Cuban Law of Immigration and Colonization, approved by the Cuban Congress on July 11, 1906. The law allocated one million dollars for a massive project to develop white settlement on the island.<sup>861</sup> Eighty percent of this funding was to be used for settling families from Spain and the Canary Islands in Cuba, and the remaining \$200,000 for the importation of contract laborers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Northern Italy.<sup>862</sup> The goal was to assist a class of white European immigrants in establishing themselves as “cane farmers on lands acquired by the

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<sup>859</sup> NARA, RG 350 (Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs), Entry 8 (I-3 8), Box 19, File C-346, Edwin Atkins to Root, Nov 13, 1899.

<sup>860</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 115, No. 101.

<sup>861</sup> This law was part of a broader effort among Latin American elites to “whiten” the region at the end of the nineteenth century. Nancy Stepan, *“The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991); George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004); Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000*, 117-152; Julia Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Okezi Otovo, *Progressive Mothers, Better Babies: Race, Public Health and the State in Brazil, 1850-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

<sup>862</sup> Kathleen Lopez, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 147.

government.”<sup>863</sup> Backers of this legislation imagined the rise of a new, middle-class group of white *colonos* who would own or rent lands around large sugar mills, and hire (disproportionately Afro-Cuban) cane cutters to work their lands during the harvest.<sup>864</sup> This legislation was supported both by foreign corporations and the local Cuban bourgeoisie, who favored developing a stream of “useful and hard-working” European immigrant labor to the island.<sup>865</sup> It was left to two Black Congressmen, Martín Morúa Delgado and Rafael Serra, to combat the explicit anti-Black components of the legislation. In July of 1906, just before the bill’s passage, they succeeded in having a ban on the entry of “Blacks, Malaysians, Mongoloids, and the Ocean races” removed from the law.<sup>866</sup>

The spike in immigration left the nascent Cuban labor movement weak and divided—the exact intention of local and foreign capital. Between 1898 and 1901, the total immigration into Cuba reached seventy thousand out of a total population of around 1.5 million. Of these, fifty-five thousand were Spaniards, and at least two thousand were Chinese, who continued to enter the island despite an official ban.<sup>867</sup> Between 1902 and 1906, an additional fifty thousand

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<sup>863</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Leg. 612, No. 10.

<sup>864</sup> Gillian McGillivray, *Blazing Cane: Sugar Communities, Class, and State Formation in Cuba, 1868-1959* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 31 and Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 146-147. In 1899, it was estimated that Blacks represented about 50 percent of the labor force on sugar plantations. In 1938 about 60 percent of the labor force devoted to cane cutting in the province of Matanzas was Black or mulatto. See also de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 107-108.

<sup>865</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 31, No 8.

<sup>866</sup> Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí*, 148.

<sup>867</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 78 and Lopez, *Chinese Cubans*, 4.

Spanish immigrants arrived in Cuba.<sup>868</sup> During those years, employers turned to foreigners to repress wages and break strikes, while the Cuban state reproduced these same divisions by targeting “foreign agitators” for repression.<sup>869</sup> By 1907, some five hundred and twenty-five thousand Cubans were entirely without work, including at least thirty five thousand veterans of the Liberation Army.<sup>870</sup>

For impoverished Afro-Cubans, the situation was bleak. In Matanzas, sugar mill mechanics and engineers who had previously earned between four and five dollars a day during the harvest were working for one dollar a day; cane cutters who had once made at least a dollar per day now earned thirty-six cents.<sup>871</sup> The professions—law, medicine, and commerce—were largely closed off to Black Cubans. In 1907, of 1,349 lawyers in the country, only four were Black, and of 1,243 doctors, just nine were Black.<sup>872</sup> In Havana, two-thirds of all sales personnel were white Spaniards.<sup>873</sup> Many Afro-Cubans became desperate to obtain salaried work through the state, but even here, they met with little success. Of 205 national government employees in 1907, only eleven were Black.<sup>874</sup> Those working for the state during these years found employment primarily as mailmen, janitors and street-cleaners, but remained excluded from jobs

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<sup>868</sup> Rafael Fermoselle, “Black Politics in Cuba: The Race War of 1912,” (PhD diss., American University, 1972), 29. For the total population, see *Report on the Census of Cuba, 1899* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900).

<sup>869</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, “Two Dangers, One Solution: Immigration, Race and Labor in Cuba, 1900-1930,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 51 (1997): 32-33.

<sup>870</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 89.

<sup>871</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 81, 89.

<sup>872</sup> Fermoselle, “Black Politics in Cuba,” 85, 86.

<sup>873</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 61.

<sup>874</sup> Fermoselle, *Black Politics in Cuba*, 85.

in the justice system, the higher bureaucracy, and the diplomatic service, where their numbers actually declined.<sup>875</sup> In the span of just a few years, it became clear: in the new Cuban Republic, there would be few ways for Black people to avoid lives of extreme precarity and dependency.

Even worse, the Black rural workforce was subject to increasing police brutality. During the first military occupation, Leonard Wood had organized the Rural Guard, designed to be an “apolitical, professional, national peace-keeping body.” The Guard—made up originally of more than three thousand soldiers—was almost exclusively white. Wood had also instructed his police chief in Havana that he wanted a “select group of men” for the city; all Black applicants were therefore eliminated.<sup>876</sup> For Black, especially rural, Cubans, the consequences of this racialized policing were extreme. Black civilians telegraphed complaints to their Congressional representatives, including Morúa Delgado, informing them of acts of violence.<sup>877</sup> In the town of San Luis, local rural guards attacked three workers with machetes during their commute home.<sup>878</sup> In another 1906 case in the western province of Pinar del Rio, rural police lynched a Black man in his jail cell.<sup>879</sup>

By 1906, then, the stakes of politics for Afro-Cubans could hardly have been higher. That year, when revolution broke out once more, Afro-Cubans joined in. The first Cuban President, Tomás Estrada Palma, was a Cuban revolutionary turned U.S. citizen who had governed for four years through a combination of violence and fraud. In 1905, his party entered more than one

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<sup>875</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 132.

<sup>876</sup> Duke, “The Idea of Race,” 100.

<sup>877</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 55, No 62.

<sup>878</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 19, No 89.

<sup>879</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 116, No. 9.

hundred and fifty thousand illegal votes to ensure his reelection. Less than a year later, the “Constitutional Army” emerged. By September, Cuban soldiers demanding the restoration of the Constitution, the expulsion of fraudulently elected members of Congress, and new, fair elections were waiting in massive numbers outside Havana, prepared to take the city by force.<sup>880</sup> Rather than surrender the capital city, President Estrada Palma called for a second U.S. intervention. On September 26, 1906, the new Secretary of War, William Taft, telegraphed President Theodore Roosevelt that military intervention was the only solution. U.S. soldiers again set sail to restore order in Cuba and to protect North American “life and property.”<sup>881</sup>

### III. The Birth of the Partido Independiente de Color

Looking out across the Atlantic World, Afro-Cubans at this moment understood their fate as profoundly linked to that of other formerly enslaved peoples. On October 7, 1905, Rafael Serra, a Black former revolutionary, politician, and newspaper editor living in Havana, published an article titled “About Elections.” Rather than focusing on the ongoing electoral contests in Cuba, the article looked instead to Kansas—in particular, to the struggles of Black freedwomen to vote. Serra was astonished by the mass movement for women’s suffrage that had sprung up across the United States in the early twentieth century. Calling it “marvelous,” he was still clear-sighted about the reactionary nature of the times. “Hate, the inevitable result of slavery,” he wrote, “poisons the debate.” Across the region, former slaveowning women, “*las dueñas*,” refused to tolerate the idea that “their washer, their cook, their former slave, could, at some point, do what they do.” At rallies, these white women railed against the “impure” white suffragette

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<sup>880</sup> Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí*, 181-187.

<sup>881</sup> Rafael Fermoselle, *Política y color en Cuba: la guerrita de 1912* (Montevideo: Ediciones Géminis, 1974), 76-79.

leaders who would consider aligning politically with Black women. Moreover, counterrevolutionary violence and political exclusion had already forced these Black families to abandon their homes in the U.S. South; once in Kansas, the “Exodusters” confronted what Serra considered a false choice. They could vote for Republicans, the party of imperial intervention, who only “*appeared* as their emancipators,” or for the Democrats, the party of “their former owners.” As he watched a violent, fraudulent presidential election unfold in Cuba in the fall of 1905, this sense of false choices may have hit Serra particularly hard. He chose to print the Kansas article as part of a column dedicated to the legacy of José Martí—the Cuban national martyr who had lost his life fighting for his vision of a raceless *cubanidad*.<sup>882</sup>

Serra had witnessed white supremacist violence in the United States firsthand. He was a cigar-maker by trade. He had lived in Key West from 1880 to 1884 and in New York City from 1884 to 1902. In both places, Serra was an active member of the Black community, which included Afro-Cubans and African Americans. In Key West he joined the Board of Directors of the San Carlos Club, a mutual aid society which helped Black families survive Southern redemption.<sup>883</sup> In New York, he became a U.S. citizen and founding member of the *Clube-Cubano Republicano*, which organized Afro-Cuban workers to vote for Republicans.<sup>884</sup> Throughout his time in the United States, he lived in segregated housing alongside neighbors who had participated in the Free Cuba campaign during U.S. Reconstruction.<sup>885</sup> Serra, like other Afro-Cuban revolutionaries, wrote continuously about his experiences of white supremacy in the

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<sup>882</sup> “Rasgos de José Martí, sobre elecciones,” *El Nuevo Criollo*, October 7, 1905.

<sup>883</sup> Lisandro Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

<sup>884</sup> *La Fraternidad*, 20 Nov. 1888.

<sup>885</sup> Hoffnung-Garskoff, *Racial Migrations*, 108-111, 132.

United States. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, he and his comrade Juan Bonilla—another Afro-Cuban cigar maker—published a column called “*Cartas Americanas*” in the Havana-based newspaper, *La Igualdad*. Together, they used this platform to denounce the reign of white supremacist terror unfolding in the Southern United States. In 1893, Bonilla met with Ida B. Wells, who had just begun her famous crusade against lynching.<sup>886</sup>

Serra and Bonilla wanted the Cuban Republic to be different than the United States. For this reason, they helped develop the ideology of racial fraternity, which originated in New York City. In 1890, Serra co-founded a Cuban revolutionary organization called *La Liga* (The League), which aimed to “harmonize all the races and all the social classes, beneath the sacred maxim of fraternity.” The League operated out of the first floor of a house on West Third Street in Greenwich Village. Under Serra’s leadership, it became a major site of interracial Cuban political organizing. José Martí was a speaker at its inaugural ceremony. Ultimately, the Afro-Cuban members of *La Liga* helped persuade Martí to embrace the ideology of racial fraternity.<sup>887</sup> Their actions helped ensure the triumph of universal manhood suffrage during the Constitutional Convention of 1900.

But after returning to Havana, Serra began to doubt the success of the Cuban experiment in interracial democracy. In 1904, he published a short book of essays, *Para blancos y negros*, critiquing the new Cuban Republic. In it, he compared the lives of Afro-Cubans and African

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<sup>886</sup> “Otra vez Mr. Call,” *La Igualdad*, 14 Feb. 1893; “Sombras y luces,” *La Igualdad*, 28 Sept. 1893; “Cartas americanas,” *La Igualdad*, 13. Oct 1894.

<sup>887</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 134-166 and “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 20-21, 25. See also Vanesa K. Valdés, *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017) and Frank Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 14-53.

Americans. For the most part, he concluded that African Americans were better off.<sup>888</sup> Serra believed that “there is no example in the history of emancipation” in which former slaves faced “more unfavorable circumstances” than in the United States. “The Black American,” he went on, was made “suddenly free, ignorant, poor, without help, and without a piece of land.”<sup>889</sup> But despite being “forced into an unequal struggle to fulfill his human rights...the progress of the Black American in arts, science, industry, and wealth [has been] astonishing.” Serra estimated that by 1870 more than eight million African Americans had learned how to read. By 1900, these men and women had founded more than two hundred newspapers across the United States. More than “twenty-five thousand African Americans have become schoolteachers,” he pointed out. Hundreds more were working as lawyers and doctors.<sup>890</sup> These statistics convinced Serra that it was more difficult for Black men and women to climb the professional ladder in Cuba. In 1905, he complained that no Black man had yet served as a Cuban diplomat—a role that had been held by a number of African American men, including Frederick Douglass, in the United States.<sup>891</sup>

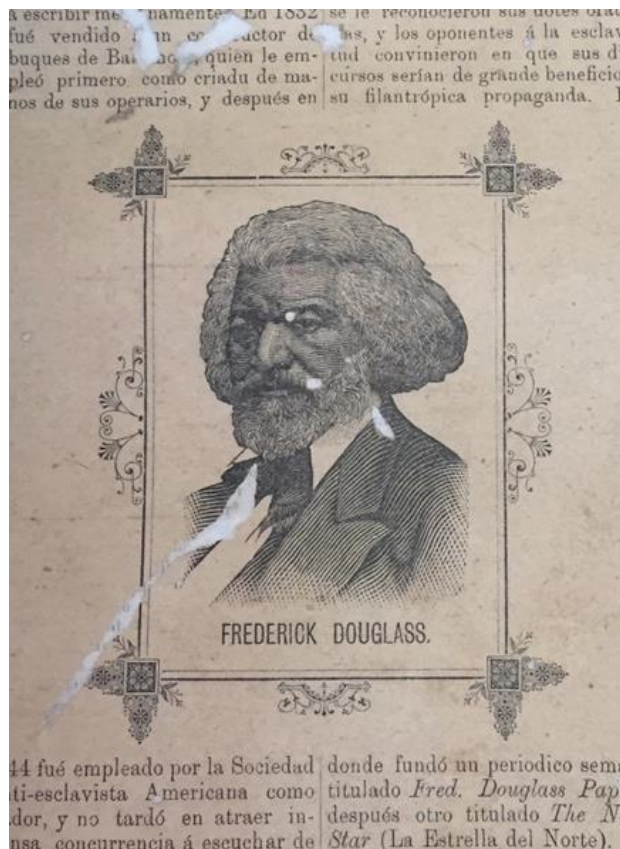
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<sup>888</sup> For Serra’s analysis of lynching and racial terror in the United States, see *El Nuevo Criollo*, 31 Dec. 1904; 9. Sept 1905; and 21 Oct. 1905.

<sup>889</sup> Serra had long been a student of the comparative history of emancipation. For his first essay on the subject, see “Aclaraciones necesarias,” *La Igualdad*, 6 Mar. 1893.

<sup>890</sup> Rafael Serra, *Para blancos y negros: ensayos politicos, sociales y económicos* (Havana: El Score, 1904), 178-197.

<sup>891</sup> “Notas Americanas,” *El Nuevo Criollo*, 30 Sept. 1905.



8. Rafael Serra admired Frederick Douglass as both an abolitionist and a statesman. He published this front-page article in *La Fraternidad* after Douglass was appointed as U.S. ambassador to Haiti in 1888.

At the same time, Serra was frightened that the U.S. government would soon strip Afro-Cubans of the right to vote. The new U.S. Provisional Government, once installed, wasted no time in drawing up a new Commission to rewrite Cuba's electoral laws. On January 12, 1907, the occupier Colonel E. H. Crowder wrote to the U.S. Secretary of War regarding his plans to roll back universal male suffrage in Cuba. He suggested that while the majority of the Cubans on the new electoral Board opposed "plurality voting," understanding it to infringe "Art. 38 of the Constitution, which they interpret as establishing equality of voters," he suspected they would consider implementing a form of restrictive proportional representation instead. Moreover, he had managed to install several conservatives to the new Board, who supported the imposition of

educational or property qualifications in national elections, and only wanted to leave “unrestricted suffrage to govern in provincial and municipal” contests. Crowder concluded his letter with a final inquiry: the Commission, he suspected, “will probably want to know whether they are to proceed in their work of drafting laws under [Cuban] Constitutional limitations, or are they at liberty to disregard those limitations.”<sup>892</sup> In other words, in 1907, it was unclear whether the U.S. occupying forces would be bound by the Cuban Constitution, which they had found so objectionable just five years earlier.

It was at this precise moment that Black Cubans began to mobilize. The movement began in the countryside. As early as October of 1906, a self-described “man of order” wrote to the U.S. Provisional Governor, Charles E. Magoon, warning him that armed groups of Black men carrying machetes and revolvers were roaming the countryside around Havana. These men, he added, saw “every police officer, every agent of authority” as “an enemy or a tyrant.”<sup>893</sup> By the middle of 1907, similar reports were reaching the headquarters of the U.S. Provisional Government from across the island. In August of 1907, Magoon got wind of a manifesto circulating among “the citizens of color” in the province of Camagüey, which declared that “in the moments of danger for Freedom, in every critical circumstance, the colored race” has been “the bronze hand that breaks the chains of oppression,” yet in Cuba, these same men were always the last to enjoy the fruits of that struggle. Now, the colored citizens of Camagüey declared, was the time to fight “for the triumph of true democracy” in Cuba.<sup>894</sup> The next month, U.S. officer John W. Furlong reported that a similar meeting had taken place in Lajas, in the Province of

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<sup>892</sup> NARA, RG 350, Box 156. File 1011, 12 Jan. 1907, Colonel E. H. Crowder to the Secretary of War.

<sup>893</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 115, No 80.

<sup>894</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 7, File 159, Manifiesto al Pueblo Cubano y a los Ciudadanos de Color.

Santa Clara, with Blacks demanding “equal political rights.” He noted “that the organization referred to is in some respect a military one there is no doubt.”<sup>895</sup> The officer W. D. Beach witnessed similar activities in the towns of Cienfuegos, Palmira, Cruses, Ranchuelo, Esperanza, Santo Domingo, and across the province of Santa Clara. As far as he could discern, the purpose of the “movement at present is to secure the election of as many negroes as possible” in upcoming elections.<sup>896</sup> Still, U.S. occupiers remained concerned that such a “movement” could quickly turn violent. In February of 1908, Magoon received a confidential memo that there was talk among Black Cuban “conspirators” that “the people from Hayti would help the Cuban negroes to uprise [sic], demanding the same rights as the whites...[against] a common enemy, the Americans.”<sup>897</sup>

Gradually, the movement began to consolidate around one figure: Evaristo Estenoz, a Black former labor leader and veteran officer of the Cuban Liberation Army, living at that time in Havana. On August 3, 1907, the chief of Havana’s secret police, José Jerez Varona, first reported to the U.S. Provisional Government that General Evaristo Estenoz was known to be conspiring with Black leaders across the island, including a stevedore in Matanzas, a bricklayer in Sagua la Grande, and a jail warden in Pinar del Rio.<sup>898</sup> A few days later, Estenoz was overheard saying in a meeting that “if what they asked for...was not given to them, they would take it, preferring to live killing off their oppressors rather than by begging.”<sup>899</sup> Over the course

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<sup>895</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 1, File 14-17, 13 Sept. 1907, John W. Furlong to the Chief of Staff.

<sup>896</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 1, 16 Sept. 1907, W.D. Beach, Confidential Report No 15.

<sup>897</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 10, File 221-11, 19 Feb. 1908, Confidential Report. Havana.

<sup>898</sup> NARA, RG 350, 3 Aug. 1907, José Jerez Varona to Major F. Foltz, Aide to the Provisional Governor.

<sup>899</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 7, File 159, 5 Aug. 1907, Translation of letter referring to meeting of August 4 at San Juan y Martinez, Pinar del Rio Province.

of the next year, Estenoz began to congregate meetings at his home on Calle Amargura. The U.S. government continued to spy on him: in September of 1908, Captain John W. Furlong reported to U.S. Military Headquarters that “the negroes under the leadership of Estenoz are meeting every night at his house to select candidates for Senator and Representatives.” Another Captain, John W. Wright, added that “there are no intelligent or educated negroes in these gatherings.”<sup>900</sup> The one positive, as they saw it, was that “the appearance of this split between the two races has made the Platt Amendment a little more popular with the white Cubans than it has been heretofore.”<sup>901</sup>

The group of roughly two hundred Black men meeting in Estenoz’s home intended to take the central concerns of poor Afro-Cubans into the arena of electoral politics. As one supporter put it, in Cuba, whites “continue exploiting us like our fathers...but we, who remain the descendants of these poor victims, are not, and cannot be slaves as they were.”<sup>902</sup> Now, Estenoz declared, “the Black race has the right to intervene in the government of his country.”<sup>903</sup> On September 18, 1908, the *Partido Independiente de Color* sent a petition to the Electoral Commission of the Provisional Government, asking for recognition as a political party “in all the Republic.”<sup>904</sup>

That same day, the *independientes* began publishing the newspaper *Previsión* to amplify their claims across the island. Among the organizers’ first demands was access to salaried public

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<sup>900</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 9, File 203-59, Wright, 18 May 1908, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff.

<sup>901</sup> NARA, RG 199, Box 9, File 203-95, 25 Sept. 1908, Furlong, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff.

<sup>902</sup> “La Republica y los Cubanos de Color,” *Previsión*, 15 Sept. 1908.

<sup>903</sup> “Nuestra Acta,” *Previsión*, 15 Sept. 1908.

<sup>904</sup> “El Primer Acto Ser Realizado por la raza de color en Cuba,” *Previsión*, 15 Sept. 1908.

jobs for Black Cubans. In their party program, published for the first time on October 16, 1908, the PIC demanded “the free and fair admission of Cuban colored citizens into the military service [and] government and judicial administrations, so that all races are represented in the services of the state.”<sup>905</sup> In their petition to the U.S. Provisional Government, they elaborated on this point, stating, “the end which we have in view is to satisfy the necessities of many thousands of Cubans systematically excluded from all participation in the affairs of our country and who are victimized and known by the name of the ‘colored race.’”<sup>906</sup> Several historians have pointed to these demands for access to the public payroll as evidence that the PIC represented a relatively elite sector of the Afro-Cuban population, who were primarily concerned with their unjust exclusion from Black patronage networks.<sup>907</sup> More likely, these demands resonated broadly among impoverished Afro-Cubans. After all, as historian Louis Pérez has pointed out, few jobs outside of the public sector paid a living wage in the early Cuban Republic.<sup>908</sup>

In a variety of ways, the PIC sought to transform the lives of Afro-Cuban wage laborers. They advocated an eight-hour workday, integrated public schooling, and an end to subsidized white immigration on the island.<sup>909</sup> In *Previsión*, they argued that as long as “poor people and people of color” were barred from higher learning “by the rich and the traitors to our democracy,” they would remain “enslaved...to the ordeal of the factory.”<sup>910</sup> They viewed the

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<sup>905</sup> “Programa,” *Previsión*, 16 Oct. 1908.

<sup>906</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 22, No 33. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>907</sup> Orum, “The Politics of Color,” 157; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 229.

<sup>908</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 90-94.

<sup>909</sup> “Programa,” *Previsión*, 16 Oct. 1908.

<sup>910</sup> “Hacia Atrás. ¿Qué hace el Congreso?” *Previsión*, 10 Dec. 1909.

state-subsidized importation of white contract laborers as a further attack on Black wage laborers. In 1909, they lampooned the Cuban government for importing ten thousand white workers from the Canary Islands, for no other reason than to make the country “rich in white inhabitants” and “the whites rich with cheap production.” Meanwhile, Black, working-class Cubans were left unable to compete.<sup>911</sup>

Yet—at the heart of their program—was a claim to the land. From the very beginning, the PIC demanded “the distribution of state-owned lands...among native Cubans who lack resources and want to dedicate themselves to agriculture.”<sup>912</sup> They blamed the white Cuban political class for selling the land out from under their feet. After one *Ayuntamiento* sold more than three thousand *caballerías* in Moa, a town in the Oriente, they wrote, “more than once we have seen it written: *the land is leaving us*, but this time we can say without erring that *they are taking the land from us*.”<sup>913</sup> The east belonged to Cuban freedpeople. The Oriente, they wrote, was more “than eighty percent Black,” but now “they tell us...that those lands are American property.” The same claim was repeated dozens of times in *Previsión*. Throughout 1909 and 1910, the *independientes* continued to compare Black dispossession to a “national pillage”—to an act of continuous “assault” on Afro-Cuban people.<sup>914</sup> More than anything else, they asserted, “the scandalous robbery of so many Black lands from one end of the island to the other merits...the contempt of this generation and every subsequent one.”<sup>915</sup>

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<sup>911</sup> “Como llegan, como nos empujan,” *Previsión*, 15 Dec. 1909.

<sup>912</sup> “Programa,” *Previsión*, 16 Oct. 1908.

<sup>913</sup> “La Gran Tierra de Moa,” *Previsión*, 25 Nov. 1909.

<sup>914</sup> “Cinematógrafo Cubano,” *Previsión*, 30 Nov. 1909. For other articles touching on the same theme, see: “Aspecto Científico de la Política Cubana,” 30 Jan. 1910; “24 de Febrero,” 25 Feb. 1910.

<sup>915</sup> “Linchamiento Moral,” *Previsión*, 25 Nov. 1909.

The *independientes* understood the violence and precarity that defined their lives in the Cuban countryside as part of a shared experience among former slaves in the Atlantic World. In 1910, Evaristo Estenoz published a short work titled *The Lynchings in America: Moral and Material Lynchings in Cuba and the United States*.<sup>916</sup> Through the concept of “moral lynching,” Estenoz and the *independientes* explored the relationship between the racial terror unfolding in the U.S. South and the Black experiences of land expropriation and police brutality in rural Cuba. More than half a dozen articles on “moral lynchings” appeared in *Previsión* between 1908 and 1910. In one, the *independientes* denounced the murder of a Black sugar cane worker in Matanzas; he was shot by a rural guard simply for being a “Black man with a machete.”<sup>917</sup> In another, the writers described the removal of Black people from the land as “another class of death,” which, if not “so spectacular” as a public lynching, was no less “cruel and inhuman.”<sup>918</sup> The writers of *Previsión* also pointed to the connection between the literacy requirements imposed in the Brazilian Constitution of 1891 and the efforts of racist demagogues like Ben Tillman to spread the same white supremacist politics across the U.S. South.<sup>919</sup> The *independientes* openly feared that this “natural movement of ideas” would soon reach Cuba, too.<sup>920</sup>

On this basis, the PIC sought to build connections outward, across the Atlantic World. In 1904, Estenoz and Rafael Serra travelled to New York together, almost certainly aiming to raise

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<sup>916</sup> “Bibliografía,” *Previsión*, 30 Mar. 1910.

<sup>917</sup> “Muerto de un tiro en Empalme, Matanzas, 15 Febrero,” *Previsión*, 25 Feb. 1910.

<sup>918</sup> “Linchamiento Moral,” *Previsión*, 25 Nov. 1909.

<sup>919</sup> “Aspecto científico de la política cubana,” *Previsión*, 5 Feb. 1910.

<sup>920</sup> “Eliminando al Negro,” *Previsión*, 5 Jan. 1910.

funds among wealthy Harlemites.<sup>921</sup> Serra made a second trip on his own a year later.<sup>922</sup> Estenoz made a third trip in 1909. After that journey, he began promising financial support from African American middle class to the members of the PIC.<sup>923</sup> The following year, he hosted a group of African American political organizers in Havana.<sup>924</sup> Then, in 1911, he became a corresponding member of the “Negro Society for Historical Research,” which was founded by his personal friend, Arturo Schomburg, and eventually became the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York. Estenoz and Schomburg corresponded regularly. Estenoz even published an article by Schomburg about the history of slave revolts in the West Indies in *Previsión*.<sup>925</sup> Schomburg, in turn, documented the activities of the PIC in the African American magazine, *The Crisis*.<sup>926</sup>

In 1908, the U.S. Provisional Government authorized the PIC to participate in fall elections, assuming they would fail. On October 9, 1908, Charles Magoon wrote to the Secretary of War to explain his rationale. “I am quite sure,” he predicted, “the showing made by this party will be so small that it will allay, for years to come, the fear of a Black Republic in Cuba.”<sup>927</sup> And at first, he seemed correct. The PIC’s performance in the 1908 elections was nothing short of catastrophic. No *independiente* candidates were elected to office. In Havana, the PIC

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<sup>921</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg,” 20.

<sup>922</sup> “Bienvenida,” *El Nuevo Criollo*, 23 Sept. 1905.

<sup>923</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg,” 20.

<sup>924</sup> “Agradable visita,” *Previsión*, 25 Jan. 1910.

<sup>925</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg,” 25.

<sup>926</sup> “General Evaristo Estenoz,” *The Crisis*, July 1912, 143-144.

<sup>927</sup> NARA, RG 350, Box 167, File 1077, 9 Oct. 1908, Magoon to Wright.

candidate with the largest number of votes was Agapito Rodríguez—he got 116. By contrast, each liberal candidate in the province received more than forty-seven thousand.<sup>928</sup>

Yet, the *independientes* had achieved at least one significant victory. Under the new Cuban electoral law, they were now authorized to participate in every future electoral contest.<sup>929</sup> And after just ten weeks of organizing, these men were not inclined to give up. As one supporter, Porfirio Morgado, wrote in 1909, “I see clearly along a distant horizon, our possible emancipation from bondage...I call for an order without hate, without prejudice for anyone or towards anyone. I call to my Black brothers, to those who have been called *incapable*,” to fight “for a new life, which reason lays out before us and which proves the justice of our cause.” “Negros,” he implored, “now is the time.”<sup>930</sup>

#### IV. Building Power in Rural Cuba

Less than a year later, the Black organizer and former Lieutenant Enrique Fournior wrote to the editors of *Previsión* from his home in Santiago de Cuba. The PIC’s campaign in the Oriente, he assured them, was going well. In November, the Black residents of the town Alto Songo had organized two new chapters of the PIC. In both cases, veteran leaders of the Liberation Army had agreed to serve as president. “The neighborhood of Alto Songo is all ours,” Fournior concluded, and the towns of Palma Soriano, Cristo, and the province of Guantánamo were going much the same way. Across the region, “the famous veterans of *La Maya*” were organizing large parties and huge meetings, and “in every town in this province, delegations and women’s committees are being organized.” Still, Fournior cautioned the *independiente* editors

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<sup>928</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 70.

<sup>929</sup> Robaina, *El Negro en Cuba*, 75.

<sup>930</sup> ANC, Fondo Especial de Periodicos, Leg. 4, No. 716 (antiguo 123).

against complacency. He advised them to begin publishing the PIC's program and political organization in every issue of *Previsión*, as "our adversaries are attempting to make the men who live in the countryside and the small villages in the interior believe that we lack both things."<sup>931</sup> The newspaper's editors took this advice into account. From then on, the complete platform of the PIC, including the party's demands for land redistribution, appeared in every issue.

Fournior's request was part of a broader effort among the organizers of the PIC to build support among Black workers in the Cuban countryside. Beginning in 1909, the PIC used *Previsión* to publicize and amplify the political grievances of this impoverished rural sector. On October 20, 1909, the editors published an "open letter to the Secretary of the Hacienda" signed by more than three hundred residents of the eastern town of Palma Soriano. According to the petitioners, the Secretary had violated their rights by granting new settlers' legal possession of lands surrounding the town. The Secretary's arbitrary decision flouted decades of "unequivocal proof" of Black land ownership, ranging from records drawn up by the U.S. Military Government in 1900 to a survey carried out by a Spanish engineer in July of 1891, which had been published in the *Official Bulletin* of the Spanish colonial government. The three hundred farmers who had signed the petition threatened to "abandon our nationality in search of another environment where our rights are respected." In their view, control over local land was a political right, not a "gift" to be given or taken away by the Cuban state.<sup>932</sup>

Black rural citizens also turned to *Previsión* to protest arbitrary imprisonment and police violence. In 1909, the PIC published another open letter, this time "to the people of Cuba and to our comrades." In the first weeks of December, the police and rural guard in the town of Güines

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<sup>931</sup> "Desde Oriente," *Previsión*, 30 Dec. 1909.

<sup>932</sup> "Carta Abierta Al Honorable Secretario de Hacienda," *Previsión*, 20 Oct. 1909.

had attacked a group of three hundred Black men who had assembled peacefully to organize a new chapter of the PIC. The police, “proceeding violently,” had arrested and detained a number of *independientes*, in clear violation of their constitutional rights.<sup>933</sup> Less than a month later, the editors of *Previsión* published another letter documenting arbitrary imprisonment. Writing “from the jailhouse” in Consolación del Sur, a Black man named Julian Hernández accused the local police of arresting him after a *bodega* owner shot at him while he tried to buy cigarettes. The storeowner and the chief of police, Hernández had discovered, were friends; as a result, he had been denied *habeus corpus* and held in prison for more than three months. Hernández concluded, “I think that justice doesn’t exist for Black people in Cuba, based on what has happened to me. My friend Faustino Milian, an honorable man and father of a family, has also been reduced to prison.”<sup>934</sup> The PIC, he hoped, might be able to help.

Gradually, the *independientes*’ campaign began to resonate in the Cuban countryside. The effect was especially profound in small towns in the Oriente, like Baracoa and San Luis. Since 1907, the residents of Baracoa had been petitioning the state to demand control of local lands. In June of that year, thirty-five *vecinos* from Baracoa had sent a letter to the U.S. Provisional Governor, asking him to cede them formal control of one hundred *caballerías* of land in the region called Moa (also located along the northern coast of the Oriente). They promised to use this land to grow plantains, coffee and cocoa for export to the United States.<sup>935</sup> Instead, as *Previsión* reported in 1909, three thousand *caballerías* in Moa were sold off to a

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<sup>933</sup> “Al pueblo de Cuba y a nuestros correligionarios,” *Previsión*, 25 Dec. 1909.

<sup>934</sup> “Linchamiento Moral. De Consolación del Sur. Desde la Carcel,” *Previsión*, 15 Jan. 1910.

<sup>935</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 64, No 17.

North American company for twenty seven thousand pesos.<sup>936</sup> The residents of Baracoa organized a chapter of the *Partido Independiente de Color* the following winter.<sup>937</sup> Similarly, in January of 1910, *Previsión* published a petition signed by one hundred and eighty residents of San Luis demanding control of the lands surrounding their town and criticizing the Cuban state for selling them off to “bosses.”<sup>938</sup> Two months later, Afro-Cubans living in San Luis organized another new chapter of the *Partido Independiente de Color*.<sup>939</sup> Throughout the early months of 1910, numerous towns in the Oriente followed suit, including La Maya, Alto Songo, and Guantánamo.<sup>940</sup>

The President of the PIC, Evaristo Estenoz, also travelled to the region to build deeper support. On January 17, 1910, he arrived in Santiago de Cuba, where he held a party to celebrate the organization of a new chapter in the Oriente’s largest city.<sup>941</sup> Three days later, he left for Guantánamo, where he spent the following month holding large rallies for Afro-Cuban citizens.<sup>942</sup> He also visited smaller rural villages, including San Luis, where hundreds of Black men on horses—important symbols of Black autonomy, and the mascot of the party—came out

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<sup>936</sup> “La Gran Tierra de Moa,” *Previsión*, 25 Nov. 1909.

<sup>937</sup> “Ecos de Baracoa,” *Previsión*, 30 Jan. 1910.

<sup>938</sup> “El Gobierno Niega sus Propiedades para favorecer Caciques,” *Previsión*, 30 Jan. 1910.

<sup>939</sup> “San Luis (Oriente) Acta de Constitución,” *Previsión*, 20 March 1910.

<sup>940</sup> “Organización y reorganización de nuestros nucleos políticos,” *Previsión*, 5 Jan. 1910.

<sup>941</sup> “Constitución de la Asamblea municipal de Santiago de Cuba,” *Previsión*, 20 Jan. 1910.

<sup>942</sup> “De Guantánamo, Lucharemos,” *Previsión*, January 25, 1910, and “Fiesta Política en Guantánamo. Reorganización del Barrio Glorieta. Triunfo del Partido Independiente de Color en Guantánamo. Entusiasmo asombroso. Vivas a Estenoz y Lacoste. Fracaso Miguelista. Los Cores Muertos,” *Previsión*, 20 Feb. 1910.

to greet him. From Havana, *Previsión* documented his “splendid reception” across the east.<sup>943</sup> By March of 1910, the party had more than one hundred chapters organized across the island, of which close to thirty were located in the Oriente.<sup>944</sup>

By early spring, the Black political meetings in the Oriente had become so widespread that they began to worry the political elite in Havana. On February 6, 1910, the Havana-based newspaper *La Lucha* reported that the “Partido Independiente de Color is holding frequent meetings. Last night, they held one in which tumultuous speeches were delivered.” This rally had then turned into “a protest with music” that “ran through the streets.”<sup>945</sup> The white president of the Conservative Party, Enrique Varona, observed these developments with concern. The success of the PIC, he confessed to a friend, was a “grave fact, which deserves all of our attention.” He had once been certain that the Black political party was doomed to failure. Such an organization demanded “a greater level of culture than Blacks have yet achieved, and the denial of political rights, of which they cannot complain.” Now, however, he was persuaded that it was time to act—the Cuban political class had to “counteract” the rising Black freedom movement. In his view, the best way “to impede and thwart” the rapid expansion of the PIC was to prove that “the control that whites have” over the Cuban political system “is exercised for the good of all.”<sup>946</sup>

## V. The Turn to Violence

It was clear by the spring of 1910 that the PIC posed a dual threat to white Cuban elites.

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<sup>943</sup> “El General Estenoz en Oriente,” *Previsión*, 30 March 1910.

<sup>944</sup> “Directorio General de las Sociedades de Color de la Isla,” 5 March 1910. See also Ricardo Rey Herrera, *Guantánamo en el vortices de los independientes de color* (Guantanamo: Editorial El Mar y la Montaña, 2007), 105.

<sup>945</sup> “Robo Importante en Guantánamo. El Partido Independiente de Color (por telégrafo),” *La Lucha*, 6 Feb. 1910.

<sup>946</sup> ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Leg. 452, No. 11.

Since 1908, the Liberal Party under the leadership of President José Miguel Gómez had controlled the Cuban government. With congressional elections approaching in 1910, maintaining Liberal dominance required the support of Black voters. Afro-Cubans accounted for 30 percent of total electorate, and for the first time, the PIC appeared poised to undercut Liberal rule.<sup>947</sup> Even worse, the PIC's program threatened U.S. property on the island. As the liberal newspaper *La Lucha* reported in the spring of 1910, the "State and War Departments" were "said to be keeping an eye" on Cuba. Evaristo Estenoz, the paper repeatedly insisted, was no revolutionary, and his followers "detest revolution."<sup>948</sup>

In February, President Gómez took action. On February 6, 1910, the Gómez administration accused Estenoz of using *Previsión* to incite a violent conspiracy and ordered his arrest.<sup>949</sup> By this point, Estenoz had personally attacked Gómez for selling lands in eastern Cuba; for forgoing control of the Arsenal in Havana; for subsidizing foreign-owned railroads; and for tolerating land appropriation by the Havana Railway Company.<sup>950</sup> That day, he was condemned to sixty days in prison. Five days later, his sentence was doubled.

At the same moment, Senator Martín Morúa Delgado proposed an amendment to the Cuban electoral law that banned all political parties organized on the basis of race.<sup>951</sup> As a leading Black politician in the Liberal Party, Delgado would benefit directly from the legal

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<sup>947</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 71.

<sup>948</sup> "Noticias Frescas," and "State and War Departments Said to be Keeping an Eye on Island. Studying News Reports." *La Lucha*, April 22, 1910.

<sup>949</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 55-60.

<sup>950</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 55.

<sup>951</sup> Robaina, *El Negro en Cuba, 1902-1958*, 71.

destruction of the PIC.<sup>952</sup> Yet, his proposal was not purely strategic. For almost his entire life, Delgado had been a committed Cuban revolutionary. In 1880, after Cuban insurgents lost the second war for independence, he fled the island to go into exile in the United States.<sup>953</sup> For the next twenty years, he labored for Cuban independence from abroad, until 1902, when he returned to the island to serve in the Constitutional Convention as one of the nation's only Black delegates.<sup>954</sup> As a young man, he had drawn inspiration from the first African American Congressmen to serve in the U.S. Congress.<sup>955</sup> Now, approaching sixty, he was acutely aware of their removal from the legislature following the rise of Jim Crow. As a result, he remained a fervent believer in the legacy of José Martí's raceless *cubanidad*. On the floor of the Cuban Congress in 1910, he argued that if the PIC endured, the organization of an all-white political party would follow.<sup>956</sup> Destroying the hemisphere's first all-Black political party was, in his view, ultimately essential to preserving Black political inclusion in the nascent Cuban Republic.

Despite Delgado's intentions, many white Cuban Congressmen embraced the amendment as a way to secure the legal exclusion of revolutionary former slaves from democratic politics. As one white Representative argued, the existence of the PIC had brought Cuba "to the brink of civil war." Scenes "that history has shown us before, most painfully in Santo Domingo," threatened to destroy Cuba once again. This time, with the United States prepared to intervene,

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<sup>952</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 93.

<sup>953</sup> Pedro Deschamps-Chapeaux, *Rafael Serra y Montalvo, obrero incansable de nuestra independencia* (Havana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1975), 41.

<sup>954</sup> Robaina, *El Negro en Cuba, 1902-1958*, 71.

<sup>955</sup> On Morúa's political activities during the 1880s, see: "Frederick Douglass," *La Fraternidad*, 21 Feb. 1889; "Martín Morúa Delgado," 12 Dec. 1889. See also *El Pueblo Morúa*, 21 Mar. 1880; 2 May 1880; 20 June 1880.

<sup>956</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 72-73.

such a war would bring about “the loss of our Republic” and even “the loss of our nationality.”<sup>957</sup> The PIC, in his view, had to be eliminated.

Across the island, *independientes* mobilized in opposition. Throughout February, the PIC launched protests demanding freedom for Evaristo Estenoz.<sup>958</sup> Gómez released him only after the Morúa law had passed the Senate. Once freed, he immediately travelled to the Oriente, where he began to organize Black political opposition to the law.<sup>959</sup> As he moved, rumors of an armed rebellion began to circulate. On April 20, 1910, newspapers in Havana received word from Santiago de Cuba that local authorities were investigating the possibility of a violent uprising propagated by “agents of the racist group.” So far, they assured readers, “tranquility is complete—the rumors of an altercation have not been confirmed.”<sup>960</sup>

These rumors put the U.S. government on high alert. That spring, the U.S. Ambassador, John Jackson, considered an “immediate disturbance of a serious character” unlikely.<sup>961</sup> Nevertheless, he continued to monitor the situation closely. On April 20, he informed the U.S. Secretary of State that President Gómez had deployed several garrisons of soldiers to Santiago de Cuba “in view of the uneasiness felt by the whites in certain parts of the Province.” He added that the “negro agitator Evaristo Estenoz has recently been making inflammatory speeches in the

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<sup>957</sup> *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de la República de Cuba*, Vol XIII, No. 14, 6 - 15.

<sup>958</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 95, No 64.

<sup>959</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524. Roll 5, 13 April 1910, Marquez to Taft.

<sup>960</sup> “La Alarma en las Villas. Informe de nuestros corresponsales—la tranquilidad es completa—los rumores de alteración del orden no se han confirmado,” *La Lucha*, 21 April 1910.

<sup>961</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524. Roll 5, John B. Jackson to Secretary of State, 22 April 1910.

Eastern part of Cuba, and many fear that the race question may soon be active.”<sup>962</sup> He warned the U.S. government that April was an especially dangerous time in the Cuban countryside, as “when the crop is over there are many idle persons left in the country districts with practically no means of support.” Naturally, “the majority of those are improvident negroes.”<sup>963</sup>

For the Cuban political elite, it was therefore essential to contain unrest in the countryside while securing the legal destruction of the *Partido Independiente de Color*. As Cuban Congressmen worked to push through the Morúa law, the Gómez administration moved to repress rural protestors. On April 23, 1910, Gómez ordered the arrest of Estenoz for the second time. He and nearly sixty other leaders of the PIC were rounded up and imprisoned with bail set at between three thousand and ten thousand dollars.<sup>964</sup> The same day, armed forces were sent to the Oriente. On April 23, two companies of the Cuban permanent army arrived in Santiago de Cuba. Two days later, the local *independiente* leaders, including Pedro Ivonet, Gregorio Surin, and Enrique Fournier, were taken into custody by the rural guard. Next, two hundred soldiers arrived in the PIC-strongholds of San Luis, Cristo, Alto Songo and La Maya. Black families fled the region, fearing for their safety.<sup>965</sup> On May 18, 1910, the Morúa Amendment was signed into law. North American capitalists like Atkins were pleased. “The negroes [in Cuba] have been

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<sup>962</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524, Roll 5, Jackson to Secretary of State, 20 April 1910.

<sup>963</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524, Roll 5, April 26 1910, John B. Jackson to Secretary of State.

<sup>964</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 125.

<sup>965</sup> “La Cuestión Palpitante,” *La Lucha*, 26 April 1910.

given too many privileges,” he declared.<sup>966</sup> Now, he hoped the movement would “die out.”<sup>967</sup>

For the next year, the destruction of the PIC seemed assured. The legal ban divided the *independientes*. In prison, some PIC leaders insisted that it was time to abandon the party.<sup>968</sup> Outside, in the Oriente, supporters continued to demand the right to participate in the upcoming congressional elections. Their efforts failed. That fall, the Liberal party easily triumphed. On November 4, the U.S. ambassador reported that the elections had unfolded peacefully, although “many negroes are said to have abstained from voting.”<sup>969</sup> After the voting ended, the leaders of the PIC were released from prison. In January of 1911, the Cuban Supreme Court ruled that the Morua law was constitutional.<sup>970</sup>

The following summer, the Liberal Party pushed through another whitening law. In January of 1911, a white Congressman put forward a bill to reserve fifteen thousand *caballerías* of public land for white settlers from the Canary Islands. Ideally, these workers would divide their time between farm production and seasonal labor on nearby sugar mills. The Congressman predicted that the project would improve “the culture, prosperity, and happiness” of the region.<sup>971</sup> On June 23, 1911, the Cuban Congress appropriated \$300,000 to settle these “desirable migrant families” on Cuban lands.<sup>972</sup>

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<sup>966</sup> MHS, Edwin Atkins Family Papers, Letterbooks, Volume II, 8 June 1912, Edwin Atkins to J. T. Witherspoon.

<sup>967</sup> MHS, Edwin Atkins Family Papers, Letterbooks, Volume II, 8 June 1912, Edwin Atkins to J. T. Witherspoon.

<sup>968</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 131.

<sup>969</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524. Roll 5, Jackson to the Secretary of State, 4 Nov. 1910.

<sup>970</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microfilm 837.00 / 357-524. Roll 5, Jackson to the Secretary of State, 26 Jan. 1911.

<sup>971</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 48, No 32.

<sup>972</sup> Lopez, *Chinese Cubans*, 154.

These policies, however, were not without consequences. In the final months of 1911, Liberation Army veterans, led by Afro-Cubans in the east, launched new protests.<sup>973</sup> Their stated aim was to “obtain the distribution of state lands” for “Cuban families whether they be veterans or not.”<sup>974</sup> One veteran leader declared, “looking at the material life of our people, with such a large number of them poor, and with a large number of families who lost all they possessed in our desolating wars, we prefer that the lands of the state, destined today for private parties, to be in turn transferred to powerful foreign companies, should be divided into small farms and given to Cuban farmers.”<sup>975</sup> Another Colonel announced that “in order to obtain our ends we intend to employ every means, even violence should such become necessary. By this we mean that we would lynch the justices and judges who oppose our plans.”<sup>976</sup>

The *independientes* seized this moment to begin organizing again. In January of 1912, rumors of an armed rebellion led by Evaristo Estenoz began to circulate once again when a large number of “negroes...left their work on the sugar plantation belonging to a former secretary of Finance.”<sup>977</sup> Although this report turned out to be a false alarm, the *independientes* were, in fact, hard at work. Throughout the month, the PIC held rallies on concurrent days with the veterans’ councils.<sup>978</sup> Black PIC organizers began entering Veterans’ Centers, where they were seen

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<sup>973</sup> NARA, RG 59, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, Memo, dated 20 Dec. 1911 by Division of Latin American Affairs; *La Lucha*, 4 Feb. 1912.

<sup>974</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 20 Feb. 1912, Beaupré to the Secretary of State.

<sup>975</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, *Havana Post*, Enclosure.

<sup>976</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 20 Feb. 1912, Beaupré to the Secretary of State.

<sup>977</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 5 Jan. 1912, Beaupré to Secretary of State.

<sup>978</sup> “El Mitin de los Independientes,” *La Lucha*, 23 Feb. 1912 and 25 Feb. 1912.

“speaking in low voices to individuals of their race, apart from the whites.”<sup>979</sup> Estenoz went so far as to begin threatening the United States government directly. On January 24, 1912, he called at the U.S. legation to outline the grievances of the *Partido Independiente de Color*. In a meeting with A.M. Beaupré, he stated that “the party had decided to go to Washington” to bring a complaint about the Morúa Law “before the President of the United States.”<sup>980</sup> Estenoz, apparently, hoped that the United States might consider revoking the Morúa Law in order to diminish the possibility of an armed uprising in the Oriente.

In response, the U.S. government explicitly threatened the Cuban political class with military intervention should they fail to suppress the demands of landless workers. On January 16, 1912, the U.S. Department of State issued a warning to President Gómez. It read: “The situation in Cuba as now reported causes grave concern to the Government of the United States...The President of the United States therefore looks to the President of the Government of Cuba to prevent a threatened situation which would compel the Government of the United States much against its desires to consider what measures it must take in pursuance of the obligations of its relations to Cuba.” The U.S. Ambassador was to hand the note, “unsigned,” to the President of Cuba, and then to “make it public.”<sup>981</sup> In the wake of this warning, and with the “Veteranista experience fresh in mind,” Beaupré expected the Cuban government “to take strong measures to put down...the negro movement.”<sup>982</sup>

The approaching end of the sugar season heightened the threat of Black revolt. On March

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<sup>979</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 110, No 2.

<sup>980</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, Beaupre to Secretary of State, 26 Jan. 1912.

<sup>981</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, Telegram Sent. Department of State, 16 Jan. 1912.

<sup>982</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, Beaupre to Secretary of State, 27 Feb. 1912.

23, A.M. Beaupré warned the U.S. Secretary of State that “the continual agitation of the ‘Independientes de Color’ carries with it an element of considerable danger to public order.” The *Estenozistas*, as Beaupré called them, “are sufficiently numerous to form the nucleus of a revolt that in any case, even were the government able to cope with it, would be extremely harmful.” Echoing previous warnings about the political consequences of Black surplus labor in the countryside, Beaupré concluded by pointing out that “there are always thousands of idlers and dissatisfied ‘heelers’ ready to flock to the standard upon the first sign of success.”<sup>983</sup>

Fearing rebellion, white Cuban elites reacted as they had during many nineteenth-century slave revolts. On February 16, 1912, white Cuban conservatives put forward a new proposal to ban all African Americans from entering the island of Cuba. Cuban immigration law already prohibited the entry of Black contract laborers, but, as the conservative spokesman José Ricardo Rodríguez pointed out, the law said nothing about “barring Black families from the South.” Rodríguez argued that it was now imperative to extend the immigration ban in order to prevent African Americans from uniting with the *independientes* to “incite a race war.”<sup>984</sup> The PIC quickly denounced the proposed ban. At a meeting on February 25, 1912, a Black organizer named Arturo Calderón declared that white Cubans “did not want African Americans to come because they understood freedom.”<sup>985</sup>

In May, the revolt began. That month, the port of Santiago de Cuba was closed because the stevedores were on strike. A draught had left the city desperate for water, and local

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<sup>983</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 23 March 1912, Beaupré to the Secretary of State.

<sup>984</sup> *La Lucha*, 17 Feb. 1912.

<sup>985</sup> *La Lucha*, 25 Feb. 1912.

politicians were making miraculous promises to discontented people. On May 20, the anniversary of Cuban independence, known leaders of the PIC disappeared. The police began arresting Black people on sight. The city's Chamber of Commerce organized a company of armed vigilantes that included more than seven hundred white people. Black citizens living in the city stopped leaving their homes at night.<sup>986</sup> By May 22, an estimated fifteen hundred Black workers were in revolt across the province.<sup>987</sup>

The Black insurgents immediately began destroying foreign property. On May 23, seven hundred Black workers, led by Evaristo Estenoz, began setting Spanish-owned sugar plantations on fire. Others rebels blockaded roads, burned railways, and destroyed local record offices that held the documents proving they had lost their lands.<sup>988</sup> The British Consul in the region put it starkly: "all the negro leaders tell the country people" to "demand a repeal of the Morúa Law," or else they would continue setting foreign property on fire.<sup>989</sup> The rallying cry of the Black insurgents was "*derecho o muerte*."<sup>990</sup>

The Cuban state reacted quickly. Within two days, six hundred Cuban soldiers had arrived in the Oriente under the leadership of Gerardo Machado. He was reinforced quickly with additional troops from the towns of Holguín and Puerto Padre. In Guantánamo, the first soldiers arrived on the warship the *Cuba*, which docked in Caimanera on May 23. By the end of the

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<sup>986</sup> Meriño Fuentes, *Una vuelta necesaria*, 31-33, 91.

<sup>987</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 22 May 1912, Beaupre to Secretary of State.

<sup>988</sup> Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, and People of Color," 533-535.

<sup>989</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 23 May 1912, Theodore Brooks to Stephen Leech.

<sup>990</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 25 May 1912, Max Baehr to Beaupré and Ross E. Holaday to Beaupré.

following day, the city was occupied by Cuban soldiers. By May 27, the state had deployed more than two thousand soldiers to the east; by June 1, that number had reached five thousand.<sup>991</sup> Five days later, the Cuban Congress suspended of all constitutional guarantees in the province and authorized the spending of more than one million pesos to crush the rebellion. The Cuban Secretary of State promised the U.S. Ambassador that Cuban soldiers would direct their “first efforts toward protection of foreign lives and property.”<sup>992</sup>

At the request of Cuban officials and local elites, the U.S. government sent in limited reserve forces to help crush the rebellion. On May 22, Edwin Atkins wrote to the U.S. War Department to ask for help crushing the “uprising of negros” that had begun in eastern Cuba.<sup>993</sup> Four days later, President Taft ordered a naval force to assemble at Key West, and battleships were sent to the Southern coast of the Oriente. At this point, President Gómez advised Taft that three thousand men had already been sent into the field, and additional forces were unnecessary.<sup>994</sup> But over the next few weeks, attacks on foreign-owned plantations intensified. On May 31, the mayor of Santiago de Cuba reported that PIC leaders were demanding that foreign capitalists turn over all their “rifles and colt revolvers and munitions” or else “their homes, mills, factories and farms will be burned.”<sup>995</sup> A few days later, the municipal mayor at

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<sup>991</sup> Herrera, *Guantánamo en el vórtice de los independentes*, 45-48, and Fermoselle, *Black Politics in Cuba*, 167.

<sup>992</sup> NARA, RG 59, 837.00/525-792, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 22 May 1912, Beaupré to the Secretary of State.

<sup>993</sup> MHS, Edwin Atkins Family Papers, Letterbooks, Volume II, 22 May 1912, Edwin Atkins to Major General Leonard Wood.

<sup>994</sup> Fermoselle, “Black Politics in Cuba,” 166. See also MHS, Edwin Atkins Family Papers, Letterbooks, Volume II, 24 May 1912, Edwin Atkins to R. B. Hawley.

<sup>995</sup> Quoted in Herrera, *Guantánamo en el vórtice de los independentes*, 88.

Guantánamo solicited a train for the transport of U.S. marines to the *centrales* of Los Caños, Soledad, Santa Maria and La Isabel in groups of fifty each. The use of U.S. marines to guard foreign property liberated Cuban soldiers to focus on fighting the rebels.<sup>996</sup>

Many white civilians—especially local elites—eagerly joined in the armed repression. The day after the rebellion broke out, white government officials offered their services in support of the military.<sup>997</sup> On June 2, the government began permitting white people to carry arms without a license.<sup>998</sup> In the Oriente, this resulted in the organization of numerous white vigilante companies, such as the “Batallá de Voluntarios Defensores de la Ciudad de Guantánamo.” One conservative leader, Marcio García Menocal, offered publicly to organize a private force of three thousand men to combat the Black “enemies” of the Cuban Republic. In Guantánamo, the mayor of the city joined with Theodore Brooks, the administrator of the U.S.-owned Guantánamo Sugar Company, to lead an assault on the Black insurgents.<sup>999</sup>

Those targeted for state repression were often among the poorest of the Afro-Cuban population. Arrest records from the month of June, 1912, document how the police systematically targeted cane cutters and Black “*desafectos de trabajo*” (the unemployed) for arbitrary imprisonment. Even far from the heart of the rebellion, in the west, Black people on farms were arrested for calling for revolt, or for declaring that “Estenoz was right, the rural guards are abusive bastards.” In Havana, the police imprisoned four Black men simply for having once visited Evaristo Estenoz’s house. Anyone who held an old copy of *Previsión* was

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<sup>996</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>997</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 95, No. 67.

<sup>998</sup> NARA, RG 49, Microcopy 488, Roll 6, 2 June 1912, Beaupre to Secretary of State.

<sup>999</sup> Herrera, *Guantanamo en el vortice de los independientes*, 48, 58-60.

subject to arbitrary arrest. Eventually, the state created a standard form for detaining Black people “for conspiracy to rebel...without the possibility of bail.”<sup>1000</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1912, impoverished Black people died at the hands of the Cuban state. In the towns of Alto Songo and Cristo, old centers of PIC organizing, Cuban soldiers impaled unarmed Black men with machetes. In late June, a regiment of Cuban soldiers captured Evaristo Estenoz. Instead of being taken to trial, he was murdered, and his body was put on display.<sup>1001</sup> By the middle of July, the contest was all but over. Rural guards reported that armed resistance in the countryside was coming to an end.<sup>1002</sup> In Santiago de Cuba, local newspapers distributed lists of Black insurgents who remained at large.<sup>1003</sup> Pedro Ibonet, the last of the major leaders of the *Partido Independiente de Color*, had gone into hiding. By the end of the month, he, too, was dead.<sup>1004</sup>

## VI. The End of Atlantic Reconstruction in Rural Cuba

In the United States, African Americans mourned the death of Estenoz. The Black press had followed his struggle since 1908.<sup>1005</sup> Writing for W.E. B. Du Bois’s *The Crisis* in July of 1912, the Afro-Puerto Rican exile Arturo Schomburg condemned the Morúa Law as “an

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<sup>1000</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia, Leg. 110, No. 49.

<sup>1001</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 255, 262.

<sup>1002</sup> ANC, Fondo Secretaria de la Presidencia, Leg. 63, Caja 63, No. 43.

<sup>1003</sup> *Independencia*, 6 July 1912, quoted in Herrera, *Guantánamo en el vórtice de los independientes*, 104.

<sup>1004</sup> Linares, *Los Independientes de Color*, 262.

<sup>1005</sup> For examples of coverage of the PIC in the African American press, see: “The Week in Society,” *Washington Bee*, 26 Sept. 1908; “Political Disturbances in Cuba,” *Wichita Searchlight*, 3 Oct. 1908; “Revolutionary Talk Throughout Cuba,” *The New York Age*, 28 April 1910; “Cuban Colored Independents,” *Indianapolis Freeman*, 9 March 1912; “More Marines Landed Takes Place of Bluejackets on North Oriente Coast,” *The Savannah Tribune*, 2 June 1912; “The Real Cause of the Cuban Revolt,” *Cleveland Gazette*, 8 June 1912; “General Evaristo Estenoz,” *The Crisis*, July 1912.

unconstitutional law, as infamous and despicable as the American Dred Scott decision.” The “Black men of Cuba,” he argued, “have taken to the woods because conditions are intolerable, because, as my friend, the late José Martí, apostle of Cuban freedom, said: ‘so long as there remains one injustice to repair in Cuba, the revolutionary redemption has not finished its work.’”<sup>1006</sup> Black reporters across the nation seemed to agree. Reflecting on the destruction of the PIC, writers for the Indianapolis *Freeman* concluded, “the same ruling forces are in the world.”<sup>1007</sup> In August of 1912, as U.S. marines withdrew once again from the Oriente, writers for the *Washington Bee* lamented the failure of the Afro-Cuban uprising. Estenoz, they declared, had “died upon the battlefield... a hero whose name will rank with L’Ouverture and Maceo.”<sup>1008</sup>

As the African American press seemed to detect, the massacre of the *Partido Independiente de Color* marked a turning point in the history of the Atlantic World. The world imagined by the *independientes* never took shape. With the defeat of the PIC, Black landholding in eastern Cuba was decimated for more than a generation. Over the next decade, sugar production in the Oriente increased by almost fourfold. By 1919, roughly 500,000 acres of the province were planted in cane, a figure that surpassed the entire Cuban area under cane cultivation in 1899. By 1946, half of all workers in the province were temporary agricultural wageworkers, who averaged 4.2 months of employment per year and earned about \$1.50 per day. The province remained overwhelmingly rural, illiterate, and unskilled.<sup>1009</sup> It bore, in many

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<sup>1006</sup> Schomburg, “General Evaristo Estenoz,” *The Crisis*, July 1912.

<sup>1007</sup> “Cuban Colored Independents,” *Indianapolis Freeman*, 9 March 1912.

<sup>1008</sup> “Roosevelt Our Foe,” *The Washington Bee*, 10 Aug. 1912.

<sup>1009</sup> Hoernel, “Sugar and Social Change in the Oriente,” 233, 236, 248.

respects, a striking resemblance to the Mississippi Delta or the Bahian Recôncavo.<sup>1010</sup> In all three places, the struggle for rural democracy had been defeated.

Still, not all hope was lost. Within decades, Black people across the Atlantic World were organizing around a new vision of freedom. In 1931, Tommy and Ralph Gray, the grandsons of a Black state legislator in Alabama, joined the Communist Party and helped launch the first sharecroppers' union in Tallapoosa County.<sup>1011</sup> In 1935, Afro-Brazilians helped build the Socialist Black Front and helped to create the *Aliança Nacional Libertadora*, which battled foreign imperialism, championed workers' rights, demanded land reform, and called for racial equality and Black revolt.<sup>1012</sup> During these same years, many Afro-Cubans began reorganizing under the auspices of the Cuban Communist Party. In 1956, the Cuban revolution began in the Oriente.<sup>1013</sup>

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<sup>1010</sup> Kim Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 45; Walter Fraga, *Crossroads of Freedom: Slaves and Freedpeople in Bahia, Brazil, 1870-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 156-160; Nathaniel Leff, "Economic Development and Regional Inequality: Origins of the Brazilian Case," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 86 (1972): 248, 258; Robin Kelly, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 34-35; Woodruff, *American Congo*, 4.

<sup>1011</sup> Kelly, *Hammer and Hoe*, 39.

<sup>1012</sup> Pauline Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 137.

<sup>1013</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 190, 193, 251.



9. *"An early union meeting." Black and white members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in Arkansas on September 12, 1937. Louise Boyle, Southern Tenant Farmers Union Photographs, 1937 and 1982.*

*Courtesy of the Kheel Center.*

## Conclusion

For months while I was writing this dissertation, I thought we might be living through another revolutionary crisis. I began this project the same year that the gay Black activist Marielle Franco was murdered by police in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Her death led to mass protests against police brutality all over the world.<sup>1014</sup> Over the next two years, time seemed to speed up. In 2019, a socialist appeared to be on the verge of winning the Democratic presidential nomination. Bernie Sanders promised universal healthcare, free higher education, an end to police brutality, a “Green New Deal,” and a democratic foreign policy.<sup>1015</sup> Almost every leftist I knew in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil had pinned their hopes on his nomination.<sup>1016</sup> While I was campaigning, I wondered frequently if the outcome of the election would change the nature of my project. Would I end up writing a redemptive history of the U.S. Constitution like Eric Foner?

It is now clear that this was an idle fantasy. By the summer of 2020, the forces of reaction had triumphed once again. The capitalist class eliminated the political possibility of universal healthcare at the start of a catastrophic global pandemic.<sup>1017</sup> The massive protests against police brutality that took place the following summer went nowhere.<sup>1018</sup> The results have been deadly. In the United States, nearly one million U.S. citizens have died of COVID-19, including more

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<sup>1014</sup> “Demonstrations in Honor of Marielle in Rio and Worldwide,” *Rio on Watch*, 17 Mar. 2019.

<sup>1015</sup> Bernie Sanders, “Issues,” <https://berniesanders.com/issues/>, accessed 12 April 2022. See also “Democratic Leaders Willing to Risk Party Damage to Stop Bernie Sanders,” *The New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2020.

<sup>1016</sup> David Domínguez Cabrera, email with author, 21. Feb 2020; Emiliano Travieso, email with author, 23 Feb. 2020; among others.

<sup>1017</sup> “Biden suggests he would veto ‘Medicare for All’ over its price tag,” *CNBC.com*, 10 Mar. 2020.

<sup>1018</sup> “Bipartisan Police Reform Bill is Officially Dead in Congress,” *Vice.com*, 22 Sept. 2021.

than one hundred thousand African Americans.<sup>1019</sup> In Brazil, six hundred thousand people have died, with the Black death rate 38 percent higher than the white.<sup>1020</sup> In Cuba, only eight thousand people have died from coronavirus but far more have been pushed to the brink of starvation by the collapsing tourist economy.<sup>1021</sup> In all three nations, unemployment, food shortages, and lack of access to healthcare have brought unmitigated disaster.<sup>1022</sup> Yet little hope of a permanent social safety net remains.

From this vantage point, it is striking how well the international proslavery order is still working. In the United States, the Senate and the Supreme Court stand as apparently insurmountable obstacles to democratic change.<sup>1023</sup> These same political structures impede progressive transformation in Brazil.<sup>1024</sup> Cuban white supremacists, meanwhile, benefit from the outsized power they hold over the U.S. electoral college. Many of these men and women fled to Florida in the aftermath of the 1959 revolution and remain determined to punish the Cuban communist regime. Their support for economic sanctions shapes U.S. foreign policy to this day.

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<sup>1019</sup> “Morrem 40% mais negros que brancos por coronavírus no Brasil,” *CNN Brasil*, 6 May 2020, <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/saude/negros-morrem-40-mais-que-brancos-por-coronavirus-no-brasil/>.

<sup>1020</sup> “The Color of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.,” *APM Research Lab*, <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>, accessed 12 April 2022.

<sup>1021</sup> “‘Everyone has a Tipping Point’: Hunger Fuels Cuba’s Protests,” *The New York Times*, 21 July 2021.

<sup>1022</sup> “First COVID Raised the Murder Rate. Now it’s changing the politics of crime,” *Politico*, 21 October 2021; “Tráfico toma conta, e violência mata tanto quanto o coronavírus na periferia de Fortaleza,” *The Intercept Brasil*, 5 May 2020.

<sup>1023</sup> “Manchin Rejects Landmark Legislation, Putting Biden’s Climate Goals at Risk,” *The New York Times*, 19 Dec. 2021.

<sup>1024</sup> Perry Anderson, “Crisis in Brazil” 38. no 8 *New Left Review* (April 2016).

In December of 2021, President Biden refused to lift the Cuban blockade despite the enormous suffering it has caused.<sup>1025</sup> The Democrats, after all, still want to win Florida.<sup>1026</sup>

Under these liberal constitutional orders, coups have become almost routine. At the national level, two have occurred in my lifetime. The first was in the United States in 2000, when the Supreme Court handed George W. Bush the presidency despite the objective victory of his Democratic opponent, Al Gore.<sup>1027</sup> The second was in 2016, when the Brazilian Parliament ousted the labor party leader Dilma Rousseff.<sup>1028</sup> Both of these coups paved the way for the rise of the white supremacist reactionaries, Donald J. Trump and Jair Bolsonaro. If the purpose of liberal constitutionalism was to help white elites maintain control over subaltern populations, then the slaveowners could hardly have done a better job.

Despite this, prominent historians cling to notions of U.S. democratic exceptionalism. In 2020, Heather Cox Richardson published *How the South Won the Civil War*, which portrayed Reconstruction as a “continuing fight for the soul of America.”<sup>1029</sup> Her substack, titled “Letters from an American,” is now read by tens of thousands of people across the nation.<sup>1030</sup> The renowned Harvard historian Jill Lepore has done even more to advance the cause of U.S.

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<sup>1025</sup> “After historic protests, Biden ‘hit the pause button’ on Cuba policy, senior official says,” *NBCNews.com*, 30 Nov. 2021.

<sup>1026</sup> “Democrats are Sticking to Trump’s Cuba Policies,” *The Nation*, 28 July 2021, <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/cuba-remittances/>.

<sup>1027</sup> *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000).

<sup>1028</sup> André Singer, *O lulismo em crise: um quebra-cabeça do período Dilma (2011-2016)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018).

<sup>1029</sup> Heather Cox Richardson, *How the South Won the Civil War: Oligarchy, Democracy, and the Continuing Fight for the Soul of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>1030</sup> See Heather Cox Richardson, “Letters from an American: A newsletter about the history behind today’s politics,” <https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/>.

exceptionalism to the general public.<sup>1031</sup> In a 2021 interview with *WBUR*, she insisted that the Capitol Hill insurrection was an event that “comes out of the pages of the history of other countries... failed states...not the pages of American history.” “Trump is unprecedented,” she insisted, “and it will always be a mistake to try to predict what can be done to answer his depredations by looking to the past.”<sup>1032</sup>

It is now time to change the way we teach the history of democracy in the United States. Situating Reconstruction within an Atlantic framework makes this clear. The U.S. Constitution was not a beacon of democracy but rather the cornerstone of the international proslavery order. Afro-descendants were the ones who reimagined the Atlantic World along democratic lines. Their struggles in the aftermath of slavery gave rise to the radical possibility of Atlantic Reconstruction. Only by inscribing the principle of Black political exclusion into the liberal international order did white elites manage to contain democracy. Their actions ultimately helped preserve plantation capitalism for generations to come. My hope is that this dissertation can play a small part in helping us decouple our understanding of democracy from liberal constitutionalism. If we can do so, then perhaps the next crisis will have a different ending.

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<sup>1031</sup> Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).

<sup>1032</sup> Bob Oakes, “Historian Jill Lepore on How We Arrived At Moment of Chaos at U.S. Capitol,” *wbur.org*, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2021/01/07/jill-lepore-capitol-insurrection-historical-context>.

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