

*Voice of the Fugitive:*  
Henry Bibb and 'Racial Uplift' in Canada West, 1851-1852

by


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### Abstract

The *Voice of the Fugitive*, Canada's first black newspaper, began publication on January 1, 1851. This thesis discusses the topics presented in the *Voice of the Fugitive* and the paper's editor, Henry Bibb. Black leader Henry Bibb established his bi-weekly newspaper in Canada West to promote causes that he felt would strengthen Canada's black community. Bibb used his paper to promote antislavery and to advance the ideology of 'racial elevation'. Racial elevation, also known as racial uplift, was an attempt to refute discriminatory stereotypes and a quest for respectability for blacks. Bibb believed that adopting values associated with the white middle class would help foster self-respect among black Canadians and demonstrate black respectability to whites. Bibb and the *Voice of the Fugitive* consistently urged black Canadians to build a better life and uplift their race. Values such as abolition, education, temperance, religion, land-owning, and agriculture were championed in the pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive*.

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**Table of Contents**

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	22
Chapter Three	44
Chapter Four	65
Chapter Five	92
Conclusion	115
Bibliography	120

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## Chapter One

In view of the existence of a prejudice which thus oppresses the colored people, the practical question is what can they do that is best calculated to remove the prevailing prejudice, and the burdens it imposes?

*Voice of the Fugitive*, 17 December 1851

Black history is a meaningful but neglected part of Canadian history.<sup>1</sup> Mainstream historical research has, for the most part, overlooked more than 350 years of black history in Canada. Although blacks are only a small percentage of Canada's population, they have been a continual presence in this country. Examining black men and women's part in Canadian history is important to both the black and white communities of Canada. By highlighting the accounts of black individuals, black communities, and black consciousness we can begin to fill in the gaps in 'minority history' in Canada. Historians have started to do this work, but there are still many issues and topics that need to be examined.

A missing element in the existing research is observations made by members of the black community. This thesis will help to fill this void in Canadian historiography by examining a commentary written by Canadian blacks in mid-nineteenth century Canada West. An excellent glimpse of black history in the Canadian past is offered in one of Canada's earliest newspapers; the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Canada's first black newspaper,<sup>2</sup> published from January 1, 1851 to December 16, 1852.<sup>3</sup> The articles published in the *Voice of the Fugitive* are an important contribution to Canadian history.

This thesis examines some of the predominant issues examined by the *Voice of the Fugitive*. The topics studied in the *Voice of the Fugitive* are indicative of the social and political climate of the nineteenth century. The newspaper was published at a time when

slavery was still legal in America and racism against blacks was widespread. One of the justifications given for slavery and racism was the inherent inferiority of blacks. It was held that blacks were biologically subordinate to whites and could not be self-reliant. In fact, a key issue in the debate over emancipating American slaves was whether ex-slaves could achieve self-improvement and become independent.<sup>4</sup> By turning to the pages of this publication, one can explore some nineteenth century values and attempt to understand their importance for some members of the black community. The *Voice of the Fugitive* covered topics that were of interest to many blacks: abolition of slavery, education, temperance, moral reform, and agricultural projects. It also reported on religious and educational activities of some Canadian blacks, and it had editorial space that published information on Canadian settlement.

The efforts of the *Voice of the Fugitive* to influence black attitudes and behavior, and its attempts to demonstrate the readiness of blacks for liberation and equality, shape this thesis. Henry Bibb, the founder and editor of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, acted as a spokesman for the plan of 'racial elevation'. Racial elevation, also known as racial uplift, was a quest for 'respectability' for blacks. In the pursuit of racial uplift, black leaders expected that blacks would renounce ties with their slave image and conform to contemporary white, middle class standards.<sup>5</sup> Bibb's paper promoted his philosophies. In his paper he said,

the eye of the civilized world is looking down upon us to see whether we can take care of ourselves or not. If our conduct is moral and upright, in spite of all the bad training we have had, it will reflect credit on ourselves, and encourage our friends in what they are doing for our elevation. . . . How important it is, then, that we should each feel our responsibility and conduct ourselves accordingly.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the topics discussed in the *Voice of the Fugitive* were tenets in the ideology of racial uplift.<sup>7</sup> Values such as education, temperance, and religion, which were endorsed by the white middle class, were championed by certain members of the black community as a means of racial elevation.

Canada's first black newspaper reveals that some blacks believed in the values associated with the white middle class. The newspaper indicates that some members of the black community attempted to forge 'respectable' ideals, publicly and privately, in their pursuit of racial elevation. By adopting the dominant notions of respectability, members of the black community tried to affirm their worth and overcome negative stereotypes held by white society. A number of black Canadians in the 1850s were optimistic that they could work towards respectability and these blacks actively pursued lives in Canada that they hoped would elevate them as a race.<sup>8</sup> The *Voice of the Fugitive* offers a view of the hopes, fears, and frustrations of black Canadians involved in this struggle.

As prevalent as the notion of racial elevation was, it should not be assumed that all Canadian blacks felt the same way. It is hard to know how much of the black community espoused the tenets of racial elevation. There is some indication from historical sources that certain members of the black community rejected the ideology of racial uplift. It is also possible that many black Canadians could not, or chose not to, become involved in the movement around them. We simply do not know. The content of Henry Bibb's newspaper offers little suggestion of critical dissension. The *Voice of the Fugitive* bolstered the ideology of racial uplift and announced that many blacks were struggling to prove their self-worth in their own community, as well as, if possible, to the white Canadian population.

The importance of the *Voice of the Fugitive* is that it presents a voice from the black community during the 1850s and indicates what issues and concerns were likely most relevant to many members of this group. It is a voice that can tell us about particular black Canadian ideologies, aspirations, and viewpoints. I wish to state that although I do not have any 'lived experience' as a black, I do not feel that I should be excluded from discussing black history.<sup>9</sup> However, I will focus on blacks speaking for themselves, using excerpts from their publications and speeches. I recognize that while I will present black voices, the discussion of a historical subject is not an unmediated process. My analysis of

the *Voice of the Fugitive* and my examination of the society that black Canadians lived in, will reflect my own views as a white Canadian. In my analysis, however, I am endeavoring to be at all times attentive to the experiences of black Canadians.

An analysis of black literature, their own written record, provides a starting point from which researchers can begin to piece together the framework of a black Canadian worldview. Essays, novels, and newspapers written by black Canadians are testimonials to how they viewed their localities, households, politics, and activism. Primary sources used in this thesis, apart from the *Voice of the Fugitive*, are transcripts, speeches, and letters existing from the 1850s. These sources may challenge previous (perhaps, white) assumptions, or in some cases they may reinforce them. Most importantly they provide an inner look at how and why some black Canadians adjusted to the world they lived in. These documents can serve as a reflection of the society that black Canadians lived in, and how they understood what they saw around them. The *Voice of the Fugitive* was a platform for delivering messages of temperance, education, abolition, and agriculture--elements of racial uplift.<sup>10</sup> These topics of social and moral reform were broadcast to the general black population of mid-nineteenth century Canada West (present day Ontario).<sup>11</sup>

The full meaning of the *Voice of the Fugitive* can be better understood by examining the larger context of black history. Although a complete panorama of blacks in Canadian history is beyond the scope of this thesis, numerous secondary sources are available that detail early black history, conflicts, American influence, and remarkable achievements. Some works provide a general overview of blacks in Canada, while others, on a smaller scale, supply interesting accounts and details. To gain a full appreciation of the scope of black Canadian history, several time periods, locations, and perspectives should be examined. Several historians have completed the task of mapping out a comprehensive survey of Canadian black history. Robin Winks has set the standard in this field. His impressive work, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, offers a wealth of information. This book spans a period from the earliest record of slaves in New France in the mid-

seventeenth century to the struggle against discrimination and the political climate of the 1960s. This masterful work, published in 1971, established Canadian black history as a legitimate field of scholarly research.

The Blacks in Canada authoritatively chronicles, from coast to coast, three and a half centuries of black history in Canada. Winks' book offers historians a catalogue of names, dates, events, and circumstances in black history, and refers extensively to primary sources. Unfortunately, one element weakens this study. Winks employs a pessimistic tone throughout the book, and says that the story of the history of blacks in Canada "is a depressing one."<sup>12</sup> However, it is Winks' emphasis on the mediocre outcomes, despite the high expectations of Canadian blacks, that is disheartening. In a closing chapter of the book, Winks says "Negroes in Canada were often responsible for their own plight, since they by no means made use of all the channels of opportunity or all the roads to progress and all the sources of strength open to them."<sup>13</sup> Statements like this charge blacks with failing to organize, and accuse them of lacking the ability to recognize what was in their best interests. Winks has studied the social, economic, and legal hardships that blacks had to endure. He further details the advancements they made in spite of these barriers, but he still criticizes blacks for their defeats. Winks has set unfair standards. Given the amount of information he has collected, his conclusions should have been more balanced. He blames blacks for failing to integrate, and then flourish, in a harsh social and economic environment.

Daniel G. Hill's work entitled The Freedom-Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada is also a general history of blacks in Canada. It was published a decade after Winks' work, but does not have the scope of Winks' volume.<sup>14</sup> As the title suggests, it covers material from earliest times (1628) to around 1870. But the title is misleading; he refers to 'Canada' but details only parts of the eastern portion: Upper Canada and Nova Scotia excluding everything to the west of present-day Ontario.<sup>15</sup> Although geographically limited, The Freedom Seekers does provide engaging personal accounts of the daily lives of some of

the black families of the period. Interesting anecdotes and interviews with the descendants of early settlers are original and important aspects of the book.<sup>16</sup>

Another compilation is Peter Ripley's The Black Abolitionist Papers, published in 1986. This collection of almost one hundred primary documents from various abolitionists, includes numerous letters, speeches, and editorials. Information from abolitionist campaigns, emigration schemes and appeals for philanthropic aid, and social support of refugees is arranged in chronological order. Although it focuses on the abolitionist movement in Canada, The Black Abolitionist Papers also imparts to the reader, through the use of headnotes that preface each document, a broader picture. The nearly 50 page introduction and detailed endnotes give excellent insight to the antislavery campaigns in Canada, the independent black abolitionist activities, and names many individual black abolitionists. Ripley incorporates a vast amount of primary material on black abolitionism, and convincingly shows that antislavery beliefs were held by many in the black community in Canada. The work done by Ripley on Canadian abolition argues that blacks played a much more active and discernible role in the Canadian antislavery movement than they did in the U.S. movement. Ripley says, "This was natural. Many black abolitionists arrived in Canada with substantial antislavery experience. They joined nearly every Canadian antislavery organization and formed societies of their own, and after the mid-1850s, the overall movement was largely in their hands."<sup>17</sup> Free blacks felt that the antislavery movement would help erase blacks' 'slave' image among the white community and contribute to black efforts to elevate their race.<sup>18</sup>

James W. St. G. Walker's 1980 study, A History of Blacks in Canada is an "annotated bibliography providing sources and studies for use in teaching and studying the history of blacks in Canada."<sup>19</sup> Moving from seventeenth century slavery to the 1970s, Walker discusses notable black individuals and movements, and places them into the perspective of Canadian history. Walker has done a sweeping job of providing references for topics like "The Founding Peoples," "Canada's Colour Line and the Black Response," and "The

Development of a Black Community." Each chapter is divided into several topics and each specific topic is followed by a bibliographic discussion of relevant works. Walker's coverage of the issues and events are not in-depth due to the nature of the book. Nevertheless, this book is a good departure for further, more intensive examination of the topic of Canadian black history.

Research on blacks who settled in Canada West in the nineteenth century began more than 75 years ago. Fred Landon's research, and his numerous articles on various subjects in Canadian black history during the mid-nineteenth century, lay the groundwork for more modern study.<sup>20</sup> Landon's prolific writings are part of what could be called the 'old school' of analysis because he makes little mention of the racism of white Canadians or the discrimination that Canadian blacks faced. However, Landon's work still has merit because it opened up this field of inquiry. Landon's analysis is weak compared to more recent works, and his language reflects his generation.<sup>21</sup> Landon investigated the migration of blacks fleeing slavery or the threat of re-enslavement in the United States in the early 1850s. Black life and work, antislavery activities, and black communities are introduced, but the prejudiced response by white Canadians is not a point that Landon deals with at any great length. It is curious that Landon, who so definitively wrote on the social conditions of Upper Canada before 1865, neglected to offer any explication of the societal tensions that were evident.

Other preliminary work on blacks in Canada, that also ignores the problem of strained racial relations, was done by William Renwick Riddell starting in 1919. Riddell deals with an earlier time than Landon, a time when slave owning was still legal in Canada.<sup>22</sup> Riddell, a Canadian jurist, reports on legal codes and precedents that shaped the lives of Canadian slaves, but does not delve into social codes and practices that formed the nature of prejudice in Canada. Although these studies introduce an important topic, they leave obvious gaps that are now being addressed in a more multi-faceted and diverse way.

Recent literature has focused on the active role of blacks in their self-definition, and their aspirations for their community.<sup>23</sup> Most of the new Canadian historical literature outlines the goals and aspirations blacks had in spite of white Canadian racism. Much research has been done to detail the methods that Canadian blacks utilized to establish a social and political space for themselves, and combat the resistance of white Canadians during the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, Canadian blacks fought to enroll in 'white' schools or they established their own institutions, and insults from the white press were countered when black editors started their own publications that championed black rights.

The wave of more modern studies that focus on American fugitive slaves settling in Canada West has brought this subject, and its historiography, a long way from its antiquated beginnings. Jason Silverman's 1985 book, Unwelcome Guests, focuses directly on the response by Canada West's white community to the fugitive slaves.<sup>24</sup> Silverman disputes the assumption that Canada was a 'haven' for blacks escaping slavery. Silverman contends that fugitive slaves found little sanctuary from white racist attitudes, and social and political injustices. Unwelcome Guests outlines the circumstances in Canada West prior to 1865, and debunks the notion that Canada provided any substantial relief from the social hardships of the United States. According to Silverman, the more readily conspicuous blacks became in Canada West, the more vehement anti-black opinions became. The openly hostile behavior of some whites compelled Canadian blacks to forge their own communities, churches, and newspapers.

Silverman's focus on fugitives and their plight in Canada West draws attention to, and challenges, some hitherto established assumptions. However, Silverman falls short in his analysis of the fugitive slave community in a few ways. First, Silverman refers to the Underground Railroad, but fails to discuss the significance (or insignificance) of this legendary vehicle. We are left asking ourselves, did the fugitives who came to Canada West use the Underground Railroad? If so, how many used this system? Ample primary

and secondary information exists documenting the Underground Railroad, but there continues to be much that is merely fiction. While we have heard numerous tales of the system that aided escaping slaves, Silverman does not present data on the famed Underground Railroad. As well, Silverman's population figures are puzzling. Canada Census figures from that time may be skewed,<sup>25</sup> and unofficial reports also may be inaccurate.<sup>26</sup> The population statistics from Canada West are vague and need clarification, but Silverman does not present any explanation of why he quotes figures that may be misleading. Readers also need to be aware that not all blacks in Canada West were fugitive slaves; some were free blacks. The population of blacks in Canada was comprised of both freedpersons and fugitives.

Prior to the publication of Unwelcome Guests, Jason Silverman published several articles in the early 1980s on fugitive slaves who settled in Canada. The first article "The American Fugitive Slave in Canada: Myths and Realities," asserts "Canadians undeniably gave refuge to thousands of fugitives," but "as the number of fugitive slaves entering Canada multiplied, so too did negrophobia on the part of white Canadians."<sup>27</sup> Silverman concludes that the "American fugitive slave did not find in Canada the Promised Land that propagandists had portrayed."<sup>28</sup> Silverman points out that prejudiced attitudes manifested themselves in several ways not only in the white press, but also in a segregated educational system. One weak point is Silverman's failure to discuss the prejudiced response from 'white' churches. The church was an important institution in the Canada West black community, but Silverman does not provide any analysis of how and why churches fell short of many blacks' expectations. Arguably, the 'white' churches offered the black community insufficient support. Silverman could have pointed out how and why most churches failed to take a stand against slavery.

Two further articles by Silverman expand on two manifestations of white hostility--discrimination in the press and in the educational system. "'We Shall Be Heard!': The Development of the Fugitive Slave Press in Canada" examines how the black newspapers,

the *Voice of the Fugitive* and the *Provincial Freeman*, "provided refugee blacks with a source of news, identity, and strength."<sup>29</sup> These two newspapers were an outlet for black expression and self-improvement. Silverman says the black press was a response to the unfavorable presentation of blacks in the white press. The theme of this article is akin to the thread that runs through Unwelcome Guests. Whites Canadians would grow more hostile as the Canadian black population increased. Silverman says of the white press, "As a vehicle of public opinion, newspapers were quickly employed by Canadian whites for catharsis; that is, in lieu of an illegal physical attack, it was much easier and convenient, not to mention legal, to launch a written assault upon the black fugitives."<sup>30</sup> By way of description, Silverman briefly details a few of the demeaning comments published by white newspapers, but his emphasis is on the black rebuttals.<sup>31</sup> Silverman's discussion of Canada's first black newspapers is a good introduction to this topic.

In an article written with Donna J. Gillie, Silverman probes "'The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties': Education and the Fugitive Slave in Canada."<sup>32</sup> Silverman and Gillie conclude that, "the new concentration of refugees prompted vehement anti-black sentiment on the part of white Canadians that translated into discrimination in education."<sup>33</sup> Black efforts to gain an education were often met with opposition from prejudiced white Canadians. The discrimination against blacks would result in segregated schools. Forced separate schooling for blacks reveals the hostility and injustice that blacks would face while trying to educate themselves and their children.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the intense debate over segregation also divided members of the black community. They desired to learn, but disagreed about how best to accomplish this. Taken together, Silverman's writings reveal the ways by which the white community, which had control over most institutions, kept Canadian blacks from realizing political and social equality.

The black population of Canada was made up of men and women who worked together to maintain households and communities. It is important to specifically discuss women in Canadian black history and their efforts to build lives for themselves, their

families, and their community. Numerous black women labored to support their families, aid the newly arrived, and contribute to their communities. A current surge in material that analyses black women, specifically black Canadian women, is making the field of history much more inclusive. Several historians have produced essays that have discussed women's roles in the church, their struggle to combat prejudice, their antislavery participation, and their goals of respectability. Canadian and American historians have presented work on politically active black women. Historical research has shown that, as best they could, women turned gender conventions to serve their purposes. A parallel theme runs through American and Canadian works. Black women wanted to define their own lives. Therefore, they took an active role in representing themselves.

American work on black women's history is richer than its Canadian counterpart. A 1994 publication on black women's social movements, entitled Righteous Discontent, focuses on the dynamic role of women within the American black Baptist church. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham devotes much of her book to tracing the roots of women's roles in the National Baptist Convention, a movement that represented (and still represents) the largest group of black Americans.<sup>35</sup> "Through a racial and gender-based movement, black women confronted and influenced their social and political milieu, and they did so through the mediating influence of the church."<sup>36</sup> As Higginbotham points out, black women within the Baptist Church movement adopted values articulated by the white middle class to prove that blacks could be 'respectable'. However, they also incorporated elements from their own social and cultural background. Black women used both of these elements to challenge racist attitudes.

Shirley J. Yee illustrates how black American women, during the mid-nineteenth century, engaged in the struggle to end slavery and racial oppression in the U.S. Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860, published in 1992, explains how black women pursued an abolitionist agenda, despite limitations imposed on their race and gender. Yee discusses the contributions made by free black women--women who had

been born free or had acquired their freedom through manumission or escape.<sup>37</sup> She says of these women,

In addition to fulfilling their domestic responsibilities and, in many cases, earning a wage, free black women were expected to extend their 'female influence' into their community. But the history of free black women is also about the contradiction inherent in the ideals themselves. Freedom had meant, in large part, the destruction of gender roles that had existed under slavery to be replaced by the white ideal of a patriarchal family and community structure, in which men wielded most of the power and women were subordinate.<sup>38</sup>

Yee considers how the discourses of private and public spheres, 'true' womanhood, and notions of respectability, bound black women to work within structures and institutions that, in hindsight, look to be cramped quarters.<sup>39</sup> The most powerful institutions within the free black community--the press, schools, and churches--imposed the strictest limitations upon black women. However, Yee argues that these ideologies did not render black women completely powerless in the political and social arenas.

The literature that considers black Canadian women during the nineteenth century invariably mentions two remarkable women: Mary Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd.<sup>40</sup> Historian Afua Cooper has written on Mary Bibb.<sup>41</sup> Both Shirley Yee and Jane Rhodes have written about newspaper editor Mary Ann Shadd.<sup>42</sup> Shadd was a commanding lecturer, an outspoken critic of slavery, and publisher of the *Provincial Freeman*, one of Canada's first black newspapers. Bibb and Shadd have garnered so much attention because they were exceptional black women and they worked in the public eye.<sup>43</sup> Even the general overviews of Canadian black women's history give special mention to them.

Shirley Yee has documented Canadian black women's experiences more generally. In her article, "Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," Yee outlines how black women contributed to the settlement of blacks in Canada. The black women who had come from the States, argues Yee, brought with them assumptions of 'proper' gender roles. But they would be forced to negotiate the confines of this restrictive role in order to survive and provide for their families in the difficult

economic and social climate of Ontario. Yee says, "Black Canadian women's experience as community-builders challenged simplistic notions of 'true' womanhood as they struggled to survive and construct family and community institutions, such as churches, schools, and benevolent organizations."<sup>44</sup>

Middle class, white women of the mid-nineteenth century were expected to have four basic virtues: piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness.<sup>45</sup> The literature on gender history consistently affirms that women outside of this category, where the archetype did not apply, found their own place on a continuum somewhere between ideal and reality. Yee says of this negotiation between the unrealizable ideal and the every day reality, that although the process may have been contrary to patriarchal ideals, the end-result would affirm the dominant ideology. Yee argues the expectations and limitations placed on black women would put them in a precarious position. In the public sphere, female activism was expected to be supportive of male leaders. In the private sphere, women were to defer to their husbands. Despite their political activity, or their financial support of their households, women were still bound by ideals of 'ladylike' behavior. By speaking in general terms Yee provides a thoughtful perspective on women's experiences. However, her article lacks the personal voices of black women telling of their individual feelings of accomplishment or frustration. The scant personal evidence from 'common' black women forces Yee to refer to unsubstantiated anecdotes or rely on the rare public evidence of women like Mary Ann Shadd and Mary Bibb. Because so few black women had a lasting outlet for these private thoughts, finding such evidence is too often impossible.

Another historian, Peggy Bristow, acknowledges the difficulty of bringing unrecognized Canadian black women to the forefront. Bristow has coordinated a 1994 collection of essays in African Canadian women's history that contains several articles on women in mid-nineteenth century Canada West. Three compositions in particular relate to black women of the 1850s: one on women in two Canada West towns, another on women's role in the Underground Railroad, and the third on Mary Bibb. An article written

by Bristow, titled "'Whatever you raise in the ground you can sell in Chatham': Black Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65," discusses work done by women in the towns of Buxton and Chatham in Canada West. Bristow reiterates the difficulty of representing women who had little or no public record. She says, "I offer only glimpses into the lives of Black women who lived in Buxton and Chatham. While the lack of much written evidence has made it difficult to provide detailed accounts of most women's lives, these women were active in all aspects of their community."<sup>46</sup> Black women who have not previously been publicly recognized accomplished remarkable feats. Adrienne Shadd, in her chapter, documents the significant role black women played helping black fugitives on the Underground Railroad. She debunks the assumption that white abolitionists alone ferried refugee blacks to the safety of Canadian soil. In actuality, many black women participated in this movement with their time, money, and commitment.<sup>47</sup>

Mary Bibb was a middle class black woman who came to Canada from Detroit with her husband and they worked together to establish Canada's first black newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*.<sup>48</sup> Afua Cooper's article in Bristow's collection provides biographical details of Mary Bibb's early life.<sup>49</sup> As well, Cooper details Bibb's little-known efforts and accomplishments in Canada. Mary Bibb, and her husband Henry Bibb, espoused the philosophy that the black race could and should endeavor to uplift itself. They reasoned that a new beginning in Canada would mean an opportunity for blacks to become 'good citizens'. In the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Henry Bibb declared, "The road to elevation is open to the colored population."<sup>50</sup> The Bibbs worked, along with other members of the black communities in Canada West, to achieve this goal.

Afua Cooper's dissertation, completed in 2000, offers an examination of the life and work of *Voice of the Fugitive* editor Henry Bibb.<sup>51</sup> In this first full-length study of Bibb, historian Afua Cooper discusses Bibb's life in slavery, Canadian abolitionism, and his activism on both sides of the border. Of Bibb's leadership, Cooper says "Overcoming serious hurdles in his life, Bibb made an inspired commitment to a cause which was critical

for the liberation of African Americans."<sup>52</sup> Cooper's analysis of Bibb is the central topic of this work, but she also looks at black settlement in Canada West and other black leaders. This work is an important contribution to Canadian black history because it offers little-known details of Bibb's life, his role as a 'transborder' subject living and working in Canada and the United States, and his relationships with his family and fellow black activists. Cooper's biography offers a "thorough and complex portrait" of Henry Bibb,<sup>53</sup> but it does not devote much space to the particular tenets of racial elevation Bibb promoted in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. This thesis will analyse racial uplift as detailed in Bibb's newspaper and should complement Cooper's work.

The following chapters will detail the comments and criticisms offered by Canada's first black newspaper in its attempt to instruct the black public in the means of racial uplift. Chapter two of this thesis will examine two Canada West towns and their black settlers, and sketch the biographies of Henry and Mary Bibb. This will provide background information for the subsequent chapters. Chapter three will recount abolitionist activity taking place in Canada West in the early 1850s and explain how the antislavery movement was advanced in the pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Chapter four will examine Canadian blacks' efforts to obtain an education and the effect this goal would have on the vision of self-improvement. Chapter five will discuss agricultural aims, temperance, religion, and other tenets published in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, that were crucial to Canadian black goals of racial uplift.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>A note on my terminology: In this thesis I refer to black and white people. I understand that the term 'black' is a social construct. Terminology is changing. However, the terms 'African Canadian', or 'African American' are not widely used in the sources I consulted.

<sup>2</sup>*The British American*, a black publication, surfaced in Toronto in March of 1845, but survived less than a month. Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2d ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) , 394.

<sup>3</sup>While the *Voice of the Fugitive* may have been published into 1853, these issues were likely sporadic and are not included on the microfilm reel.

<sup>4</sup>Allen P. Stouffer, *The Light of Nature and the Law of God: Antislavery in Ontario 1833-1877* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) , 98.

<sup>5</sup>In her recent work, historian Afua Cooper terms the black leaders' pursuit for respectability based on class 'middle class-ism'. She says "Such a philosophy dictated that Blacks no matter how destitute should 'pick themselves up and elevate themselves like men, so that whites could respect them'." Afua P. Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854." (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000) , 261.

<sup>6</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851. Reprinted in C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 2, *Canada, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) , 170-175.

<sup>7</sup>Black leaders in the United States also promoted self-improvement through the tenets of racial uplift. In his work on the ideas expressed by early black leaders, Frederick Cooper says "Although leaders became increasingly involved in campaigns against slavery and discrimination, especially in the 1840s, whenever they spoke of bettering the living conditions of the free blacks, it was generally to exhort blacks to overcome their ignorance, conquer the temptations of the bottle and behave industriously and respectably." Frederick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," *American Quarterly* 24 (December 1972) : 608.

<sup>8</sup>Race is a socially constructed artifact. It is culturally and historically contingent. E. Nathaniel Gates, introduction to *The Concept of 'Race' in Natural and Social Science*, edited by E. Nathaniel Gates (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997) , *vii-x*. Gates

concludes "there is ultimately no such thing as 'race' in itself, only a politicized notion of 'race' reflecting prevailing societal arrangements." *Ibid.*, x. For further discussion of 'race' as a socially constructed phenomena, see Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in Region, Race and Reconstruction, eds. J. Kousser and J. McPherson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Ashley Montagu, Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race, 6th ed. (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1997). Montagu maintains that race is an abstraction which is believed and treated as if it had a real existence, when in fact the only reality is the artificial construction of the term and the meaning that has been given to it. *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>9</sup>Ruth Roach Pierson's chapter "Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women's History," in Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall, eds., Writing Women's History: International Perspectives (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), expands on many of the problems encountered in writing the history of oppressed groups (specifically women). Pierson discusses how the "'lived experience of oppression', especially in its most systematic or violent forms, can be voiced only by those who have known that experience first hand." *Ibid.*, 93. That being said, I recognize that I must move forward with caution.

<sup>10</sup>The mid-nineteenth century American black press also promoted these tenets of racial uplift. "Upright living was the backbone of middle-class reforms, and the black press kept the issues of temperance, good health, prudence, respectability, and education near the forefront of its content." Frankie Hutton, The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 160.

<sup>11</sup>The black press in America also focused on racial uplift. Black newspapers in the United States offered advice on racial elevation and published uplifting messages of blacks conforming to 'respectable' ideals. "If we are guided by the reporting and commentary of the black press, the [black] middle class aspired almost constantly to respectability through education, temperance, industriousness, upright living patterns, and involvement in a variety of self elevation organizations." Hutton, Early Black Press, x.

<sup>12</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 479.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>14</sup>Daniel G. Hill, The Freedom-Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada (Agincourt, Ont.: Book Society of Canada, 1981).

<sup>15</sup>Research on black history in the Canadian prairie provinces has been done by Colin A. Thompson, Blacks in Deep Snow: Black Pioneers in Canada (Don Mills, Ont.: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1979). The experiences of black pioneers on the prairies are unique and different from those of the black settlements in Upper Canada/Canada West. Further, blacks settling west of the Rockies have a distinct history, see Winks, Blacks in Canada, 272-287.

<sup>16</sup>In his chapter entitled "Freedom Seekers," Hill gives quick, but detailed, autobiographical sketches and includes personal photos of some of the nineteenth century black settlers in Canada West. These are accounts of exceptionally determined individuals who struggled to make a place for themselves in Canada. One such man was a Torontonian named William Peyton Hubbard. He entered civic politics in 1893 and said "I have always felt that I am a representative of a race hitherto despised, but if given fair opportunity would be able to command esteem." Hill, Freedom Seekers, 217. It is such inspiring stories of blacks who sought a better, freer, more humane life north of the 49th parallel, that Hill solicits for his book.

<sup>17</sup>Ripley, BAP, 18.

<sup>18</sup>Racial elevation was a notion, directed by black leaders, to make blacks more respectable, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the white community. Racial uplift of free blacks would also help those in slavery. In a history of the black press in the United States, the author Frankie Hutton says "While antislavery was a component in all of the papers, the politically powerless editors knew their energies would probably be more effectively spent by offering uplifting messages to help free blacks get on with the trying business of elevating the race in the face of the most recalcitrant odds." Hutton, Early Black Press, 158.

<sup>19</sup>James W. St. G. Walker, A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students (Hull, Que.: Government Publications, 1980), *iii*.

<sup>20</sup>A complete bibliography of Fred Landon's writings has been prepared by Hilary Bates in Ontario History, 62 (1970): 5-16.

<sup>21</sup>Landon does not provide much analysis of relations between black Canadians and white Canadians. Landon also refers to members of the black community almost exclusively as 'negroes' in his writings. See Fred Landon, "The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," Journal of Negro History 5 (January 1920): 22-36; "Social Conditions Among the Negroes in Upper Canada Before 1865," Ontario History 12 (1925): 144-161; "Agriculture Among the Negro Refugees in Upper Canada," Journal of Negro History 21 (July 1936): 304-312.

<sup>22</sup>William Renwick Riddell, "The Slave in Upper Canada," Journal of Negro History 4 (October 1919): 372-395. Riddell, "Slavery in Canada," Journal of Negro History 5 (July 1920): 261-377.

<sup>23</sup>Most of the recent literature that examines blacks in Canada still focuses on blacks in Canada West, especially on the communities that were in close proximity to the American border. These locales were home to a substantial population of blacks and thus were important centers of black Canadian life.

<sup>24</sup>Jason Silverman, Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive

Slaves, 1800-1863 (New York: Faculty Press, 1985).

<sup>25</sup>The 1861 Canada West census reports 11,223 blacks in Canada West. But Michael Wayne argues "Since that figure was almost 4,000 below even the lowest estimates made at the time, it seemed evident to historians that enumerators had neglected to record a significant proportion of the black population. Examination of the original manuscript schedules, however, suggests that it was the clerks who transcribed the data who were at fault, not the enumerators. The census rolls include entries on 17,053 blacks, not the 11,000 quoted in the published report." Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based of the Manuscript Census of 1861." Histoire sociale/Social History 56 (November 1995) : 467.

<sup>26</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 489-494.

<sup>27</sup>Jason Silverman, "The American Fugitive Slave in Canada: Myths and Realities," Southern Studies 19 (Fall 1980) : 217.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>29</sup>Jason Silverman, "'We Shall Be Heard!': The Development of the Fugitive Slave Press in Canada," Canadian Historical Review 65 (March 1984) : 54.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>For a detailed examination of the nineteenth century white press in Ontario, and its reflection of white Canadian attitudes towards blacks, see Allen P. Stouffer, "A 'Restless Child of Change and Accident': The Black Image in Nineteenth Century Ontario," Ontario History 76 (June 1984) : 128-150.

<sup>32</sup>Jason H. Silverman and Donna J. Gillie, "'The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties': Education and the Fugitive Slave in Canada," Ontario History 74 (June 1982) : 95-112.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>34</sup>Silverman's writings are a contrast to Winks' conclusions that black Canadians made little use of the institutions that could have been sources of strength to their community. However, Winks does recognize that growing prejudice in the 1850s was reflected in the school situation. Winks, Blacks in Canada, 371.

<sup>35</sup>Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) , 2.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>37</sup>Shirley J. Yee, Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860

(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) , 1.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>39</sup>Gender conventions of the time dictated the role that a woman could play. Yee argues that although the means of politicizing themselves was somewhat restricted by patriarchal nineteenth century society, free black American women developed their own patterns of participation. *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>40</sup>Both women were born in the United States and distinguished themselves as well-educated abolitionists involved in Canada's two premiere black newspapers. The achievements of these women met with controversy, especially for the out-spoken Shadd. Interestingly, Mary Ann Shadd had an open feud with Henry and Mary Bibb. Each would use their respective forums to exchange public barbs. In Henry Bibb's opinion, "Miss Shadd has said and writes many things we think will add nothing to her credit as a lady." Shirley J. Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," Canadian Historical Review 75 (March 1994) : 62. For a discussion of the controversy between Mary Ann Shadd and the Bibbs, see Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 245-271.

<sup>41</sup>Afua Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb, Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," Ontario History 83 (March 1991) : 39-54. Also, see Cooper's article "Black Women and Work in Nineteenth-Century Canada West: Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb," in 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994).

<sup>42</sup>Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women," 53-73. Jane Rhodes, Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). Also see Harold Hancock, "Mary Ann Shadd: Negro Editor, Editor, and Lawyer," Delaware History 15 (April 1973) : 187-194.

<sup>43</sup>Mary Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd Cary were exceptional for a couple of reasons. First, their accomplishments were extraordinary for black women of the mid-nineteenth century. Second, they left written records of their work. Jane Rhodes says of Mary Ann Shadd, "She devoted her life to using public discourse to advance a range of political and social reforms. In the process she became a consummate communicator who thrust herself into a public sphere where few people of color, especially women, dared to tread." Rhodes, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, xi.

<sup>44</sup>Yee, "Gender Ideology," 54.

<sup>45</sup>Yee, Black Women Abolitionists, 40. Yee says "ideas about what constituted 'ladylike' behavior reflected illusions about female respectability that were narrowly applied only to native-born, white, middle class women." *Ibid.*, 4. The four 'cardinal' virtues are also

mentioned in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966) : 152.

<sup>46</sup>Peggy Bristow, "'Whatever you raise in the ground you can sell in Chatham': Black Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65," in Bristow, 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up', 125.

<sup>47</sup>Adrienne Shadd, "'The Lord seemed to say "Go"": Women and the Underground Railroad Movement," in Bristow, 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up', 62.

<sup>48</sup>For their work in the Black and abolitionist press of the nineteenth century, historian Afua Cooper refers to "Henry Bibb as father and founder of the African Canadian Press, and Mary Bibb as a foremother of African Canadian journalism." Cooper, "Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause," 9.

<sup>49</sup>Cooper, "Black Women and Work," in Bristow, 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up'.

<sup>50</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851.

<sup>51</sup>At the time of writing, Afua Cooper's paper is not publicly accessible. Cooper has placed a restriction on her dissertation, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854." (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000). However, the author kindly shared two chapters (chapters 1 and 6) of her work.

<sup>52</sup>Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 3.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

## Chapter Two

... it is not true that the fugitives here need food and clothing as a general thing. They need education, and land on which they can raise what they can eat and wear.

*Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 March 1851

Beginning in 1850, a significant number of blacks fled the threatening atmosphere of the northern United States and made their way to settlements and communities in Canada West. Many white Canadians disliked the presence of these new immigrants.<sup>1</sup> This disdain and hostility created a tense relationship. In 1851, as a response to anti-black actions and sentiment, former slave Henry Bibb established the bi-monthly newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive* in Canada West. He intended his paper to be "a mouthpiece for the refugees in Canada."<sup>2</sup> The milieu of Canada West during the mid-nineteenth century and some biographical information on Henry and Mary Bibb will be discussed in this chapter, since they are two elements crucial to understanding the later discussion of the *Voice of the Fugitive*. The Canadian social environment that blacks lived in (and the American system that many had escaped from) would influence the attitudes and objectives of many Canadian blacks.

The immigration of blacks from the United States to Canada was insignificant in the eighteenth century. With an act "to prevent the further introduction of slaves" in 1793, Upper Canada took a partial step towards the emancipation of slaves.<sup>3</sup> Although slavery in Canada was not abolished until 1834,<sup>4</sup> prior to that, because of the ban on importing slaves into Canada and the liberties granted to blacks on Canadian soil, many American blacks would come to Canada. There was great incentive for slaves to flee their masters and journey to Canada, but they did not do so in great numbers until about 1815. The

political climate for blacks in the United States, at this time, was hostile. Race relations between blacks and whites were strained and blacks longed for safety and freedom. So, it can be argued, that the Canadian milieu did not draw blacks across the border, as much as the conditions in the United States of America forced them to flee. The movement of American blacks into Upper Canada continued through the 1840s and by the middle of the nineteenth century a few black communities had been created.<sup>5</sup>

A major turning point for blacks coming to the free, Canadian 'haven' occurred in 1850. The American Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was an amendment to an earlier law from 1793. It "allowed a citizen to arrest and detain any person of African descent suspected of being a runaway slave. In practice, free Blacks as well as runaways were often kidnapped by bounty-hunters and taken off to slavery."<sup>6</sup> The Fugitive Slave Law allowed slaveowners to retrieve their runaway 'property' from states north of the Mason Dixon line. Thus, slaves who had escaped their masters and settled in the free northern states could be recovered and brought back into bondage. Historian Fred Landon summed up the results of the law, "When President Fillmore signed the Fugitive Slave Bill on September 18, 1850, he started a Negro migration that continued to the opening of the Civil War, resulting in thousands of people of color crossing over into Canada and causing many thousands more to move from one State into another seeking safety from their pursuers."<sup>7</sup> Not only were runaway slaves afraid of being apprehended, but also freed blacks were afraid of being kidnapped and enslaved.

Several well-publicized cases of kidnapping or mistaken identity legitimated the abduction fears of freedpersons. Regardless of their fear of leaving the United States, thousands of blacks poured into Canada after 1850. Cases arose in Canadian courts involving American slave 'catchers' who attempted to retrieve runaways. Canadian law protected blacks from the Fugitive Slave Law.<sup>8</sup> British courts passed an act in 1833 that allowed the Governor-In-Council of Upper Canada to decide whether or not a 'Fugitive Offender' should be extradited. The governor usually protected the fugitive slave, "whose

only crime was self-theft, a patent impossibility where slavery did not exist." In the majority of cases the Canadian courts refused to extradite, thus sheltering the former slaves.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding what we now know about the Underground Railroad, we can only speculate as to exactly how many runaway slaves reached Canada via the Underground Railroad.<sup>10</sup> While some rescues and arrivals are well documented, others are vague or non-existent, or so sensational that we question the accuracy of the accounts and the number of fugitives in Canada. Robin Winks states "that by 1860 the black population of Canada West alone may have reached forty thousand, three-quarters of whom had been or were fugitive slaves or their children, and therefore beneficiaries of the Underground Railroad."<sup>11</sup> Thousands of blacks came to Canada after the Fugitive Slave Law and the resulting surge in the black population in Canadian communities would have an effect on the white population. The Canada West towns on the shore of the Detroit River became major settlement locations for black immigrants. Sandwich and Amherstburg, towns at the westernmost edge of the province, saw their black population steadily grow. Chatham and the surrounding area recorded an increase as well. By the early 1850s, the town of Windsor, known as a major terminus of the Underground Railroad, saw a rise in its black population.

Among historians there is considerable debate over general population data.<sup>12</sup> Researchers cannot agree on exactly how many blacks were in Canada, how many blacks were fugitives from slavery, or how they reached here.<sup>13</sup> Canadian census figures showed 4,669 black residents in Canada West in 1851, and 11,223 in 1861.<sup>14</sup> These official figures have been disputed as categorically inaccurate for a number of reasons.<sup>15</sup> Discrepancies in population figures are found throughout the secondary literature, and can be misleading. The diverse figures may be attributed to the inconsistency of population, school, tax, and voting records.<sup>16</sup> Various reports make disparate estimates.<sup>17</sup> Based on

my reading of the sources, I believe that approximately 20,000 to 40,000 blacks lived in Canada West by 1860.<sup>18</sup>

To understand the significance of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, one must first have an understanding of the society and the people it was intended for. Henry Bibb published his newspaper in Sandwich, Canada West. Unfortunately, very little information exists on the black community in Sandwich. However, information is available on the nearby communities of Buxton and Chatham.<sup>19</sup> Much has been written on the history of an all-black settlement in Buxton, founded by Reverend King in 1849, and the black community in the racially mixed town of Chatham. By examining Buxton and Chatham we will be given, to some degree, a look into the everyday lives of black Canadians. However, because the social climates of these two communities differed, we can see that the experiences of blacks in Canada West were not necessarily alike. Buxton and Chatham illustrate some of the diverse, and parallel, circumstances of blacks during the mid-nineteenth century. Examining the towns of Buxton and Chatham will provide us with partial portraits of black settlement in Canada. It will also lay the foundation for comprehending the social climate that existed in the black communities during the time the *Voice of the Fugitive* was published.

The settlement at Buxton had been established as a segregated community for black Canadians,<sup>20</sup> by an American, Reverend William King. In June 1849, King organized a stock company called the Elgin Association (named after Lord Elgin, governor-general of 'the Canadas'), to act as the legal agent for the community.<sup>21</sup> This stock company raised the capital to purchase a parcel of Canadian land. King, a white slaveowner from Louisiana, brought his 15 slaves to settle on individual plots on the site.<sup>22</sup> King, after his wife's death, had acquired slaves that had belonged to her. King's conscience was troubled by slaveowning, so he moved his slaves to Canada where they would automatically gain their freedom. The first settler moved on to the site in December 1849. King hoped other blacks would purchase land in Buxton, and they did. In 1852 there were 75 black families,

with a total population of about 400 living at Buxton. At that time 350 acres of land had been cleared and more than 200 were under cultivation. A year later the population had risen to 520 and more than double the number of acres were under cultivation. With steady growth, the settlement at Buxton continually developed over the next several years.<sup>23</sup> Historian Allen Stouffer has said "Buxton provided the opportunity to determine whether ex-slaves would support themselves and take advantage of their liberty to achieve self-improvement--a key issue in the long debate over the feasibility of emancipation."<sup>24</sup> The accomplishments made at Buxton would be touted (by blacks and whites) as a model of social progress and productivity. Well-known abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward said of the community, "Buxton, in more points than one, is the model settlement, not only of the colored people, but of Canada."<sup>25</sup>

Settlements were seen by their supporters as a testing ground for moral and social reform of blacks. Buxton "provided a setting in which to infuse blacks with white, middle-class, Protestant values. Piety, education, moral uplift, and sobriety were the watchwords; thrift and industry were the economic imperatives."<sup>26</sup> Settlers followed strict minimum standards set by the Elgin Association on the building and upkeep of their houses and yards, maintenance of roads, clearing and cultivation of the land, and the raising of livestock. Most blacks in Buxton were farmers, but a few were mechanics and craftsmen. Some residents also performed duties as constables or postmasters. There were small businesses in Buxton such as a two storey hotel, a general store, a post office (which other black communities lacked), and a school.<sup>27</sup> Buxton's first school was opened in 1850 and was followed by another a few years later. These schools were considered superior to nearby white public educational institutions and many whites from the surrounding area enrolled their children in them.<sup>28</sup> The successful school system in Buxton concentrated on basic education at the primary level. Students were taught English, arithmetic, history, geography, ancient languages, and the Bible.<sup>29</sup>

Most residents of Buxton became citizens and voted in local elections.<sup>30</sup> They attended temperance meetings and church services in Buxton's church which was known as the Buxton Mission. There was little report of drunkenness or theft, and nearby white farmers respected their hard-working neighbors. "The Buxton settlers were spoken of by the white people as good farmers, good customers and good neighbors. There were white children attending the Buxton school and white people in their Sunday church services."<sup>31</sup> After initial opposition from local white Canadians to the settlement of blacks in Buxton, race relations with surrounding whites were peaceful. Reverend King's experiment 'succeeded' because the black men and women who settled in Buxton conducted themselves in a manner, and adopted values, that were akin to the area's white homesteaders.

In 1864 a white commentator reporting on the condition of freed blacks in Canada West visited Buxton. He said,

There is no tavern and no groggery; but there is a chapel and a schoolhouse. Most interesting of all are the inhabitants. Twenty years ago most of them were slaves, who owned nothing, not even their children. Now they own themselves; they own their houses and farms; and they have their wives and children about them. They are enfranchised citizens of a government which protects their rights. . . . The present condition of all these colonists as compared with their former one is remarkable. . . . This settlement is a perfect success.<sup>32</sup>

The relative isolation of this black community helped to buffer it from the white hostility that most urban blacks encountered. In the nearby town of Chatham, however, racism was rampant. In Chatham, during the years 1840 to 1860, "blacks suffered considerable prejudice at the hands of their white neighbors."<sup>33</sup> The social environments of these two communities were markedly different. Chatham was definitely more racially diverse than Buxton and this possibly had an effect on its race relations.

Chatham was not established as a black colony and was not exclusively or mainly black, although many blacks did settle there. By the late 1850s, one third of the population of Chatham and the immediate surrounding area was black.<sup>34</sup> These Chatham

residents were forced out of local public schools, refused admission in Chatham hotels, and could not purchase a cabin class ticket on a steamer. The rampant prejudice in Chatham was noted by a number of sources. An Anglican missionary reported that, "Prejudice against the colored people prevails here to a greater extent than I have anywhere else found," when he visited Chatham in 1854.<sup>35</sup> In his autobiography, Samuel Ringgold Ward said the racism of Chatham whites was the worst in Canada West.<sup>36</sup> Despite these first-hand reports of discrimination, historian Fred Landon sidesteps the issue of evident racism in his report "Fugitive Slaves in Ontario." Landon, however, cannot completely mask the problem. He says, "testimony is borne to an ill-will more manifest at Chatham than elsewhere. Not that there is ill treatment at Chatham, far from it, but there was more prejudice there."<sup>37</sup> Current historiography is more forthright. A more recent study says, "Chatham whites, generally speaking, were racists."<sup>38</sup> With such a harsh social climate, why did blacks stay in Chatham?

Chatham made a favorable home for blacks because, generally, jobs were plentiful. During this time there was substantial economic growth in Chatham. In 1851 most of Chatham's blacks were unskilled laborers, but a few were tradespeople and business people. There were 9 shoemakers, 7 carpenters, 8 blacksmiths, 3 bricklayers, 6 masons, several barbers, tobacconist, cooks, ministers, sailors, and farmers among the resident blacks.<sup>39</sup> Blacks could find work as tradesmen, laborers or farmers. They also found skilled and semi-skilled jobs as craftsmen, merchants, and clergymen.<sup>40</sup> Beginning in 1854 many blacks were employed in the construction of the Great Western Railway. Black women were also busy in their communities. In both Buxton and Chatham women "taught school, ran businesses, raised children, worked as farmers, domestic servants, midwives, and healers, and were political activists."<sup>41</sup>

Yet, the climate for black Canadians in these two areas were starkly different. The black men and women in Buxton and Chatham would have experienced disparate degrees of social acceptance, in large part due to the reception they received from white citizens.

Canadian law was more supportive of blacks than American legal codes, but in the eyes of the white populace Canadian blacks still carried the stigma of slavery and the racism that had justified it. Some white Canadians believed that blacks, because of their association with slavery, were essentially sub-human and could be mistreated.<sup>42</sup> Despite Chatham's racist atmosphere, it is suggested that blacks stayed in Chatham because there was paid work to be found.<sup>43</sup> Blacks may also have settled in Chatham because efforts to acculturate to white Canadian values were encouraged by black leaders and abolitionists.

Racism did not just exist in Chatham, but all over Canada West. The increased migration of blacks to areas of Canada that had previously had relatively few non-white townspeople, was met by intolerance from the white population. Often white citizens most vehemently opposed a large black population in their community, and "prejudice was plainest in the areas where most Blacks had settled."<sup>44</sup> Early historical reports allude to racism in Canada West communities, but quickly dismiss it as "differences in the attitude of the white population towards these strangers in their midst."<sup>45</sup> In a 1936 article outlining the "Conditions Surrounding the Refugees", historian Fred Landon says,

Occasionally there was prejudice shown, some intolerance that jarred on the generally broadminded view of Canadians. This did not pass unobserved by the negroes themselves nor by their friends, yet none could be more grateful than these people for even the droppings of liberty and opportunity of the Canadian table. Despite the small population at the time of the very considerable immigration of negroes in the [eighteen] forties and fifties, there was never anything in this country which could properly be described as a negro problem, and in general the relations of whites and blacks were marked by a friendliness against which any occasional ill-will showed in quite marked contrast.<sup>46</sup>

Landon's denial of racial tension in the towns of Canada West is not widely supported. White antipathy did result in discrimination against blacks. Blacks were excluded from white institutions such as schools, churches, and the press, and suffered economic and social discrimination.<sup>47</sup>

Black Canadians suffered discrimination in their communities and they were maligned in the white press so they looked for a medium that would voice their opinions. Canadian

blacks may have been interested in a public voice for their beliefs and a proponent for their views. Leaders of the black community spoke out against the injustices in Canada West, and campaigned for the end of racial prejudice everywhere. One of the foremost voices of the black community and an advocate of racial improvement through abolition, education, agricultural pursuits, and temperance was Henry Bibb. Henry Bibb established Canada's first black newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*, in 1851. He created a platform from which the topics that were of special interest to blacks could be presented. Henry Bibb used his bi-monthly publication as an opportunity to broadcast his beliefs and explain them to fellow black Canadians. As the paper's editor, Bibb promoted his convictions about racial uplift and the path he thought Canadian blacks should take to become better, more respectable men and women. His life helps illustrate the motivation behind his work and his opinions.

Henry Bibb was born in Shelby County, Kentucky in May 1815, the first of seven sons born to an enslaved black woman named Mildred Jackson. His father was a slaveholder named James Bibb. Henry chronicled his life in an autobiography published in New York in 1849.<sup>48</sup> He tells of his years in southern slavery, his masters, his toil, and his humble and degraded life as a slave.<sup>49</sup> The tone is set for this story in the first paragraph of his narrative, where he declares, "I have been dragged down to the lowest depths of human degradation and wretchedness, by Slaveholders."<sup>50</sup> Although Bibb physically escaped his various owners several times, emotionally he longed for more personal freedom and, on a much larger scope, emancipation for fellow blacks held in bondage. His belief "that every man has a right to wages for his labor; a right to his own wife and children; a right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience" was rooted in the dictates of American (white) liberalism and his religious convictions.

Bibb was not an 'ideal' slave from a slaveholder's perspective. After initially 'experimenting' at running away, he resolved to be free once and for all. After six

attempts, he finally succeeded in 1840, leaving behind a wife and daughter. Bibb's years of bondage and attempts at freedom were filled with trials and events that supply his autobiography with drama and sorrow, evoking empathy from the reader. In early 1842 Bibb moved to Detroit to pursue an education. He briefly attended a school for blacks run by Reverend William C. Monroe. After three weeks of instruction, Henry 'graduated' and left because he was financially unable to continue. This brief schooling was the full extent of his formal academic endeavors.

Education for blacks, whether free or enslaved, was legally prohibited in most of the slave states. Ideally, a slaveowner wanted a hard-working, docile, obedient slave. Henry Bibb, in his autobiography, makes some very discerning observations of the slaveholding institution. He notes that slaveowners regard a slave's intellect and education as a drawback.

[T]he most rigorous examinations of slaves by those slave inspectors, is on mental capacity. If they are found to be very intelligent, this is pronounced the most objectionable of all other qualities connected with the life of a slave. . . . It lays the foundation for running away and going to Canada. They also see in it a love for freedom, patriotism, insurrection, bloodshed, and exterminating war against American slavery.<sup>51</sup>

In May 1844 Henry Bibb embarked on a new phase of his life. He had been living as a free man in Detroit for two years when he began to tour and lecture as an abolitionist. He attended and spoke at antislavery meetings in various towns and cities in Michigan, Ohio, New England, and New York. Bibb was also promoting the platform of the Liberty Party as one of its candidates. Bibb's talents had been recognized and his political leanings formalized. The party's main tenet was the necessity of severing all ties that the national government had with slavery.<sup>52</sup> Bibb made contacts and gained valuable experience from his tenure on the lecture circuit. During this time he also helped organize abolitionist groups in the northeastern United States and in Canada West.

A few years later Henry Bibb would meet Mary E. Miles at an antislavery meeting in New York, and in June 1848, they would marry. Bibb said of his new wife, "My beloved wife is a bosom friend, a help-meet, a loving companion in all the social, moral, and religious relations of life."<sup>53</sup> Mary's life experiences were markedly different from Henry's. Unlike Henry, Mary had never been enslaved. She had a substantial amount of formal education and she was a trained teacher. Mary Elizabeth Miles was born around 1820 in Rhode Island and was the only child of free Quaker parents. Mary's earliest education is unknown. Presumably, she was trained by her parents or attended a private institution for black children. She enrolled in Massachusetts State Normal School at Lexington and, after graduating, she taught at various schools in the North and Northeastern United States.<sup>54</sup> Her training, education, and commitment would help distinguish her as a leader and activist. She also proved to be an invaluable contributor to Henry's future efforts and endeavors.

In 1850, after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Henry, Mary, and his mother emigrated from Detroit to Sandwich, Canada West. In his autobiography, Henry explained why he had chosen Canada: "Canada was a land of liberty, somewhere in the North; and every wave of trouble that rolled across my breast, caused me to think more and more about Canada, and liberty."<sup>55</sup> The fate of blacks in America, exacerbated by the recent change in legislation, troubled the Bibbs and drove them across the border. Henry and Mary Bibb soon became activists in Canada West. The Bibbs' most ambitious venture was the *Voice of the Fugitive*.<sup>56</sup>

Mary Bibb canvassed support for Canada's first black newspaper. Before the premier issue of the paper, she sent a prospectus to a New York abolitionist and asked for his help.<sup>57</sup> Mary promoted the paper and recruited agents to sell subscriptions in the U.S. She may also have participated in editing the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Although Mary was never given formal credit in the newspaper as an editor, there is evidence that she contributed to the paper.<sup>58</sup> Mary Bibb had much more formal education than Henry so

presumably she assisted with the production of the paper. A comparison of the informal correspondence of Henry Bibb with the polished presentation of the newspaper and the editor's columns indicate that Mary's education and skills were put to ample use.<sup>59</sup> It may be further suggested that she influenced the editorial direction of the *Voice of the Fugitive*. During part of 1851, when her husband was traveling in Wisconsin and Illinois, Mary oversaw the paper's publication.<sup>60</sup> Although Henry is given full credit for his work on the *Voice of the Fugitive*, we cannot overlook certain clues that Mary used her education and activism to sustain the paper.

In addition to running the paper, the Bibbs were local proponents of the Refugee Home Society, a Detroit-based organization that acquired large parcels of Canadian land for refugees to settle on.<sup>61</sup> The *Voice of the Fugitive* was a tool for the Refugee Home Society. This organization aimed to purchase fifty thousand acres of land and sell it in plots to black Canadians. Each settler would purchase twenty acres (and receive a bonus of five free acres) at a cost of two dollars an acre, to be paid in nine equal annual payments. A stipulation of the contract was that purchasers were not allowed to sell their land for fifteen years. Henry and Mary Bibb were also very involved in local temperance activities, as well as antislavery and emigrationist movements. They were instrumental in the founding of the local branch of the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society. Mary's numerous attempts to sustain a black school, her involvement with the Refugee Home Society, her membership in the Anti-Slavery Society of Windsor and various commitments to abolitionist activities, kept her at the forefront of social reform. Henry cultivated every attribute that his former slaveholders would disapprove of: he was literate, intelligent, and a fierce abolitionist promoting Canada as a refuge for blacks. The Bibbs' belief in antislavery, temperance, religion, and education would be primary tenets of Canada's first black newspaper.

Henry and Mary Bibb held that the moral elevation of black Canadians would garner white respect. They believed that the black community could improve its position in

society by adopting white standards of behavior. The Bibbs hoped their newspaper would be an invaluable tool for achieving respectability, and ultimately, equality. Topics were introduced in the first issue of the newspaper that outlined its editorial policy. Henry Bibb pledged to:

advocate the cause of human liberty in the true meaning of that term. We shall advocate the immediate and unconditional abolition of chattel slavery everywhere, but especially on American soil. We shall also persuade, as far as it may be practicable, every oppressed person of color in the United States to settle in Canada . . . . We shall advocate the claims of the American slaves to the Bible from whom it has ever been withheld. We shall advocate the cause of Temperance and moral reform generally. The cause of education shall have a prominent space in our columns. We shall advocate the claims of agricultural pursuits among our people as being the most certain road to independence and self-respect.<sup>62</sup>

The Bibbs believed that approval and esteem from the white community were available to blacks but it would take strict adherence to a moral and social code to gain this approval. Henry Bibb wanted to show that blacks, who had the freedom and the opportunity to succeed, were capable of achievement. Blacks' steps toward self-elevation would contribute to racial elevation.

The first step on the road to racial uplift was liberty. In an early edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Henry Bibb addressed an editorial to "the Anti-Slavery Public" drumming up support for his new publication. He said,

It was under these circumstances, in Canada, we felt the need of an organ through which we could be heard, and when there was no other even willing to try the experiment of such an enterprise for the encouragement of our long-oppressed and enslaved people in their efforts to establish homes and character among strangers in a new country to them, we came forward, single-handed, with our humble offering, and pledged it in Freedom's name on the common altar of human liberty.<sup>63</sup>

By the end of the inaugural year, Bibb estimated that there were 1100 subscribers to the *Voice of the Fugitive*.<sup>64</sup> The publication began in Sandwich, Canada West, but in the spring of 1852 the office moved two miles north to Windsor, Canada West. Bibb described Windsor as a "flourishing little village" with 300 inhabitants.<sup>65</sup> Windsor was

located along the Detroit River, directly opposite the American city of Detroit, Michigan. It was convenient for Bibb to cross the river and do business in Detroit and he encouraged American contributors to send their papers and articles to his Detroit agent. The *Voice of the Fugitive* had agents in Canada West and in the United States. The men who acted as agents for the newspaper in states like Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Vermont, helped to publicize it. Bibb encouraged Americans to subscribe and he noted that the cost of postage to mail the newspaper across the border was the same as if the paper were published in the States.

Canada's first black newspaper followed a very similar pattern to the American black press that had been in existence for decades.<sup>66</sup> U.S. historian Frederick Detweiler noted that the 'Negro press' started as a result of the hostile race relations in America. He called them 'race papers' because they kept the interests and issues of the black community pre-eminent.<sup>67</sup> In general, newspapers discussed news and ran advertisements, but the antislavery press added its own brand of editorial arguments and exhortations. The black press carried "through its entire history this motive, the fight for liberation."<sup>68</sup> Black papers took a stand against slavery and reflected the struggle of American blacks. In Canada West, blacks likely read the *Voice of the Fugitive* because they could learn about each other, read success stories of fellow blacks, and interpret the conflicts and issues facing blacks.

The *Voice of the Fugitive* covered local news (which was generally known by the citizens before it appeared in the press), discussed international events (that had occurred weeks or months previously), and was very interested in political affairs in the U.S. It also included special features, poetry, advertising, and editorials. Henry Bibb relied on other journals for information about foreign events. In fact, many editors from Canada, America, Europe, and England exchanged their newspapers to gain news from outside their country. So-called 'exchange papers' were allowed to be sent without postage to other editors and publishers.<sup>69</sup> The *Voice of the Fugitive* borrowed some of this

information from other newspaper sources, but it had a distinct function and responsibility in Canada. The growing black population probably needed a different news medium for its unique circumstances. Trying to assimilate into a new society, literate blacks could read the established white newspapers, but only found understanding of their own situation in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. The newspaper also gave blacks a widespread platform from which they may have been able to express their views and arguments on issues that would not have been promoted in the white press.

There was a on-going campaign to boost sales. Henry Bibb wanted to make the *Voice of the Fugitive* a weekly paper. He insisted that if the number of subscribers could be doubled, the paper could be issued weekly at the same subscription cost.<sup>70</sup> In his pitch to start a weekly publication, Bibb promoted the press as "one of the most powerful instrumentalities [sic] for breaking the arm of the oppressor."<sup>71</sup> Periodically during its publication, Henry Bibb would announce that the paper needed more subscribers to keep it afloat. In the 8 April 1852 edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, under the headline "Five Hundred Dollars Wanted at this Office," Bibb claimed that money was owed to the paper by truant subscribers.<sup>72</sup> He explained that the mortgage was due on the press and printing materials, and the newspaper could be forced to close.

This newspaper maintained regular, bi-monthly publication until the end of 1852. Unfortunately the paper did not sustain its financial footing, and in 1853 the issues were sporadic.<sup>73</sup> On October 9, 1853, Bibb's printing office burned down. Bibb proceeded to publish a shorter version of his paper, but the *Voice of the Fugitive* never regained its former presence.<sup>74</sup> Less than a year later, on August 1, 1854, Henry Bibb died. Mary Bibb, sometime after 1855, remarried. By 1865, after three teaching ventures, she opened a fancy goods store in Canada West. Despite the brief duration of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, the Bibbs' accomplishments in establishing themselves as leaders of the black community in Canada West and creating a forum for discussing issues within their community were remarkable.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Predating the time of this study, from 1815 to 1840, there was a marked increase in the number of fugitive slaves crossing the American border into Canada. Initially blacks were accepted as a unique minority, but as their numbers increased white Canadians began to resent their presence. By 1850 and the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law in the U.S., 'negrophobia' was a significant prejudice among white Canadians. Black Canadians in the mid-nineteenth century suffered the effects of racism from the white community, the white school system, and the white press. For a discussion of the growing hostility of white Canadians, see Jason Silverman, Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1863 (New York: Faculty Press, 1985). For information about the Fugitive Slave Law, see Stanley Campbell, The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851. Also cited in Jason Silverman, "'We Shall Be Heard!': The Development of the Fugitive Slave Press in Canada," Canadian Historical Review 65 (March 1984) : 60.

<sup>3</sup> Robin W. Winks, The Blacks in Canada: A History, 2d ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) , 96-99. In 1793, the first parliament of Upper Canada enacted a law against the importation of slaves and stipulated that the children born of slaves after the passage of this act were to become free at the age of 25 years. However, this legislation did not put an end to slavery or free those already enslaved. William Renwick Riddell estimates that at the time of the Act of 1793 there were approximately 500 slaves in Upper Canada. William Renwick Riddell, "The Slave in Canada," Journal of Negro History 5 (July 1920) : 326.

<sup>4</sup> Slavery within the British Empire was abolished by the Emancipation Act of 1833. Up to that point, slavery had existed in Canada for two hundred years. The Imperial Act, which would take effect the following year, had closed the slaveholding chapter in this English colony's history. Emancipation Day was August 1, 1834.

<sup>5</sup> From the 1820s to the 1840s many American blacks settled in present-day Ontario. In 1842 the reported black population was 4,167. Winks, Blacks in Canada, 144-148, 153-162, 486.

<sup>6</sup> Adrienne Shadd, "'The Lord seemed to say "Go"": Women and the Underground Railroad Movement," in 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in

African Canadian Women's History, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994) : 63n.

<sup>7</sup>Fred Landon, "The Negro Migration to Canada After the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," Journal of Negro History 5 (January 1920) : 22.

<sup>8</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 169.

<sup>9</sup>Landon, "The Negro Migration," 36. In 1838 the British officials decided that it was unlawful to extradite a fugitive slave for any reason in which a white person would also not be extradited. Also, offenses charged under foreign jurisdiction would not be given a trial by jury in Upper Canada. Winks, Blacks in Canada, 170-172. See also *Ibid.*, 168-176.

<sup>10</sup>The period following the Fugitive Slave Law saw the greatest activity in the Railroad's work of secret emancipation. Because of the covert nature of the Underground Railroad, there is scant evidence detailing its work and the number of individuals who relied on it. However, various recollections and primary documents have surfaced and have been very well utilized. In Wilbur H. Siebert's highly influential book, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), he interviewed 'conductors' on the Underground Railroad, investigated cryptic letters and ledgers kept at the Railroad 'stations', as well as provided a groundbreaking map of the various stops of the Railway. Since then, a number of historians have informed us of the intricacies involved in transporting black men, women, and children to gain their freedom. Adrienne Shadd, in her article "'The Lord seemed to say "Go"": Women and the Underground Railroad Movement," in Bristow, 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up', explores the little known facts about black women's efforts within this movement. She argues that, "the popular myth of a clandestine system of liberal white abolitionists and sympathizers helping poor, destitute Black fugitives is a distortion of the reality. As we have seen, large numbers of Black people--Black women--aided on the Underground Railroad with money, time, energy, and commitment." *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>11</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 240.

<sup>12</sup>Robin Winks remarks on the numerous estimates of the 'Negro' population. *Ibid.*, 233-240. As well, he set aside an Appendix (pages 484-496) in the back of his book to discuss this issue at length. *Ibid.*, 484-496.

<sup>13</sup>After examining enumerators' schedules from the 1861 census for Canada West, Michael Wayne says "The census suggests that historians have exaggerated the size of the black population, significantly overstated the proportion who were fugitives from slavery, underestimated the degree to which blacks were dispersed throughout the province, and misrepresented the extent of return migration." Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based on the

Manuscript Census of 1861." Histoire sociale/Social History 56 (November 1995) : 465.

<sup>14</sup>The published 1861 census for Canada West reported 11,223 blacks in Canada West. Daniel G. Hill, The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada (Agincourt, Ont.: Book Society of Canada, 1981) , 39. Historian Michael Wayne examined the original manuscript schedules and found the census roles included entries on 17,053 blacks. The clerks who transcribed the data incorrectly quoted the number as 11,223. Wayne, "Black Population of Canada West," 467.

<sup>15</sup>Several excuses exist for the errors including: some blacks 'passed' for white and were included in the 'white' column of the census or some blacks were not enumerated at all. Nevertheless, Michael Wayne argues that the census is "substantially more reliable than any other available source," such as, the speculation of contemporaries or the research of historians. *Ibid.*, 466.

<sup>16</sup>After the census of 1861 Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe visited Canada West from Washington and claimed that the black population numbers had been greatly underrated. Upon inquiring at various town offices and examining the records of several cities Howe determined the official reported figures to be unreliable. See Howe's Report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission, 1864. The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West (Boston, 1864; reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1969). Census information for this period underreported the number of blacks, while contemporary observers, for various reasons, overestimated numbers. Wayne "Black Population of Canada West," 467. For example, some whites reported thousands of blacks living in their town, but these reports cannot be substantiated and may have been the result of paranoia and racism. As well, abolitionists may have quoted inflated black population figures to promote their own causes.

<sup>17</sup>For a number of nineteenth century examples that show major disagreement in population figures, see Siebert, Underground Railroad, 221.

<sup>18</sup>Daniel Hill says that 30,000 blacks in Canada between 1800 and 1860 would be his 'conservative guess'. See Hill, Freedom Seekers, 39. Historian Robin Winks says "by 1860 the black population of Canada West alone may have reached forty thousand." Winks, Blacks in Canada, 240. Ripley's population estimate is analogous to Winks'. C. Peter Ripley, ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers, vol. 2, Canada, 1830-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) , 42. My assessment is based on a compromise between Wayne's data, which concludes that the 1861 black population was 17,053, and the population research of Ripley and Winks. Wayne, "Black Population of Canada West," 467.

<sup>19</sup>Early research was done by Fred Landon, see "The Buxton Settlement in Canada," Journal of Negro History 4 (October 1918) : 360-367.

<sup>20</sup>Black 'settlements' included Dawn, Buxton, and Wilberforce, as opposed to the black

settlers in non-segregated communities like Windsor, Sandwich, Amherstburg, Colchester, Chatham, and Toronto.

<sup>21</sup>The settlement at Buxton was overseen by the Elgin Association. Sometimes the names Elgin and Buxton are used interchangeably. Buxton was approximately fifteen miles southwest of Chatham.

<sup>22</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 208-218.

<sup>23</sup>Fred Landon, "Agriculture Among the Negro Refugees in Upper Canada," Journal of Negro History 21 (July 1936) : 306-307.

<sup>24</sup>Allen P. Stouffer, The Light of Nature and the Law of God: Antislavery in Ontario 1833-1877 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) , 98.

<sup>25</sup>Ripley, BAP, 259, citing *Provincial Freeman* (Windsor, Canada West), 24 March 1853.

<sup>26</sup>Ripley, BAP, 14-15.

<sup>27</sup>Three integrated schools were established in Buxton in the 1850s, with a total enrollment of almost 250 students. Ripley, BAP, 254n.

<sup>28</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 217.

<sup>29</sup>Ripley, BAP, 357n.

<sup>30</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 217.

<sup>31</sup>Landon, "Buxton Settlement," 366.

<sup>32</sup>Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe wrote this in his report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission. Howe was an American abolitionist who came to Canada West to investigate the status of blacks. Cited in Landon, "Buxton Settlement," 366.

<sup>33</sup>Howard Law, "'Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence: Ideology and the Ex-Slaves in Buxton and Chatham," Ontario History 77 (June 1985) : 109.

<sup>34</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 245. In 1851, 17 percent of Chatham's population was black. In 1861, 28 percent of Chatham's population was black. Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," 108.

<sup>35</sup>Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," 109.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 116, citing Ward's An Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro (London, 1855).

<sup>37</sup>Fred Landon, "Fugitive Slaves in Ontario," Quarterly Bulletin--The Northwest Ohio Historical Society 8 (April 1936) : 2.

<sup>38</sup>Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," 109.

<sup>39</sup>Hill, Freedom Seekers, 171.

<sup>40</sup>Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," 108, 120n.

<sup>41</sup>Peggy Bristow, "'Whatever you raise in the ground you can sell it in Chatham': Black Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65," in Bristow, 'We're Rooted Here', 125.

<sup>42</sup>Ripley, BAP, 183n.

<sup>43</sup>Historian Howard Law proposes that conforming to white standards of behavior and white work ethics contributed to the prosperity of Chatham's blacks. "In other words, deliberate and partial acculturation was economically advantageous for the ex-slaves." Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," 110.

<sup>44</sup>Hill, Freedom Seekers, 105. For an analysis of the prejudiced response of white Canadians to black fugitive slaves, see Jason Silverman, "The American Fugitive Slave in Canada: Myths and Realities," Southern Studies 19 (Fall 1980) : 215-227. Opposition to black settlement in Canada West, specifically Buxton and Chatham, is detailed on pages 221-224.

<sup>45</sup>Fred Landon, "Fugitive Slaves in Ontario," 1.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>The intolerance displayed by some white Canadians affected the liberties of blacks. For example, blacks could not stay at Chatham hotels, or purchase a cabin-class ticket on the Chatham steamer. Winks, Blacks in Canada, 248. As well, black students in Chatham were forced to attend separate schools. *Ibid.*, 370-374. Further, in 1853, Chatham's white property owners asked the government to block all further black immigration. *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>48</sup>Henry Bibb's autobiography is reprinted in Puttin' on Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup, ed. Gilbert Osofsky (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

<sup>49</sup>Slave narratives, such as Henry Bibb's, have been the subject of debate among scholars who question their reliability. Because many slave stories were published by and for the abolitionist cause, critics of these works suspect that the antislavery recorders have taken dramatic licence with the autobiographies. Nearly all published slave biographies document years of mistreatment on the plantation, a dramatic escape, and the long journey

to northern freedom. Many tales follow this structure and sequence of events, flavored with personal details. If some of Bibb's account has been blurred by hindsight and influenced by his allegiance to abolition, certain measures both past and present have been taken to authenticate his claims. Most of the facts of his life have been validated. In any case, readers may chalk up Henry Bibb's description as "substantially if not literally true." Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 241.

<sup>50</sup>Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 64.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>52</sup>Bibb joined this third party in 1844. He lectured throughout Michigan and travelled to Ohio. The Liberty Party had a full ticket of candidates nominated for Congress and the State legislature. In the 1844 election the Liberty Party received only six and a half percent of the votes. Fred Landon, "Henry Bibb, A Colonizer," *Journal of Negro History* 5 (October 1920) : 441.

<sup>53</sup>Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 164.

<sup>54</sup>Afua Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb, Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," *Ontario History* 83 (March 1991) : 40.

<sup>55</sup>Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 72.

<sup>56</sup>The subscription price was one dollar per year. For four dollars a year a subscriber received five copies of each printing. The paper announced that "No subscription will be received for a less term [sic] than six months." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. The cost of advertising in the paper was one dollar for four insertions of the ad, every subsequent insertion was 25 cents. *Ibid.* There were advertisements for anti-slavery books, boarding houses, life insurance, tailoring, livery stables, grocers, eating houses, bath houses, books, household items, and ready-made clothing. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851, 9 April 1851, 23 April 1851, 18 June 1851, 24 September 1851.

<sup>57</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 108-109.

<sup>58</sup>Henry Bibb credits his wife with "supervision of the business" during his absence. See his comments in *Voice of the Fugitive*, 13 August 1851.

<sup>59</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 108.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 111n.

<sup>61</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851; Ripley, *BAP*, 147n. The constitution and bylaws of the Refugee Home Society are printed in the 12 February 1852 edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive*.

<sup>62</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851. Reprinted in Roger W. Hite, "Voice of a Fugitive: Henry Bibb and Ante-bellum Black Separatism," Journal of Black Studies 4 (March 1974) : 273-274.

<sup>63</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1851.

<sup>64</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 17 December 1851.

<sup>65</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 8 April 1852.

<sup>66</sup>The first black periodical in America was called *Freedom's Journal*. It was published in 1827 by Samuel Cornish and John B. Russworm. Frederick G. Detweiler, The Negro Press in the United States (Chicago 1922; reprint, Maryland: McGrath Publishing Co., 1968) , 35-36.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>69</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 19 November 1851.

<sup>70</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 May 1851, 3 December 1851, 17 December 1851.

<sup>71</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 June 1851.

<sup>72</sup>Near the end of the first year of publication, Henry Bibb had urged readers to "Prove Yourselves to be Honest." Bibb said "This paper will be sent to some persons who have never subscribed for it, or been asked to do so by its agents . . . . Can those who are indebted to us for the paper, during the past year, expect us to continue?" *Voice of the Fugitive*, 17 December 1851.

<sup>73</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive* issues from 1 January 1851 to 16 December 1852 are available on microfilm. The intermittent issues from 1853 are not readily accessible.

<sup>74</sup>Silverman, Unwelcome Guests, 113. Historian Peter Ripley says that after the first publication of the paper was suspended and never brought back. Ripley, BAP, 112n. This discrepancy might mean that Bibb continued to publish, but the original form of the newspaper was never re-established.

### Chapter Three

To chase a man who has committed no crime, who is running for his liberty, as he has a right to do; and then drag him back handcuffed, against all remonstrances of his nature, to a slavery he loathes, and has a right to loathe; and there doom him to his hopeless toil without contract or wages: if this is not in itself a hopeless wrong, then tell us what is wrong.

*Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 January 1851

In the years immediately following the Fugitive Slave Law, some white and black Canadians took direct and formal action against slavery. The pivotal transition period of the early 1850s, when Canada West's black population surged, saw a rush of antislavery activity and the emergence of an abolitionist movement. In his research on abolition in Canada, historian Peter Ripley noted the important role of the black press in furthering this cause. "Editors understood the importance of newspapers in forging public opinion, attracting converts, filling lecture halls, raising money, and uniting the black community."<sup>1</sup> Henry Bibb's newspaper was a platform for antislavery news and views. The *Voice of the Fugitive* called for freedom and lent support to the abolition movement. It was a crucial tool in Canada West's antislavery activity and a voice of 'uplift' to the black community.

This chapter discusses some of the manifestations of antislavery sentiment and action in mid-nineteenth century Canada West. During this period antislavery societies were established to agitate for the abolition of American slavery and the emancipation of slaves. Some antislavery groups also provided material support and assistance to free blacks and fugitive slaves who came to Canada. As well, many activists extolled Canada's political freedoms and encouraged blacks to emigrate. And efforts to 'uplift' Canadian blacks were

often tied to Canada's antislavery activity. Racial uplift was inextricably linked with liberating the slave from bondage into freedom. Most black leaders thought that ending slavery would help to elevate blacks.

Indeed, Henry Bibb believed that slavery was demoralizing and oppressive to those enslaved, and it also contributed to the degraded status that whites attributed to all blacks. Bibb knew that being black was inextricably intertwined with being a slave, and a slave was considered less than fully human so blacks could be treated disrespectfully. The notion that blacks were innately inferior to whites was a widely-held proslavery argument. "Proslavery apologists believed blacks to be constitutionally indolent, vice-ridden, sensual, and lacking the intellectual capacity necessary for freedom and equal participation in a civilized, democratic society."<sup>2</sup> Much of North American white society had a negative perception of blacks. In fact, some whites debated whether blacks were human beings. "During the 1840s and 1850s, the 'American school' of ethnologists buttressed these assertions with 'scientific opinion'. They examined the nature of racial diversity and concluded that the black and white races were two distinct, separately created, and unequal species."<sup>3</sup> Bibb's ultimate goal of black elevation could not be accomplished without emancipation.

In addition to his antislavery work, Bibb was active in trying to eliminate racial prejudice from the white community. Black residents of Canada West were free, but still faced prejudice from the larger white community. The racist attitudes of white Canadians manifested themselves in the unequal treatment of black Canadians. In an editorial from his paper entitled "Color-Phobia in Canada," Bibb addressed intolerant white Canadians. He asserted that discrimination afflicted the "lowest class" of white people and said, "Anti-Slavery is the very best remedy for it. It will cure [whites] of prejudice and hatred, and prepare [whites] for a happier state of existence."<sup>4</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century antislavery was a significant issue both north and south of the border. The crusade against slavery had not been a topic foremost in the minds of

Canadian citizens before 1850. But, with the passing of the American Fugitive Slave Law, and the resulting influx of blacks into Canada, abolitionist response increased. Canada West was presented as a sanctuary from the American slaveholding system because Britain had outlawed slavery in Canada with the Emancipation Act of 1833. Abolitionists encouraged American slaves to come, perhaps by way of the Underground Railroad, to freedom in Canada. The resulting black migration to Canada prompted some Canadians to denounce the institution that had driven black refugees out of their American homeland.

News of the antislavery movement in Canada West in the early 1850s was carried in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Henry Bibb proclaimed in the first edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive* that his paper, and the objectives it promoted, would "advocate the cause of human liberty."<sup>5</sup> The *Voice of the Fugitive* discussed antislavery in each issue. The newspaper's columns presented antislavery topics, reports of antislavery news from the United States, and documented local abolitionist activities. Approximately 25 percent of the articles in the paper were about antislavery.

Canadian abolitionists, both men and women, were partly divided into black and white groups. Events of both the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada (ASC), a white-led antislavery group, and the Anti-Slavery Society of Windsor (ASW), a black-controlled branch of the ASC, were reported upon in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Bibb's philosophy on white versus black antislavery campaigns was not explicitly stated in his newspaper. The *Voice of the Fugitive* reported on both components of the antislavery movement. Bibb likely understood the importance of having white endorsement of antislavery in order to encourage further support.

The ASC embarked on its incorporation within the first few months after the Fugitive Slave Law had taken effect. In the March 12, 1851 edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Henry Bibb reported on the first meeting of the ASC. This public assembly was organized by a group of white men from Toronto. There was a large turnout in Toronto's city hall and the ASC was formalized. Although Bibb did not attend this meeting, he wrote of the

gathering: "The meeting was called to enable the citizens of Toronto to enter their protest against the manifold and unspeakable inequities of slavery, and a very interesting and effective demonstration it certainly was."<sup>6</sup> In addition to identifying those who had been named as officers of the ASC, Bibb printed the resolutions that had been passed. At this meeting several proclamations were issued including:

That a Society be now formed, called 'the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada,' The object of which shall be to aid in the extinction of Slavery, all over the world, by means exclusively lawful and peaceable, moral and religious, such as the diffusing of useful information and argument, by tracts, newspapers, lectures, and correspondence, and by manifesting sympathy with the houseless and homeless victims of Slavery flying to your soil.<sup>7</sup>

Abolitionists worked through various Canadian antislavery groups like the ASC and ASW, contributed their energies to abolitionist groups in the U.S., and advanced their platforms in the *Voice of the Fugitive*.

Prominent Toronto citizens, including abolitionists who had gained experience in the British antislavery campaigns, were among the members of the ASC. Dr. Michael Willis, mayor of Toronto and principal of Knox College, was chosen as president of the society.<sup>8</sup> Willis was a British antislavery veteran and would lead the Society until its demise. Committee members promptly went to work organizing a series of lectures by noted abolitionists George Thompson, Reverend Samuel J. May, and Frederick Douglass.<sup>9</sup> In April 1851, the three abolitionists spent a week expounding their objectives for Toronto audiences. The *Voice of the Fugitive* reprinted a report of the lectures under the headline "Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Toronto."<sup>10</sup>

A year later, the first annual meeting of the ASC convened in Toronto in March 1852. Members were mostly satisfied with the accomplishments of the inaugural year. The only disappointment came from the report of the treasurer. The ASC coffers held only a paltry sum. Committee member Robert Burns commented that supporters of the ASC would be unimpressed.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of the next year the ASC was nearly stagnant. It

sponsored a public lecture in December 1852, but no other Toronto activities were advertised. That year, the ASC published an article in some British and American newspapers that defended Canada's treatment of newly arrived refugee blacks. It was a formal response to rumors circulating that claimed the conditions for refugees in Canada West were unfavorable. The ASC replied that blacks enjoyed the freedom to learn, worship, work, and travel in Canada. As well, the ASC said it had aided in clothing and settling fugitives.<sup>12</sup> This statement extolled the Canadian social environment and argued that accusations against Canada West were untrue.

The ASC did not hold another annual meeting for two years. In 1854 it announced that it had been inactive, and did not reassemble for another two years at which time it had nothing to report. In 1860 the ASC came out of hibernation to defend a fugitive slave named John Anderson. Anderson was threatened with extradition to the United States for committing a crime while fleeing to Canada. The ASC took interest in his case because it focused Canadian attention on extradition of fugitive slaves. Canadian historian Allen Stouffer remarks, "The ASC's important role in helping to free Anderson was its last significant contribution to antislavery."<sup>13</sup> The last meeting of the ASC was held in February 1863. By this time the American Civil War had been going on for two years and President Abraham Lincoln had penned the Emancipation Proclamation freeing America's slaves. The ASC formally disbanded in 1867.

The women's auxiliary of the ASC, the Toronto Ladies' Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Fugitives, formed in the spring of 1851.<sup>14</sup> Its inauguration was publicized in the *Voice of the Fugitive* under the banner headline "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Canada."<sup>15</sup> This white organization was started in response to the call by the ASC for relief for refugees in Toronto, and unlike its male counterpart, this group was consistently active. Although many of the female officers were wives and daughters of the councilmen of the ASC, the women operated independently. The Ladies' Association provided money, clothing, and employment assistance to hundreds of fugitives, and

remained steadily engaged during the lengthy intervals when the ASC was inert. To begin raising funds the Ladies' Association held two concerts (one in June 1851 and one in January 1852) in their inaugural year. They raised enough money to help more than one hundred poor black families. When the ASC and the Ladies' Association met for the first annual meeting in March 1852, the ASC praised them and acknowledged that it had raised less than half the amount that the Ladies' Association had raised.

News of the 'Ladies' Anti-Slavery Association' was released in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. The Ladies' Association sent a copy of its first annual report to the newspaper. The statement closed by saying,

We cannot conclude, however, without stating our conviction, that . . . prejudices are diminishing: that the superior class of colored people, who have been driven to Canada, has had a favorable influence on the minds of many who had judged of the whole from the unhappy specimens which our cities too abundantly supply.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the racist sentiment evident in the Ladies' statement, the work of the Ladies' Association continued. For the rest of the year the Ladies' Association helped in moving some blacks out of the city and on to their own farms. They also wrote an open letter to American women, urging them to assume 'domestic' responsibility for ending slavery.<sup>17</sup> American women were implored by the Ladies' Association to abolish the immoral slave system using their role as homemakers and mothers.<sup>18</sup> American women were urged to use their 'softer natures' to 'tenderly' influence their households. This public campaign did not replace the Ladies' Association's primary fund raising activities. They persisted in their work of raising funds and applying them to the relief of fugitive slaves.<sup>19</sup>

From time to time, in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Bibb wrote of the condition of the fugitives coming to Canada West. Bibb said that many of the blacks arriving in Canada were destitute and in need of relief. He reported "The condition of this people in Canada, as a general thing, is that they are here in a strange land from necessity, uneducated, poverty stricken, without homes or any permanent means of self-support."<sup>20</sup> After all, most had come across the border with little money and very few belongings. In a letter to

a Christian antislavery organization, Bibb wrote that the refugees from southern slavery who were so rapidly settling in Canada were almost entirely destitute of the most important of all books--the Bible.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Bibb preferred appealing for donations to purchase land for blacks to settle on rather than asking for donations of goods or clothing to relieve their immediate needs.<sup>22</sup> Bibb's attitudes toward eschewing charity, even for those who seemed to really need assistance, corresponded to nineteenth century middle class ideas about the importance and respectability of independence and self-sufficiency. Bibb's position is clearly stated in an article from the *Voice of the Fugitive*.

He says

much has been sent to Canada during the last 7 months by the friends of humanity, in the way of food and clothing for the fugitives. But such help is only temporary and must be repeated again and again, while it is degrading to some extent to all who are recipients thereof--for no people can be respected who live beneath the dignity of manhood.<sup>23</sup>

It seems Bibb feared that newly arrived Canadian blacks would rely on the help of others and fail, in the long-term, to elevate themselves. A subsequent correspondence to a missionary association solicits support for a land-purchase plan. Bibb advocated "procuring land for the fugitives in Canada as a permanent means of self-support" in a letter to the Executive Committee of the American Missionary Association.<sup>24</sup> Bibb's focus on landowning as a solution to the destitution of fugitive slaves indicates he believed blacks should look after themselves and be respected for doing so, rather than rely on the charity of others.

In 1857 the ASC announced the Ladies' Association had helped between 400 and 500 fugitive slaves that year. Despite the charitable activities of this hard-working group, the impact of the Ladies' Association on the black community and blacks' response to them is unclear.<sup>25</sup> Did most blacks willingly accept white women's assistance knowing the racial and social hierarchies that reinforced it? If blacks did accept the generosity of the Ladies' Association, how did they feel? Was the white women's charity viewed as similar to the

control wielded by the overseers on the plantation? Or did blacks genuinely appreciate the support and assistance? Perhaps these same benevolent gestures coming from blacks would lessen the deferential reaction (and familiar feelings of being under the control of whites) of the needy blacks?

The black refugees may have thought of the Ladies' Association as a mixed blessing. On one hand, they appreciated the generosity of this group. On the other hand, many black leaders urged refugees to gain their independence. An editorial by Henry Bibb said, "Ignorance, dissipation and pauperism are the landmarks of slavery, and the great aim and object, therefore, should be to enable this people to arise above it by their own industry."<sup>26</sup> One of the goals of racial uplift was self-sufficiency. However, blacks recognized that many of their brethren required assistance.<sup>27</sup> Black activists responded by forming black-run organizations called True Bands to aid needy blacks. These societies collected dues and assisted blacks. Amherstburg blacks formed the first True Band Society in 1854.<sup>28</sup> The society condemned begging, administered an emergency fund, and arbitrated disputes. In 1856, the organization had 600 (men and women) members. By that time, there were 14 True Band Societies in Canada West.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that many black women in Canada West contributed to the antislavery cause. Black women assisted church projects and community events, but their labors were not often reported in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Perhaps the significant role black women played in their community is not documented because their efforts may have been seen as commonplace. Numerous Canadian black women assisted the efforts to free southern slaves and ameliorate the conditions for free blacks in their nation. However, the efforts of these women were not as publicly praised as the work of prominent abolitionists. Few made public efforts, while most quietly donated their time, money, clothing, and food to the immediate needs of their townspeople.<sup>30</sup> Black women's work to free the slave and their drive to aid newly arrived blacks paralleled the efforts of the white Ladies' Association.

The mission to convince Canadians to assist in antislavery work had support from Henry Bibb. He also cooperated with the ASC's campaign. In a column entitled "Progress of Anti-Slavery," Henry Bibb reported,

The cause of anti-slavery . . . seems to be making some progress this winter. In Toronto, the Anti-Slavery Society have been doing much for the elevation of the refugees in Canada. They have been holding public meetings, in which the the [sic] subject of American slavery has been fully and freely discussed: . . . . In support of the anti-slavery . . . cause we have recently held several meetings in this country amongst our people, which were well attended.<sup>31</sup>

Bibb was elected as a local vice-president of an ASC auxiliary society (several Canadian towns would establish a branch), one of only three blacks to gain a seat as an officer. He promoted ASC causes, advertised antislavery speakers, and went on a lecture tour to advance antislavery. As well, numerous American abolitionist activities were advertised and reported in the pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Using his paper and his personality, he contributed to antislavery efforts. In addition to Bibb's work with the ASC and his responsibilities at the *Voice of the Fugitive*, he took a further step to gather support against slavery. Henry Bibb promoted the antislavery message by organizing a convention of black people in Canada West.

Bibb helped organize the North American Convention held in Toronto in September, 1851. He called for a national convention in the pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive* in the months prior to the meeting. Letters were published in the paper showing interest in the subjects to be considered and the delegates to be called.<sup>32</sup> Fifty delegates attended the three day conference. Most of the delegates were black (46 out of 50), and most came from Canada West (31 of 50).<sup>33</sup> Abolitionists were instructed not to wait for the American government or Southern slaveholders to spontaneously liberate blacks from slavery. Freedom for the enslaved would have to be actively sought, especially by black abolitionists.

With the map and the history of human bondage before us, we are led to believe that the abolition of American slavery is now in the hands of the people of color in North

America. Not that we would have the true-hearted abolitionists, who have stood by us in the darkest hours of adversity, to cease their efforts until the work is done; but we should be found standing in the front ranks of the battle, until our kinsmen, according to the flesh are disenthralled.<sup>34</sup>

The assembled group was urged to continue their efforts to emancipate slaves.

Henry Bibb was part of a trio that wrote and delivered a lecture to the abolitionists gathered. Bibb, John T. Fisher, and James D. Tinsley believed that the cause of emancipation would be furthered in proportion to the labor of the freedom seekers. In a speech given to the delegates of the North American Convention, these three abolitionist leaders implored

for let it be remembered, that there can be no real freedom in the land while the great body of our people are held in slavery. We have, therefore, all one common interest at stake, which is the abolition of slavery and the mutual improvement of our people. Let us then be united in sentiment and in action upon this work until it is accomplished.<sup>35</sup>

After the officers were elected, resolutions were adopted that condemned the Fugitive Slave Law, praised the British government for protecting blacks on its soil, and encouraged black settlement in Canada. Further, the Convention resolved that American slavery was 'repugnant' and ought to be abolished, and impressed upon blacks that education, temperance, and agricultural pursuits would uplift the race. By improving their lives, blacks would prove that they could flourish without slavery. In his "Address to the Colored Inhabitants of North America," Bibb said

The history of the oppressed in all ages of the world, plainly shows that they have emerged from degradation to social and political equality with their oppressors, only in proportion to their own exertions in their own cause.<sup>36</sup>

This quotation is indicative of Bibb's opinion that black endeavors were crucial to improving their own circumstances. When he returned from the Convention to the office of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Bibb printed the proceedings of the sessions in the next issue of the newspaper.<sup>37</sup>

In the fall of 1851, well-known American black activist Samuel Ringgold Ward also made an appearance in Toronto. Ward had been a lecturer for two antislavery societies,

had founded and edited several newspapers, and had a "reputation as a forceful and articulate antislavery spokesman."<sup>38</sup> On his arrival in Canada West, Ward wrote a letter to the *Voice of the Fugitive* telling Bibb, "If you choose to have me do so, I will scrawl a little for your columns, now and then."<sup>39</sup> His services were soon enlisted by the ASC and the *Voice of the Fugitive*. In an early dispatch to Bibb, Ward hinted at the Canadian prejudice he had already encountered. "I do not, of course, find Canada free from negrophobia," said Ward. And he continued,

The boast of Englishmen, of their freedom from social negrophobia, is about as empty as the Yankee boast of democracy. In all this, I repeat, I am not at all disappointed; and I believe that a universal agitation, by the press and the tongue, in church and at the polls, will rid our beloved adopted country of this infernal curse. God forgive me when I shall refuse or neglect to do my humble part in this agitation!<sup>40</sup>

The *Voice of the Fugitive* announced Ward's speaking dates in towns west of Toronto in both of its issues of November 1851.<sup>41</sup>

In his first of a series of letters to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Ward told Bibb of the demise of Ward's New York newspaper, the *Impartial Citizen*. This defeat, and Ward's fear that he would be arrested for the role he played in rescuing a fugitive slave from federal officers, motivated Ward to come to Canada. A former slave, Ward had become a minister, newspaper editor, and prominent abolitionist in the United States.<sup>42</sup> After he moved to Canada West, Ward served on the executive committee of the ASC and traveled as a popular lecturer. He toured extensively, and by the end of 1852 had delivered 108 lectures as part of his ASC duties.<sup>43</sup> Ward's visits to Canada West towns spurred the creation of a number of affiliates of the ASC.<sup>44</sup> Ward carried forth the antislavery message, at home and abroad, for several years. He corresponded with the *Voice of the Fugitive*, publicizing details of his travels across the province, and his undertakings and accomplishments.<sup>45</sup> In late 1852, Ward sent an editorial to the *Voice of the Fugitive*. In his report on "Canadian Negro Hate" he said,

that Canadian Negro Hate can not be eternal. The labors of the anti-slavery society, the improvement, progress, and good demeanor of the black people will, in a very short time, undermine and destroy this abomination.<sup>46</sup>

In 1853 Ward went to Britain to campaign for antislavery funds, but in 1855 he terminated his work with the ASC.<sup>47</sup>

The activism of abolitionists like Ward and Bibb attracted attention and publicity to the antislavery campaign. Ward's visits to numerous towns (where he expressed his antislavery views on behalf of the ASC) stimulated antislavery activity within each locale. Henry Bibb was involved in one such gathering in Windsor, Canada West, on October 18, 1852. Residents of Windsor rallied and formed the Anti-Slavery Society of Windsor soon after Ward spoke there.<sup>48</sup> Bibb was elected president at the first meeting and was supported by a committee of seven members. The preamble for the society declared,

Whereas we regard American Slavery, to be the sum of *all* villainies [*sic*]-holding as it does about three and a half millions of our fellow men in the condition of chattels, many of whom are our own kinsmen according to the flesh. And whereas we feel bound by the law of God and humanity to do all that is in our power morally and legally to effect their emancipation, and secure their elevation in the scale of being, therefore.

*Resolved*, That we do now constitute a Society which shall be a branch of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, the leading object of which shall be the abolition of chattel Slavery, and the elevation of the colored population of North America.<sup>49</sup>

Days later, Bibb's newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*, broadcast the constitution of the new ASW.

The ASW branch of the ASC agreed with the tenets of its parent group and resolved to work at the same goals. Moreover, the ASW had something that the umbrella society lacked; it was a black-controlled effort. Black residents of Windsor helped establish this society and, uncommonly, a couple of high ranking members were women. The first article of the constitution specified that the ASW would

have for its object the promotion of right principles upon the subject of Slavery, and cooperation with similar Societies already formed, in diffusing information, and seeking to awaken greater zeal in religious bodies in regard to this momentous question.<sup>50</sup>

After the second meeting of the ASW on November 17, 1852 (details were reported in the November 18 edition of the *Voice of the Fugitive*), it is not known what transpired. One source says that the group came under the influence of Henry's rival, Mary Ann Shadd.<sup>51</sup> If Shadd did assume control of the ASW, presumably Bibb was unseated as president. His paper makes no further reports on the activities of this association, so he might have severed all ties. Most likely Bibb's differences with Shadd ruled out the possibility of a joint effort at the ASW.

There was a history of disagreement and squabbling between Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd.<sup>52</sup> "Like Bibb's *Voice of the Fugitive* . . . , the *Provincial Freeman* had as its primary goal the 'elevation of the Colored People.'"<sup>53</sup> However, these two editors argued about the best way to 'lead' the attack against slavery and the crusade for racial uplift. They had editorial differences, a disagreement about fund-raising,<sup>54</sup> and even a quarrel about the 'proper' conduct of black Canadians.<sup>55</sup> Mary Ann Shadd believed that black Canadians should endeavor to assimilate to white Canadians. "Shadd and the *Provincial Freeman* opposed *any* institution that tended to remove the fugitive from the mainstream of white Canadian society."<sup>56</sup> Consequently, Shadd attacked Bibb's support of the Refugee Home Society. This organization aimed to settle blacks in separate black farming communities.<sup>57</sup>

The antislavery vanguard had its share of discord. Abolitionist leaders debated about what their antislavery goals should be and how best to accomplish these goals. Factionalism among ASC (white) committee members contributed to the closing of their permanent office in Toronto.<sup>58</sup> Mary Ann Shadd then berated the ASC for its inactivity. Black activists were not necessarily unified in their objectives either. Race did not guarantee a consensus on values or expectations. There was public in-fighting between outspoken blacks with differing opinions. Initially, most activists shared similar aspirations and values. Activists wanted to free slaves and help to establish fugitive blacks in Canada. Soon, however, the ideologies and tactics of those committed to antislavery

became less cooperative. Leaders of the abolitionist movement had strong opinions and dominant personalities. Their competing ideologies sometimes resulted in conflict. Regardless of the debate within the ranks of antislavery leaders, activists did their part to fight slavery.<sup>59</sup>

The two-fold agenda of Henry Bibb's antislavery activism was a design to abolish slavery and then uplift free blacks. In "An Address to the Colored Inhabitants of North America," Henry Bibb said "We have, therefore, all one common interest at stake, which is the abolition of slavery and the mutual improvement of our people. Let us then be united in sentiment and in action upon this work until it is accomplished."<sup>60</sup> While white abolitionists were working to emancipate enslaved blacks, Henry Bibb held that racial uplift was principally a black responsibility. Therefore only blacks could undertake to elevate themselves. In an address to mostly black abolitionists Bibb said,

We have dwelt much on the subject of American slavery because we consider it a matter of the greatest importance. It is the great stumbling block in the way of our social and political advancement, and it is also the main key which locks the door against our general improvement. But notwithstanding, we believe as long as American slavery exists, an impetus will be given to the exertions of the liberated few which will cause them to rise in general intelligence, and enable them to realize a like elevation for the whole race.<sup>61</sup>

It might be surmised that Bibb felt blacks, especially free blacks, had a special responsibility to other blacks. Racial elevation stressed self-reliance and Bibb encouraged blacks to help themselves and each other.

Bibb and his newspaper were key elements in Canadian antislavery activism. Indeed, Henry Bibb's newspaper, *Voice of the Fugitive*, displayed a powerful commitment to the cause in Canada West.<sup>62</sup> Bibb held that abolition would raise the self-esteem and increase the independence of the black community. In an editorial letter, Bibb wrote to a slaveowner "your former slaves who are now British subjects, are about trying the *dangerous experiment* of taking care of themselves--which has so far proved to be a successful one."<sup>63</sup> The *Voice of the Fugitive* was a resource in Bibb's crusade against

slavery. In addition, he made personal appearances and promoted numerous tenets of black elevation.<sup>64</sup> Bibb made a paramount effort in the antislavery movement because he believed that freedom was right and the emancipation of slaves would advance black aspirations of racial uplift.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>C. Peter Ripley, ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers, vol. 2, Canada, 1830-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) , 23.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 183n.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 May 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 136-137.
- <sup>5</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.
- <sup>6</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 March 1851.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup>For more information about the ASC and its leadership see, Allen P. Stouffer, The Light of Nature and the Law of God: Antislavery in Ontario 1833-1877 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
- <sup>9</sup>Robin W. Winks, The Blacks in Canada: A History, 2d ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) , 257.
- <sup>10</sup>Excerpt from the *Globe* newspaper (Toronto) quoted in *Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851.
- <sup>11</sup>Stouffer, Light of Nature, 122. Robin Winks notes that membership in the ASC never exceeded 200 people. See Winks, Blacks in Canada, 265.
- <sup>12</sup>Stouffer, Light of Nature, 124-125.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.
- <sup>14</sup>I am indebted to Karen Leroux of the University of British Columbia Department of History for information she shared from her unpublished work on the 1850s antislavery activism of women in Canada West (concentrating on the activities of the Toronto Ladies' Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Fugitives). Karen Leroux, "'The Legitimate Province of Women:' Reinterpreting the 1850s Anti-Slavery Movement in

Canada," Paper presented at the Qualicum History Conference, Qualicum, British Columbia, February 1996. See also Karen Leroux, "Making a Claim on the Public Sphere: Toronto Women's Anti-slavery Activism, 1851-1854" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1996).

<sup>15</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 May 1851.

<sup>16</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 20 May 1852.

<sup>17</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 257.

<sup>18</sup>There is a failure by some historians to recognize that the Ladies' Association had its own type of political activity. For example, in Light of Nature, a study of Canadian antislavery, author Allen Stouffer comments on the benevolent activities of the Toronto Ladies' Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Fugitives, but fails to discuss the political dimensions of their campaigns.

<sup>19</sup>For example, in June 1854 the Ladies' Association held a two day bazaar that earned \$230. It was later reported that this had been the bulk of the ASC's annual fundraising. *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>20</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>21</sup>Henry Bibb's letters to the Executive Committee of the American Missionary Association are reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 113-118.

<sup>22</sup>Bibb believed "that Blacks could help themselves without depending on white charity and the best way to do that, while at the same time refuting racist ideology, was for Blacks themselves to engage in self-elevation by becoming landowners and farmers." Afua P. Cooper, "Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000) 231. See also Cooper's discussion of Bibb's denunciation of begging. *Ibid.*, 230-233.

<sup>23</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>24</sup>Ripley, BAP, 113-118.

<sup>25</sup>Historian Michael F. Hembree discusses the complex issue of aiding fugitive slaves in his article "The Question of 'Begging': Fugitive Slave Relief in Canada, 1830-1865," Civil War History 37 (1991) : 314-327. He says "What on the surface seemed simply a matter of charity was at its most profound a question of identity." *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>26</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>27</sup>"All black leaders opposed begging. But they all agreed that if the 'fugitives must beg

let it be for something permanent,' showing that they all supported begging 'under certain circumstances'." Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 269.

<sup>28</sup>By this time, Henry Bibb was dead and the *Voice of the Fugitive* was defunct. So we can not know if he would have been more supportive of black assistance to fellow blacks than he was of white charity. True Bands did not, on any large scale, help black Canadians to purchase land in Canada West. However, Bibb may have believed that True Band Society efforts to mediate arguments within the black community, denounce begging, and advocate education were a step towards racial uplift.

<sup>29</sup>Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 226. Winks says that the True Band organization "undertook to convince [blacks] of the need for regular school attendance, to prevent additional fragmentation within black church ranks, and to persuade fugitives to disperse throughout the province, in order both to hasten integration and to allay prejudice by decreasing concentration in any one area." *Ibid.* A 'Report and Circular' from the True Band Society of Amherstburg, Canada West is offered in Ripley, *BAP*, 306-308.

<sup>30</sup>For a discussion of the efforts of Canadian black women in assisting their communities see Shirley J. Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," *Canadian Historical Review* 75 (March 1994) : 53-73.

<sup>31</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1852.

<sup>32</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851, 2 July 1851, 16 July 1851.

<sup>33</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 160n.

<sup>34</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 170-175.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851.

<sup>38</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 292-293n.

<sup>39</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 5 November 1851. A copy of this correspondence and additional footnoted information appears in Ripley, *BAP*, 177-181.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 5 November 1851, 19 November 1851.

<sup>42</sup>Samuel Ringgold Ward was born a slave in Maryland in 1817. Ward's parents escaped

to freedom and he was educated by New York Quakers. After becoming a Congregational minister in 1839, he led two white churches in New York. In the 1840s he studied medicine and law and established three abolitionist newspapers. Jane Rhodes, Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 59.

<sup>43</sup>Stouffer, Light of Nature, 122.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 17 December 1851, 2 February 1852, 11 March 1852. Ward's editorials from 5 November 1851, 19 November 1851, and 4 November 1852 are reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 177-179, 182-183, 224-228.

<sup>46</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 224-228.

<sup>47</sup>Ward was charged with conning a London tradesman. He never returned to Canada West. Ward moved to Jamaica in 1855 and died there in about 1866. See Winks, Blacks in Canada, 227.

<sup>48</sup>Stouffer, Light of Nature, 122-123.

<sup>49</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 October 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 222-223.

<sup>50</sup>Also written into the constitution were: the amount of the annual fee for members (two shillings), the agreement to hold annual meetings to report on events and account for funds, the arrangement that monthly meetings would be held on the first Monday of the month, and that lectures would be delivered throughout the year "by Ministers of the Gospel and others, on the subject of *Slavery*." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 October 1852. A copy of this article appears in Ripley, BAP, 222-223.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 222. Mary Ann Shadd was Henry Bibb's adversary and was the editor of Canada's second black newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*.

<sup>52</sup>"Henry Bibb and Mary Shadd refused to cooperate to further the Negro cause and used their presses to attack each another." Winks, Blacks in Canada, 261. A comprehensive discussion of the controversy between Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd is found in Cooper, "Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause," 245-271.

<sup>53</sup>Jason H. Silverman, Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1863 (New York: Faculty Press, 1985), 114.

<sup>54</sup>Mary Ann Shadd was an opponent of the Refugee Home Society, an organization which was locally led by Henry Bibb. Shadd expressed her opposition to the Refugee Home Society, and Henry Bibb, in an 1852 letter. She denounced Refugee Home Society

fund-raising methods as 'begging' and publicly criticized other aspects of the society. Shadd accused fund-raising agents, including Bibb, of keeping donations meant for fugitives, for themselves. Shadd wrote "I have spoken out what I and others know of the Refugees' Home Society, and of Henry Bibb, but not until silence was no longer safe nor right." Ripley, *BAP*, 251. See also Ripley, *BAP*, 147n, 245-251; Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 207, 397; Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause,'" 245-271. For a discussion of fugitive slave relief see Hembree, "Question of 'Begging'," 314-327. Hembree says "Fund raising for Canadian settlement and fugitive slave relief aroused a more passionate and acrimonious debate among blacks in Canada. Opponents reduced it to one demeaning word: begging. They sought to demonstrate that the practice was unnecessary, or worse, inherently corrupt. And although many of the fund-raising appeals involved legitimate concerns and conscientious agents, there was much to criticize. Some agents were outright frauds. Other[s] pocketed hefty commissions from the funds they collected. Still others mishandled the money and donated goods, and disbursed them in a self-serving manner." *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>55</sup>Mary Ann Shadd criticized Henry Bibb for his fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Refugee Home Society. She accused him of 'begging' whites for money to support the land scheme. Also, Shadd charged that Refugee Home Society settlers were drunk and shiftless. These attacks on Henry Bibb and the behavior of Canadian blacks are detailed in Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause,'" 245-271.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>The Refugee Home Society was an organization that bought parcels of land in Canada West and sold individual plots to black fugitives.

<sup>58</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 20.

<sup>59</sup>Henry Bibb wielded his pen in the *Voice of the Fugitive* for the slaves held in bondage in the United States and for black Canadians adapting to their new communities. Black leaders such as J.T. Fisher, Hiram Wilson, and Josiah Henson supported Bibb's undertaking and publicly resolved, "that we recommend to the friends of humanity, to support such presses only as will faithfully vindicate our cause; and that we use our best endeavors to extend the circulation of the *Voice of the Fugitive*." These black men were delegates at the 1851 North American Convention in Toronto. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851.

<sup>60</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 170-175.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851, 8 October 1851.

<sup>63</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 7 October 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 217-221.

<sup>64</sup>In an editorial, Henry Bibb detailed a lecture he gave at an American Methodist Episcopal Church. His subject was the moral elevation of the colored people of North America. Bibb proclaimed the advantages to be gained by leaving (American) cities, emigrating to Canada, and following agricultural pursuits. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 30 July 1851.

## Chapter Four

We feel satisfied from careful observation, that there is nothing so much needed among us in Canada, as knowledge and strength. Without it, we shall ever be degraded and oppressed.

*Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851

In the pages of his newspaper Henry Bibb frequently addressed the significance of education. In the inaugural issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive* Bibb specified that "education shall have a prominent space in our columns."<sup>1</sup> Bibb believed that education was a means to achieving independence. As well, he saw education as a way of advancing the respectability of black Canadians and thus countering white racism. In an article in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, titled "The Elevation of the Free People of Color," Bibb said

In view of the existence of a prejudice which thus oppresses the colored people, the practical question is what can they do that is best calculated to remove the prevailing prejudice, and the burdens it imposes? There can be but one correct answer to this question. Let the colored people put forth every exertion to acquire solid education, . . . and they will be on the high road to their highest elevation.<sup>2</sup>

To better understand Bibb's commitment to promote education it is important to examine the social and historical context that shaped black education during this time.

The nineteenth century was the century of schooling.<sup>3</sup> The organization of a system of public schooling in Canada West began in the 1830s. During this time, the government's interest and involvement in the promotion and management of schools increased, and parents were more willing to make schools the primary instrument for 'formal' education.<sup>4</sup> It was also expected that schools would act as an agent of political socialization. Learning 'correct' behavior would mean the elimination of social problems. Education "would prepare individuals for their 'duties and employments of life, as Christians, as persons of

business and also as members of the civil community in which they lived'.<sup>5</sup> It was also expected by school administrators that the structure and procedures of education would elevate society as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Education became a cultural imperative of the white middle class. Education typified success and respectability.<sup>7</sup> School reformers proclaimed that education would lead to social advancement, whereas lack of education would invite social and economic disaster.<sup>8</sup>

School promoters encouraged education for the progress of society and black leaders touted its value in racial uplift. Education for black Canadians was a symbol of racial elevation and respectability, but it was also a practical tool for individual independence. It was believed that education could both remedy illiteracy and ameliorate the living conditions of blacks. Education also conformed to the Victorian ideal of self-help. Blacks pursuing education were viewed as valuing personal and racial improvement and taking steps toward these goals. Black leaders "stressed that the 'elevation' of the race depended on the 'self-improvement' of the individual."<sup>9</sup> Henry Bibb echoed these beliefs in an address to Canadian blacks,

Too long, brethren, have we been conniving at our own oppression, . . . , by neglecting to educate ourselves and our children, which is the most essential step to our moral and intellectual advancement.<sup>10</sup>

Bibb's endorsement indicates he thought that education was a personal accomplishment and a step toward racial uplift. Many members of the black community agreed. A letter from a reader to the *Voice of the Fugitive* observed that the support of education, "seems to be among the chief objects of every reflecting mind among our people. Nothing short of this will ever elevate us in any country."<sup>11</sup> In another letter to the editor, a subscriber to the *Voice of the Fugitive* writes,

I here propose a new subject for the consideration of preachers, lecturers, and reformers who have the good of the colored people at heart: namely, education and economy, a subject that every moralist or lecturer should devote a portion of their time and talent in showing the many advantages of intelligence and morality; and the respectability of the first and advantageous effects of the latter.<sup>12</sup>

This article suggests that at least some members of the black community regarded education as a significant factor to improving their respectability.

For members of the Canadian black community education symbolized racial achievement because it was denied to slaves and difficult for free blacks to obtain.<sup>13</sup> Acquiring knowledge was an esteemed goal in the wider society, but the black community also saw learning as a victory over discrimination. Education for blacks in Canada West signified a triumph over the biased laws that had prevented blacks from attending schools in the United States. Most blacks had suffered oppressive social, political, and legal restraints in America. In all American slave states except Kentucky, the education of blacks was illegal prior to the Civil War.<sup>14</sup> As a result, only two to five percent of blacks in the American South were literate in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Even in northern states, blacks did not receive the same educational advantages as whites.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the vast majority of fugitive slaves who came to Canada West in the mid-nineteenth century were illiterate.<sup>17</sup>

Likely many of the blacks who came to Canada West in the mid-nineteenth century hoped they would have the opportunity to learn to read and write. Education was seen as the basis for independence and a foundation for the elevation of Canadian blacks. Henry Bibb announced in the *Voice of the Fugitive* that what fugitives wanted, second only to a home and its comforts, was education and instruction.<sup>18</sup> Although some blacks may have rejected education, Bibb's comments suggest that a number of blacks in Canada West aspired to the notions of the dominant society. Perhaps some Canadian blacks could not obtain an education, or did not accept the notions of the importance of education. However, for many black Canadians education was a way to gain respectability associated with the middle class, and also represented the social egalitarianism that they sought in Canada.<sup>19</sup> But blacks in Canada West faced social and legal barriers to their education.<sup>20</sup>

Because dominant groups upheld Canada West's social inequality, black access to education was limited. Racial discrimination in the Common School Act and in society

more generally was used to prevent blacks from attending public (white) schools in Canada West.<sup>21</sup> The Common School Act of 1850 legally required blacks to attend separate schools,<sup>22</sup> although blacks could attend public schools if separate schools were not available.<sup>23</sup> School Superintendent Egerton Ryerson was responsible for the Common School Act.<sup>24</sup> Ryerson's intention was that the bill would allow blacks to make a choice between separate schools and integrated schools. Unfortunately the plan miscarried.

With the law on their side, school trustees and the white electorate were powerful enough to force the Canadian black community into separate schools.<sup>25</sup> Although black Canadians protested against segregated education; "segregated schools developed wherever a large fugitive slave population resided in Canada West. The larger the number of blacks, the more intense was the white prejudice."<sup>26</sup> However, since education was viewed as a step towards personal advancement and racial elevation, a number of black Canadians took action against educational discrimination. A group of black parents in Canada West sent a petition to school trustees after their children were denied access to public education. The appeal said "We have paid the taxes and we are denied of the public schools, . . . we left the United States because we were in hopes that prejudice was not in this land."<sup>27</sup> Although blacks paid taxes to support public schools, and even if public schools had only partial enrollment, blacks were often banned from attending them.<sup>28</sup>

Ryerson eventually recognized that social circumstances affected legal codes. He conceded that "social condition[s] of their respective communities" determined if blacks could attend public schools.<sup>29</sup> He admitted "the prejudices and feelings of the people are stronger than the law."<sup>30</sup> The milieu in several communities in Canada West prevented blacks from attending 'white' public schools.<sup>31</sup> As a result, by the end of 1851, no black children attended a 'white' school in any township of the Western District (present day western Ontario).<sup>32</sup> Some black Canadians sent letters of protest to government offices, others petitioned against this unjust segregation and exclusion.<sup>33</sup> A few Canadian blacks

challenged segregated schooling in Canadian courts, but with limited success. For example, in 1855 a black Canadian plaintiff, George Washington, sued white trustees for establishing a separate school. He won the case, but lost his farm because he had to pay the court fees.

Dennis Hill, of Dawn Mills, Canada West, was the first black Canadian to legally challenge segregated education. Hill attempted to enroll his children in the nearby public school. He was told to send his children to a 'black' school, four miles away. Hill, like many other black Canadians, asked, "How shall I arrange matters so as to give my Children their education, for I cannot Let them grow up in ignorance."<sup>34</sup> In a letter, Hill wrote "they say that I am a Black Man and that it would be presumption in me to contend for my son to go to school among white Children, though I am among the largest Tax payers in the said school section."<sup>35</sup> As a taxpayer, he supported the public school, yet his children were denied access to public education. In a report to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Samuel Ringgold Ward wrote

Dennis Hill, Esq. of the Gore of Camden, a black gentleman owns the largest farm, and has the best education of all the rate payers in his own school section. The trustees of that section (No. 3), by a majority of two to one, deny to Mr. Hill's son, the right of attending the common school, solely of the ground of his complexion.<sup>36</sup>

In 1853, Hill filed suit. Hill said "to be debarred from my rights of school privilege for no other crime than that my skin is a few shades darker than some of my neighbors, I do think it unfair."<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, in *Hill v. Camden*, the court upheld the separate school system. Chief Justice John Beverly Robinson ruled that black students must attend separate schools. He wrote that "separate schools were not created for the benefit of blacks, but rather to protect the morals of white children."<sup>38</sup> In his decision, Robinson said that white parents feared their children would adopt the bad habits and bad morals of black children. Robinson recognized that prejudice underpinned the case, and said "It can hardly be supposed that the legislature authorized such separate schools under the idea that it would

be more beneficial or agreeable to the coloured people."<sup>39</sup> Robinson's ruling, in favor of separate schools, legally sanctioned segregated education.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, for many Canadian blacks the hope of educating their children necessitated that they opt for separate schools.<sup>41</sup> Conditions in Canada West schools, generally, were characterized by overcrowding, irregular attendance, and inadequately trained teachers.<sup>42</sup> However, problems of black schools were compounded as they received little or no financial support from the state.<sup>43</sup> Black pupils were taught at poorer schools, by the least qualified teachers, and the educational experience for black students was marked by hardship.<sup>44</sup> Often separate schools were poorly equipped, insufficiently heated, overcrowded, and most had no library facilities. The school environment was not conducive to learning. After he visited in the mid-1850s, abolitionist Benjamin Drew described the black separate school in Amherstburg, Canada West. He said "The whole interior is comfortless and repulsive." Schoolbooks were "miserably tattered" and there was a drastic shortage of ink.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, adverse conditions coupled with inconvenience served to deter school attendance and shorten the school year.

Some black Canadians held that racially segregated classrooms were a denial of the freedom that they sought in Canada.<sup>46</sup> These blacks maintained that the point of settling in Canada was assimilating with whites, in the classroom and in the community. On the other hand, some blacks believed that separate schools were in the best interest of black pupils. They advocated separate schools because some blacks were not familiar with, or could not complete, the curriculum of the public schools.<sup>47</sup> They also argued that a segregated schoolroom could provide a safe haven for blacks. White school teachers often were unsympathetic to black pupils and white schoolmates insulted black children.<sup>48</sup> Separate schools would shelter black children from the prejudice of whites, thus fostering a calm learning environment. Sadly, most Canadian blacks had few options and most black Canadians were forced to accept separate education.<sup>49</sup>

Henry Bibb condemned separate schools.<sup>50</sup> He and other black leaders publicly announced that the establishment of separate schools for colored people "contributes greatly towards the promotion of prejudice, heretofore unknown in the Canadas, and we do hereby recommend that all such organizations be abandoned as speedily as may be practicable."<sup>51</sup> The segregated school debate in the black community had class overtones. Some black leaders attempted to convert black Canadians into a respectable and educated community and saw integrated education as the means of achieving this goal. Leaders were frustrated if Canadian blacks did not conform to their own particular approach to racial uplift through integrated education. When Bibb learned that a number of black families had petitioned for a separate school in Windsor he announced that the request "was not made by the intelligent portion of the colored population, but by a lot of ignoramuses who were made tools of and who knew not what they were doing."<sup>52</sup>

The social and legal entrenchment of the separate school system, however, compelled Bibb to tacitly accept separate education. An article in the *Voice of the Fugitive* is indicative of Bibb's opinion. The column, intended to provide blacks with information on Canada West, incorporates details on various black settlements, and the difficulties and advantages of living in Canada West. The list of (dubious) advantages for blacks in Canada West includes: "educational advantages are as good as can be expected under these circumstances."<sup>53</sup> Further, it read, blacks have to deal with prejudice from whites, "even in Canada."<sup>54</sup>

Amherstburg, Canada West, established a separate school in 1838.<sup>55</sup> The town's blacks protested against their exclusion from public schools, but could not overcome the discrimination that prevented their children from attending the 'white' school. In 1846 town superintendent of schools Reverend Robert Peden declared that "the prejudice in this part of the country is exceedingly strong against the Coloured people."<sup>56</sup> Both Reverend Peden and Amherstburg blacks complained to Egerton Ryerson, superintendent of education for Canada West. Ryerson apologized, but offered no solution. "Without other

recourse, the blacks at Amherstburg remained barred from common schools."<sup>57</sup> Amherstburg's segregated school did not close until 1917.

A 'black' school opened in Chatham in 1848. A local black teacher, James E. Grant, instructed close to fifty pupils at the poorly supplied school. By 1851 attendance had doubled and Grant penned a letter to the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Grant's letter was published in the newspaper and informed the readership that the school was overcrowded.<sup>58</sup> In his correspondence Grant commented on the class size and he described his students and the subjects they were studying. To deal with classroom overcrowding, Grant's wife taught more than a dozen pupils in their home. A second separate school opened in Chatham in 1858, but closed the following year amid controversy that geographical boundaries were gerrymandered by school officials.<sup>59</sup> Despite opposition from Chatham blacks, Chatham's separate school continued instructing students until 1891.<sup>60</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century blacks attended integrated public schools in London, Canada West. In fact, after visiting London in the fall of 1851, newspaper editor Henry Bibb boasted in the *Voice of the Fugitive* that there were "no colored schools [in London]--for there is no need for them."<sup>61</sup> However, by 1862, London's integrated schools had led to racist objections from white Canadians and disruptive classroom and playground behavior from white students. These circumstances convinced London school trustees that separate schools were the solution for improving order in the classrooms. An editorial from a Toronto newspaper details a meeting of the London school board. The paper reports that "there is a repugnance in the minds of the white population to a close or intimate relation between their children and those of colored parents."<sup>62</sup> The newspaper proclaimed that segregated education was in the best interests of black pupils because the "feeling of estrangement between teacher and scholar, . . . cannot be the best means of elevating the negro."<sup>63</sup> The school board decided that white opposition to mixed classes

would be best handled by establishing separate schools for black pupils. The school board's argument for separate schools for black students was that

When educated apart [blacks] will not be educated for evil; they will not have some of the worst passions of the human heart called daily into play and thus strengthened by exercise; they will have no taunts and insults to remember; and when they enter life as men, they will be enabled to meet their white fellow-citizens without a single acrimonious feeling, arising from the recollections of wrongs suffered or injuries retaliated.<sup>64</sup>

An observer of the proceedings reported that this sentiment was supported by teachers and headmasters of public schools.<sup>65</sup> The newspaper columnist reasoned that "The children of black men are entitled to the benefits of education as well as those of the whites; but it does not necessarily follow that they both should be taught together. It is hard to believe that the colored people will object to this."<sup>66</sup> This type of discrimination in Canada West limited the educational opportunities for blacks and hindered them in their pursuit of an education.

Notwithstanding the resistance of white Canadians, and the poverty and destitution that prevented many blacks from attending school,<sup>67</sup> many blacks saw the importance of education. Henry Bibb's writings in the *Voice of the Fugitive* champion the value of education for a number of reasons. Bibb believed that education was an important part of the struggle to overcome slavery. He asserted that if black Canadians acquired an education, albeit a separate education, it would prove their capacity to learn and signify a break from the 'ignorant slave' stereotype.<sup>68</sup> Though there was clear discrimination in black schooling, it was thought that education could redress prejudice against the black community. "In other words, black females and males would demonstrate the race's intelligence, morality, and ingenuity."<sup>69</sup> Bibb believed that educated blacks demonstrated that blacks were as intelligent as whites and thus equally deserving of respect from the white community.

In the *Voice of the Fugitive* newspaper, Bibb reasoned that slavery and discrimination had prevented blacks from learning;

not that we are more stupid than others would be under the same circumstances, indeed very few races of men have the corporal ability to survive, under the same physical and mental depression that the colored race have to endure, and still retain their manhood.<sup>70</sup>

He charged that formal education was unjustly withheld from slaves despite their potential to learn. He argued that blacks had the same capacity for knowledge as whites and urged black participation in education.

In many of his *Voice of the Fugitive* editorials, Henry Bibb wrote that knowledge would separate blacks from their roots in slavery.

We regard the education of colored people in North America as being one of the most important measures connected with the destiny of our race. By it we can be strengthened and elevated--without it we shall be ignorant, weak, and degraded.<sup>71</sup>

Bibb believed that education, by undermining the racist allegations of slaveowners, was an important element in the rise from slavery to freedom. The first battle against the 'war of ignorance' was attacking the slaveholding system for oppressing millions of blacks and barring them from gaining an education. Bibb discussed his position against slavery in a series of three articles entitled "To Our Old Masters." Speaking on behalf of himself and other former slaves, he condemned slavery and denounced slaveholders for withholding education from slaves.

In the first of these editorials, Bibb criticized white slaveowners and charged them with hypocrisy. Bibb wrote, "It is contended by many [slaveowners] that our enslavement is just, inasmuch as we are an inferior race, and not susceptible of the same degree of cultivation as the white men."<sup>72</sup> He went on to argue that slaves "possessed the same intellectual power, and the same general attainments" as their oppressors.<sup>73</sup> From his own experience, though, he knew that slaves could not acquire an education, "until we become fugitives." He reasoned that white slaveowners were in the position to persecute

blacks because whites outnumbered blacks, were "greater favorites of fortune, or, perhaps, better skilled in the use of the sword."<sup>74</sup>

In the second column of this series, Bibb argued "we are slaves because you are stronger physically, not because of any natural or intellectual inferiority in us."<sup>75</sup> Bibb continued,

This fact, by your own conduct, you admit; or why do you so carefully block up every channel which has been opened for our instruction? Are we not justified in concluding that you are impregnated with the idea, that could we receive the same amount of care and attention which has been bestowed upon yourselves, that we could, in all probability, exhibit an equal degree of mental power, by which means you would entirely lose your control over us? . . . it is evident, that, while the majority of you endeavor to persuade the world that our intellectual capacity is very little above the level of the brute creation, you are so afraid that we should arrive at your own standard, that you dare not allow any one to instruct us.<sup>76</sup>

Bibb said "We find this assumption of our mental inferiority is not generally entertained among the highly enlightened."<sup>77</sup>

In addition to his own *Voice of the Fugitive* editorials supporting education, Bibb often reprinted articles from other, primarily American, newspapers. To incorporate his personal point of view, Bibb responded to topics raised in the reprinted column and tied the issue to events and circumstances in Canada West. For example, in an article from the *Daily Appeal* (Memphis, Tenn.) entitled "Education--its Consequences" the author declares "Educate the slave--teach him to read."<sup>78</sup> The article proclaims that illiteracy maintains the American slaveholding system. The piece suggests that the institution of slavery could be overthrown if slaves were educated.<sup>79</sup> Slaveowners, explains the writer, fear that education for blacks may dismantle the American social system. The comments in the reprinted article are answered by Bibb. He replies that blacks are not naturally intellectually inferior, but are kept in ignorance by their oppressors. Bibb's column also implies that slavery would be threatened if slaves were educated.

Henry Bibb used his editorials and the *Voice of the Fugitive* as forums to encourage black fugitives to learn to read and write. The *Voice of the Fugitive* advanced this

educational philosophy and encouraged blacks, young and old, to become literate. Bibb affirmed that in order to contribute to society, blacks needed education. He added that Canadian blacks needed knowledge, like learning to read, write, and cipher, to make themselves useful.<sup>80</sup> His call for literacy was supported in an early editorial.

We frequently hear persons say that they are too far advanced in life to learn to read and write. To all such we say, be not discouraged. We think there are but very few who could not be taught to read the Bible, if they would only commence and persevere. If we learn to read that, we can then learn to read other books and papers, and we should understand the laws of the Government under which we live. To do this we should read, in order to become wise and intelligent, and useful in society. We should at least know how to read and write; and when we have learned this, we have the best means with which to educate ourselves.<sup>81</sup>

He maintained, "It is the best fortune a father can give his son; it is a treasure that can never be squandered, and one that will always command respect and secure a good livelihood for an industrious person."<sup>82</sup> Bibb wrote that knowledge, including agricultural knowledge, would make blacks useful. Presumably this knowledge would empower blacks to support themselves or acquire a livelihood in the white community. Education would make blacks capable of earning a living and participating in Canadian society, and thus elevate their race.

Literacy and education for the Canada West black community were also promoted at black forums. At the North American Convention, Bibb and fellow committee members addressed the "Colored Inhabitants of North America." The committee said,

we regard education as being one of the most important items connected with our destiny, . . . we therefore recommend, that there should be no time or opportunity lost in educating the people of color. Let there be put into the hands of the refugee, as soon as he crosses Mason and Dixon's Line, the Spelling Book. Teach him to read and write intelligibly, . . . It is emphatically the most effectual *protection to personal or political liberty* with which the human family can be armed.<sup>83</sup>

The 53 delegates gathered in Canada West for the North American Convention adopted the resolution "that this convention impress upon the minds of our people the great necessity of acquiring education."<sup>84</sup>

Henry Bibb and other leaders of the Canada West black community believed that the improved education of blacks was an initial step in ending discrimination.<sup>85</sup> Educated blacks could prove that they deserved parity with whites. "By proving their ability to learn, the fugitive slaves hoped to refute all those who belittled black capabilities in general."<sup>86</sup> Samuel Ringgold Ward, a leader of the black community, and a contributor to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, also thought that education would contribute to black equality and remedy the degradation that developed from slavery. In an editorial, he wrote,

Many blacks come here, and finding that they are not treated as equals by the better classes, attribute the treatment they receive, to the prejudice. The mistake, is [i]n not looking at society as it really is. A black gentleman of good education, polite manners, and courtly address, would be received as a gentleman, while a white man destitute of these would not so be received.<sup>87</sup>

Both Bibb and Ward held that black education would contradict some of the racist stereotypes held by whites.

Henry Bibb also hoped that educated blacks would set an example to their own community. Educated blacks, males and females, were counted on to espouse racial uplift and promote the efforts to elevate their race.<sup>88</sup> It was expected that blacks who were able to assist in racial uplift, would do so.<sup>89</sup> Bibb and his well-educated wife Mary certainly advanced efforts to educate blacks in Canada West. Henry delivered his message in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Mary instructed students at her home in Sandwich, Canada West. Mary Bibb's active part in educating Canadian blacks is one example of black women's contribution to education.<sup>90</sup>

Mary set up a classroom, in her home, shortly after she and her husband came to Canada West.<sup>91</sup> In the fall of 1850, when the Bibbs arrived in Sandwich, Canada West, there was no school for black students in the township.<sup>92</sup> Although the Bibbs publicly condemned separate schooling, they had to face the fact that black children did not have a school. Without Mary's school, black children had no opportunity for education. By the beginning of 1851, Mary Bibb's school had 25 day and evening students.<sup>93</sup> A month later

she had 46 students and had to move to a larger facility.<sup>94</sup> Mary and her students endured a cold classroom, an insufficient number of books and supplies, and overcrowding. She described the dismal beginning of her school in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Mary wrote of the "embarassing [sic] circumstances under which it was started, namely, a dark ill-ventilated room, uncomfortable seats, want of desks, books and all sorts of school apparatus."<sup>95</sup> Mary was not easily discouraged and even taught at Sabbath school on Sundays. Unfortunately, Mary's school lacked financial and material resources. The pressures of teaching and managing the school forced Mary to resign as teacher. Two teachers took over Mary's position.<sup>96</sup> However, the school never gained a firm financial footing and closed by the spring of 1852.<sup>97</sup> The area's black children were again without formal education.<sup>98</sup>

Canadian black women played an important role in the education of black students. Unfortunately little has been written of the important contribution these woman made.<sup>99</sup> Apart from the infrequent reference to Mary's school, the *Voice of the Fugitive* did not directly comment on women's education or their support of education in Canada West. Articles in the *Voice of the Fugitive* that addressed women, offered them advice on behavior, dress, and comporment. Nearly all the articles repeat commonly (and/or dominantly) accepted notions of womanhood.<sup>100</sup> For example, the column titled "May Not Women Propose?" says that women are "born to love" and that "maternity is one of their strongest passions."<sup>101</sup> The article "Golden Rules for Brides" counsels women to be submissive to their husbands, cheerful and self-denying.<sup>102</sup> In "A Letter to Country Girls", women are told how to properly sew a bodice and wear a dress.<sup>103</sup> A subsequent article reports on a "Great Improvement in Ladies Dress."<sup>104</sup> The piece praises short frocks and pantaloons. "The Future Wives of England" notes the attributes of good wives.<sup>105</sup> There were also short accounts of women who had not followed Victorian rules of behavior or had shown bad judgment.<sup>106</sup> Women are warned of the double standard in the treatment of men and women. "The Difference" says

when a boy goes astray he is helped back onto the right path, when a girl is 'betrayed' she receives the brand of society, and is henceforth driven from the way of virtue. The betrayer is honored, respected, esteemed; but his ruined, heart-broken victim knows that there is no peace for her this side of the cold and solitary grave. Society has no helping hand for her, no smile of peace, no voice of forgiveness.<sup>107</sup>

These anecdotes were cautionary tales intended as lessons for black women.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, most of these articles had been selected from American periodicals.

By examining the 'bad' behavior of women and discussing the ideals of women's domestic role, the *Voice of the Fugitive* promoted respectable middle class ideals for Canadian black women. Articles praised women's role in the family and advised women to follow respectable ideals.<sup>109</sup> In a history of the early black press in America, author Frankie Hutton says, "If there was a certain approved pattern or etiquette to be followed in courtships, marriage and related situations, black editors wanted to be sure that their readers knew about it, all in keeping with middle-class values."<sup>110</sup> In warning black women against inappropriate behavior, the *Voice of the Fugitive* was reinforcing the cult of true (middle class) womanhood. Moral lessons printed in the newspaper educated black women on the values 'respectable' society expected.<sup>111</sup> Black newspapers, in general, were interested in emphasizing black female middle class morality. In research on the early black press in America, Hutton says "The overriding concern of [black] editors in their coverage of [black] women appears to have been to dispel unsavory images about them by informing readers of their successes in education, employment, and community service."<sup>112</sup> Black women, through their role as respectable women, could contribute to the elevation of the black community. The *Voice of the Fugitive* critiqued women's behavior in an attempt to counter racism and dispel prevailing negative images of black Canadians.<sup>113</sup>

Bibb's attempts to instruct black women in 'proper' (that is, middle class white) behavior and to push the black community towards what he and other black leaders saw as appropriate educational goals, hint strongly that there were other values and approaches in

the black community beyond those of Bibb and other black leaders. Black leadership assumed they knew what black Canadians wanted. However, many blacks may have been at best disinterested in taking on white values including a focus on education. Others may have felt educational goals were impossible to achieve in light of white racism.

Henry Bibb's support of education was consistent with the beliefs of other black leaders.<sup>114</sup> The leadership of the black community promoted middle class interests, however, that may not have been espoused by all black Canadians. Some Canadian blacks may have questioned the superiority of middle class ideals that seemed unattainable or irrelevant to lower-class blacks. Bibb's zeal for education, his views on racial uplift, and his acceptance of middle class values reveal his class or class-seeking bias. Henry Bibb made every effort to persuade uneducated blacks that education was a remedy for racism. Nevertheless, blacks in Canada West may have been discouraged by the failure of the educational system to provide adequate assistance in their efforts to obtain education or they may have rejected the bourgeoisie model. Regardless of those who may have disagreed, Henry Bibb directed black Canadians to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Despite apparent disinterest or rejection in at least some segments of the black community, Bibb remained committed to his vision of what education could do for Canadian blacks. In an early issue of his newspaper, Bibb said "By [having education] we shall be clothed with a power which will enable us to rise from degradation and command respect from the whole civilized world: without it, we shall ever be imposed upon, oppressed and enslaved."<sup>115</sup> Henry Bibb believed that the successful education of blacks would prove that blacks were worthy of respect from the white community. Despite the problems of segregated education and separate schools, education was still touted as a significant strategy for eliminating prejudice. In a published letter to his former master, Henry Bibb wrote

Here it will be observed, that one of our calumniated race shows himself capable of entering the arena and vindicating his claim to an equality with the whites, in a diction as polished, and with ideas as forcible as have been elicited on the opposite side of the question.<sup>116</sup>

Bibb uses himself as an example and reinforces the value of education in racial uplift. Through his newspaper's columns, Bibb sent a clear message to the Canadian black community. Knowledge was a sign of independence and a tool of progress.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.

<sup>2</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 17 December 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Alison Prentice and Susan Houston made this observation. Cited in Marvin Lazerton, "Canadian Educational Historiography: Some Observations," in Egerton Ryerson and His Times, ed. Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), 3. Prentice and Houston also say "The importance of public schooling in the history of nineteenth-century Ontario society cannot be overestimated." Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), *viii*.

<sup>4</sup>"By and large taxpayers, as parents, shared the vision the common schools promoted: a vision of individual self-development and modest advances in societal and economic standing." Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 233; *Ibid.*, 115-116. Lazerton quotes Harvey Graff saying, "the school was more than ever before seen as the vehicle required to replace the family and church in giving moral instruction." Lazerton, "Canadian Educational Historiography," 6; *Ibid.*, 3-4;

<sup>5</sup>Bruce Curtis, Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871 (London, Ont.: The Althouse Press, 1988), 109. "The process of educating the population of Canada West after the [educational] reforms of 1846-50 involved the construction of routines and rituals of obedience. The creation in the population of new habits, attitudes, orientations, desires; the channeling of popular energy into particular regulatory forms supportive of a bourgeois social order--these were the objectives of education." *Ibid.*, 366. Said simply, "pupils would learn the obedience, regularity, and precision valued in the public sphere." Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 308.

<sup>6</sup>A circular distributed to county clerks by education administrators said "[The administrative procedures of education] are not mere arbitrary provisions; they are means to a great end--the social elevation of the whole population of the land. And *this elevation is not effected merely by schools*, but by teaching and habituating the people at large to transact all their public affairs,--from the school section to the county municipality,--in a business-like manner. The accuracy, punctuality, and method observed in such proceedings will soon be extended to all the transactions of domestic and private life, and thus exert a salutary influence upon all the social relations and personal habits of the whole people." Curtis, Building the Educational State, 142.

<sup>7</sup>"*Respectability* was to be the key to the mid-Victorian schoolroom culture as it was to the new bourgeois social order." Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 308.

<sup>8</sup>Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 103.

<sup>9</sup>Frederick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," American Quarterly 24 (December 1972) : 604.

<sup>10</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851.

<sup>11</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852.

<sup>12</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 5 November 1851.

<sup>13</sup>C. Peter Ripley, ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers, vol. 2, Canada, 1830-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) , 119.

<sup>14</sup>South Carolina, Missouri, Virginia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama legally prohibited teaching slaves to read. Moreover, the teaching of blacks, in general, was opposed. For further information see Carter G. Woodson, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861 (New York, 1915; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968).

<sup>15</sup>Jason H. Silverman and Donna J. Gillie, "'The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties': Education and the Fugitive Slave in Canada," Ontario History 74 (June 1982) : 95.

<sup>16</sup>Free blacks in Ohio were denied access to public schools. Blacks in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York were compelled to attend separate and inferior schools. The reason: "Northern whites feared that educational opportunity would encourage black immigration, antagonize Southerners, hurt public education, and result in violence." Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 95; Ripley, BAP, 119. An article in *Voice of the Fugitive* says blacks challenged segregated education in New York. American blacks asked the state to admit black students to public schools. After all, black families paid taxes. The column claims that there was a necessity for blacks in New York to supervise the separate schools. "[Blacks] have claimed the right to *act* separately though somewhat reluctantly unwilling to yield the principle, or to strengthen this invidious distinction." For editorial comments on New York's separate schools, see *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 June 1851.

<sup>17</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 95.

<sup>18</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>19</sup>Ripley, BAP, 8.

- <sup>20</sup>"Canadian legislatures did not enact discriminatory anti-black laws, with the sole exception of legislation legalizing segregated schools." Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996) , 75.
- <sup>21</sup>"Ironically, the Common School Act of 1850 effectively reinforced and legally entrenched a system of segregated schools for blacks in Canada West." Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 100. St. Catherines, Dresden, Simcoe, Malden, Anderson and other communities had fully segregated schools systems. Robin W. Winks, "'A Sacred Animosity': Abolitionism in Canada," in The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists, ed. Martin Duberman (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965) , 315. For reports and comments on the educational conditions in Canada West towns, see *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 March 1851 and 29 January 1852.
- <sup>22</sup>The Common School Act is also referred to as a Separate School Act. The law permitted separate schools for racial or religious reasons. Ripley, BAP, 186n; Robin W. Winks, The Blacks in Canada: A History, 2d ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) , 368-370.
- <sup>23</sup>Ripley, BAP, 8.
- <sup>24</sup>Egerton Ryerson believed that education would help all children to be "honest and useful member[s] of the community." To accomplish this, education "should be universal, free, practical, and compulsory." Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 100.
- <sup>25</sup>Afua P. Cooper, "Black Women and Work in Nineteenth-Century Canada West: Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb," in 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) , 156; Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 299. "Once the initial interventions were made to establish a *state* educational structure, attempts by different groups and classes in Canada West to realize the promise of educational equality and self-determination conflicted with the concern of governing classes to preserve and reproduce inequality in society." Curtis, Building the Educational State, 13.
- <sup>26</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 106.
- <sup>27</sup>Ripley, BAP, 97.
- <sup>28</sup>"Segregated education was the sole vestige of legal racial discrimination in the Canadian provinces." Ripley, BAP, 243; Winks, Blacks in Canada, 371.
- <sup>29</sup>Jason H. Silverman, "The American Fugitive Slave in Canada: Myths and Realities," Southern Studies 19 (Fall 1980) : 226.
- <sup>30</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 369.

<sup>31</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive* correspondent Samuel Ringgold Ward reported to the paper that black children were shut out of Simcoe (Norfolk County), Norwich (Oxford County), and Chatham public schools. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852.

<sup>32</sup>Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 226.

<sup>33</sup>In 1856, William P. Newman of Dresden, Canada West appealed to superintendent of education Egerton Ryerson complaining that his children were forced to attend a separate school eight miles away. Egerton Ryerson advised black Canadians who were denied access to public schools to petition the court for damages. However, fear, ignorance of the law, lack of funds, or weary indifference prevented most blacks from prosecuting. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 369. For more examples of blacks in Canada West actively lobbying for desegregated schooling, see Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 103-104.

<sup>34</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 244.

<sup>35</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 243. Dennis Hill lived in the gore of Camden, Kent County.

<sup>36</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852; Ripley, *BAP*, 233n.

<sup>37</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 101.

<sup>38</sup>Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 226.

<sup>39</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 101; Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 373.

<sup>40</sup>Separate schooling existed into the 1860s. See Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 362-376.

<sup>41</sup>For example, blacks in Sandwich, Canada West, organized a separate Union Sabbath school. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851. The article titled "Colored Settlements and Schools" cites the teachers and students at the black schools in the towns of Sandwich, New Canaan, and Windsor. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1852. See also *Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1852.

<sup>42</sup>Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 234.

<sup>43</sup>Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 150. Presumably, Cooper is referring to the system of administration that oversaw education. Cooper goes on to argue that the government's unwillingness to finance black schools shows the low priority accorded to black schools by the province. *Ibid.*, 152-153. An involved definition of the educational state is offered by Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, 12-18.

<sup>44</sup>Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 300. Another historian argues that

"The problem was not the existence of schools just for blacks. If black schools were equal in quality to those of white schools, then the controversy would have been less severe." Linda Bramble, Black Fugitive Slaves in Early Canada (St. Catharines, Ont.: Vanwell Publishing, 1988), 77.

<sup>45</sup>Excerpts from Drew's North Side View of Slavery are cited in Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 101; Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 227.

<sup>46</sup>Ripley, BAP, 8.

<sup>47</sup>Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 224. See also Winks, Blacks in Canada, 365.

<sup>48</sup>Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 301-302.

<sup>49</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 362.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 372.

<sup>51</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851. Black leader Samuel Ringgold Ward believed separate black institutions reinforced prejudice. In an editorial to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, discussing "Canadian Racism," Ward wrote "We have separate and distinct black churches, schools and preachers, whose existence and influence are much against us." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 224-228.

<sup>52</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1852. Cooper, notes "The more 'enlightened' preached integration and derided those who did not share their opinions. Ultimately, though, even the black middle class came to realize that their children would have a hard time gaining admission to the common schools run by whites; they became unwilling supporters of separate schooling." Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 155-156.

<sup>53</sup>The article also notes "[Canadian blacks'] want of knowlege in planning, and lack of firmness and perserverance in execution has operated very much against their prosperity." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 March 1851.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>For further information on segregated schooling in Amherstburg, see Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 97-98. Also see Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 225.

<sup>56</sup>Silverman, "American Fugitive Slave," 225.

<sup>57</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 98.

<sup>58</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 April 1851.

<sup>59</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 369-370.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 376; Ripley, BAP, 489n.

<sup>61</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 8 October 1851.

<sup>62</sup>Alison L. Prentice and Susan E. Houston, eds., Family, School and Society In Nineteenth-Century Canada, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 234.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Fred Landon, "Fugitive Slaves in Ontario," The Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio: Quarterly Bulletin 8 (April 1936) : 6-7.

<sup>66</sup>Prentice and Houston, Family, School and Society, 235-236.

<sup>67</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 96.

<sup>68</sup>Proslavery apologists judged blacks to be lacking the intellectual ability necessary for freedom and equal participation in society. Indeed, the belief that blacks were inferior was a proslavery argument. "Since the intellectual inferiority of the race was the primary justification for slavery, central to their mission of 'uplift', blacks sought as a central goal in their mission of uplift to improve their education to help dispel the widespread myth of the dull black intellect." Linda Perkins, "Black Women and Racial 'Uplift' Prior to Emancipation," in The Black Woman Cross-Culturally, ed. Filomina Chioma Steady (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1981), 323; Ripley, BAP, 183n.

<sup>69</sup>Linda M. Perkins, "The Impact of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women," Journal of Social Issues 39 (Fall 1983) : 19. Henry Bibb wrote to his former master "I have acquired the art of communicating my thoughts intelligibly on paper to be read by tyrants, notwithstanding they with yourself have done their best to keep me in perpetual bondage and ignorance." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 7 October 1852.

<sup>70</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 January 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 119-120.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1851.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851.

<sup>79</sup>Interestingly, this article says that the 'fearful results' of teaching slaves to read would be the overthrowing of slavery and the endangerment of tranquillity. The American columnist warns of 'momentous consequences'. The writer threatens that slave literacy "will not stop at the mere reading of the Scriptures, but it will gradually, slowly but certainly, lead to a degree of literary education which will be found incompatible with the present happy security of the fabric of our social system." *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851.

<sup>81</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 January 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 119-120.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851. Reprinted in Ripley BAP, 170-175.

<sup>84</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851.

<sup>85</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 362.

<sup>86</sup>Silverman and Gillie, "Pursuit of Education," 95-96.

<sup>87</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852.

<sup>88</sup>Education was to be "undertaken as a part of the service all black people were encouraged to provide to the community. It was believed that education would not only counteract racial prejudice, but would also better prepare blacks to understand and to participate in the ongoing struggle for racial justice." James Oliver Horton, "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions Among Antebellum Free Blacks," Feminist Studies 12 (Spring 1986) : 62.

<sup>89</sup>Perkins, "Education of Black Women," 18. "It was felt by members of [the Black middle class] that those Blacks, female and male, who had some money and education, and most assuredly those who were freeborn, should help their less privileged sisters and brothers." Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 164n.

<sup>90</sup>"Unlike women of the white society, black women were encouraged to become

educated to aid in the improvement of their race." Perkins, "Education of Black Women," 19.

<sup>91</sup>Henry Bibb wrote to an American antislavery association in December 1850, requesting help for Mary's students. He said, "My wife has just commenced teaching a school in Sandwich, for [fugitives]--she has quite a large school, but has not a [supply] of school books for the children." Ripley, *BAP*, 113.

<sup>92</sup>Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 149.

<sup>93</sup>What Mary Bibb taught in her school is not known. Who she instructed is also not clear. There is no evidence of the number of blacks, whites, males or females, that attended. Perhaps the school was open to boys and girls and taught the same curriculum to both because "Unlike their white counterparts, blacks established coeducational schools and similar curricula for both males and females." Perkins, "Education of Black Women," 18.

<sup>94</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 110n.

<sup>95</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1851.

<sup>96</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1852.

<sup>97</sup>Ripley, *BAP*, 110n; Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 152. Afua Cooper contends that the school closed for two reasons: the poverty of the pupils' parents and the reluctance of the government to finance its long-term functioning. She reasons "The unwillingness of the government to finance Black schools fully reveals the low priority accorded to them by the province." *Ibid.*, 152-153.

<sup>98</sup>Cooper, "Black Women and Work," 152.

<sup>99</sup>Relatively more primary and secondary information is available on the history of American black women. The information that exists on American black women shows "with educational resources limited to them, they educated themselves as well as others." Perkins, "Black Women and Racial 'Uplift'," 331. Likely many of the same efforts were made north of the 49th parallel. "Throughout the nineteenth century, the threads that held together the organizational as well as individual pursuits of black women were those of 'duty' and 'obligation' to the race. The concept of racial obligation was intimately linked with the concept of racial 'uplift' and 'elevation'." *Ibid.*, 317. Many Canadian black women, like their American peers, knew that education would aid in racial uplift and were determined to assist in black uplift.

<sup>100</sup>Other editorials report on women who are remarkably different. "A Female Teamster" reports on a young woman who takes care of horses and draws cordwood to the city every day for a livelihood. She loads and unloads the wood herself. The woman lives

with her brother and he *allows her* (italics mine) \$16 per month. The article also mentions that she is not very masculine in appearance, and is only about sixteen years of age. It concludes "Let any young lady, who is in favor of women's rights, find moral courage to beat that if she can." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1852.

<sup>101</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 May 1851.

<sup>102</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 June 1851.

<sup>103</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851.

<sup>104</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851. Another item approves a women's 'Bloomer outfit' as a comfortable and practical alternative to a corseted dress. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 13 August 1851.

<sup>105</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 7 May 1851.

<sup>106</sup>A woman laments about her life in "A Lady's Complaint of Matrimony." Her husband married her for her money and they have nothing in common. Their children behave terribly and her servants keep deserting her. She says she looks terrible and concludes, "Wishing myself an old maid. I do it every day of my life." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 8 October 1851. "Reality and Romance" tells the story of a father who must retrieve his daughter after she elopes with his workman. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 30 July 1851.

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

<sup>108</sup>Horton, "Freedom's Yoke," 56, notes "Black newspapers were clear in their support of the place reserved for the female sex in American society. In their pages were countless stories of the dire consequences that awaited those who did not accept and conform to the pattern, within the limits of their ability."

<sup>109</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 16 July 1851, 22 April 1852, 20 May 1852.

<sup>110</sup>Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 68.

<sup>111</sup>Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 57.

<sup>112</sup>Hutton, *Early Black Press*, 58.

<sup>113</sup>"The image of the immoral black female was quite pervasive during the mid-nineteenth century; it required the astute mutualism of the editors and women working together to wage war against it." Hutton, *Early Black Press*, 58. See also Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 57.

<sup>114</sup>Cooper, "Elevating the Race," 604-605.

<sup>115</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 15 January 1851.

<sup>116</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851.

## Chapter Five

I urged the cause of mental and moral elevation by integrity, temperance, industry and good economy, and took the liberty to hold up and urge the support of your Paper as a means of enlightenment.

*Voice of the Fugitive*, 3 December 1851

The *Voice of the Fugitive* spoke to blacks in Canada West on a broad variety of issues. Most articles stressed racial elevation and improving the condition of the black community. The paper published articles featuring pleas for emigration, hints for successful farming, news of social and benevolent societies, as well as articles praising black Canadian efforts at respectability. Like other black leaders, Henry Bibb believed that by their industrious, sober, respectable, and upright conduct, the black community would refute racial stereotypes and elevate the race.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will present opinions expressed in the *Voice of the Fugitive* that aimed at 'elevating' Canadian blacks through emigration, agrarian employment, religion, and temperance.

Agrarian employment, temperance, and religion were seen by black leader and newspaper editor Henry Bibb as symbols of respectability. "'Respectable' was a code word for values associated with the middle class."<sup>2</sup> Bibb regarded dominant white middle class values such as thrift, temperance, and education as means of respectability and racial elevation. Bibb stressed that once in Canada, hard-working, God-fearing, self-controlled blacks would be viewed as 'respectable' in the eyes of the white community.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Henry Bibb and other black leaders urged American blacks to emigrate to Canada.<sup>3</sup> Emigration to Canada West was viewed, by black leaders, as a new beginning for the black community.<sup>4</sup> Canada West offered the black community

the chance to escape the discriminatory social and political climate of the United States. Black leaders promoted Canada as a safe and potentially prosperous place to settle.<sup>5</sup> Emigration was also viewed as a step towards personal independence because it indicated that some blacks were willing to leave behind a repressive society to make a fresh start. Blacks who abandoned the United States to make a new life for themselves in Canada West were praised for their intelligence and self-reliance. Therefore, emigration was a key element in the advancement of the philosophy of racial elevation.

Henry Bibb headed efforts to promote Canada West as an asylum from the political climate of America. Many freed blacks living in the northern states were pushed out of the United States after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. In the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Bibb encouraged fugitive slaves to escape their American oppressors and flee to the freedom and safety of Canada.<sup>6</sup> African, Haitian, and British West Indian settlement schemes were discussed in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. However, Bibb saw emigration to Canada West as the most advantageous option. In his articles Henry Bibb emphasized the political rights available to blacks in Canada. Bibb's editorials suggest that he believed that leaving the United States was a symbolic departure from discrimination and degradation for blacks. Bibb also reasoned that if the black community had a clean slate, it could achieve racial uplift.

At the 1851 North American Convention in Toronto, Henry Bibb and other black representatives collectively advocated emigration to Canada West. At the convention, Bibb and the gathered delegates

Resolved, that we feel truly grateful, as a people, to her Britannic Majesty's just and powerful Government, for the protection afforded us; and are fully persuaded from the known fertility of the soil, and salubrity of climate of the milder regions of Canada West, that this is, by far, the most desirable place of resort for colored people, to be found on the American continent.<sup>7</sup>

At a meeting called by supporters of Henry Bibb to further discuss issues raised at the North American Convention, the committee members concluded "Emigration is

emphatically one of the most important subjects that can engage the attention of an oppressed and denationalized people, as a means for [sic] to accomplish their elevation."<sup>8</sup> The group went on to say "Canada is the first place that presents itself to our consideration. Here is the Asylum of the Refugees from American Slavery, and here the imperial laws of Great Britain have full sway."<sup>9</sup> The assembly also glorified Canada's agricultural land and bountiful water supply and maintained the province was suitable for 'incalculable' development.

In a series of editorials published in the *Voice of the Fugitive* in late 1851, Bibb examined emigration. Canada West was presented as a practical choice for blacks escaping the political oppression of the United States. The proximity of Canada West made it accessible to many black Americans. Canada West also offered political freedom and safety. Writing on the benefits of immigration to Canada, Bibb said

We say Canada first because it is the most convenient refuge for the American slave; and in fact the only spot on the American Continent upon which the hunted fugitive can find a protection by law for his liberty. Again we say Canada, because it is known to be one of the best agricultural countries on this continent.<sup>10</sup>

As part of black emigration and resettlement in Canada West, blacks were encouraged to begin independent farming. For white Canadians, landowning and farming were important standards of independence and progress. Independent farmers were regarded as industrious, upright, and respectable. In 1850s Canada West, agriculture was a practical and respectable pursuit. Canada West was touted as a fertile region with a favorable climate. These conditions were conducive to agriculture, and Henry Bibb pressed black Canadians to buy land and begin farming.

Canada West's abundant agricultural resources led many Canadian settlers to pursue agriculture. In the inaugural issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Henry Bibb said agriculture "is the most certain road to independence and self-respect."<sup>11</sup> Henry Bibb probably believed that agrarian self-employment was more respectable than casual or seasonal labor in the towns.<sup>12</sup> Black leaders declared that through hard work, black

farmers would be able to acquire wealth and respectability.<sup>13</sup> *Voice of the Fugitive* articles indicate that independent farming was seen as a noble pursuit and landowning was a solid foundation for future generations.<sup>14</sup>

In a *Voice of the Fugitive* editorial promoting black agriculture and praising Canada's natural resources Bibb writes,

it is plainly to be seen that there are certain fields of enterprise open to us, under the British Government, which will enable us to do far more for the abolition of slavery, and the elevation of the colored population in North America, than we can ever effect by remaining in the United States. . . . We speak of this subject, not as a scheme of colonization, but as a great commercial and agricultural enterprise [sic], possessing, in itself the elements for breaking down the system of American slavery. We believe that the time has now fully come when the watchword of every colored American should be FREE LABOR FOR FREE MEN.<sup>15</sup>

Bibb contended that black Canadian farmers would aid the antislavery cause by contributing to the free labor movement.<sup>16</sup> Free labor agriculture served to uplift free blacks and it also helped those in slavery. By producing goods with non-slave labor, black farmers contributed to an economy that was not dependent on slaves. Thus, free black farming was also a stand against slavery.

In addition to Bibb's notion of erasing the slave economy through free labor, Bibb believed that agrarianism would signal the transition from dependence and subordination to independence and elevation.<sup>17</sup> "If each successful slave escape undermined the 'contented slave' thesis, then each successful black farmer, artisan, or entrepreneur in Canada helped erode the myth of black dependence."<sup>18</sup> Black Canadians could erase the stereotype of the subjugated slave if they could secure an independent livelihood as yeoman farmers. Bibb said "To improve the moral, mental and political condition of a poverty stricken and degraded people, they must become owners and tillers of the soil-- and PRODUCE WHAT THEY CONSUME."<sup>19</sup> Bibb's quote suggests that the accumulation of land was the basis of economic and political self-sufficiency.<sup>20</sup> Certainly, the racial elevation ideology emphasized this type of independence. Self-reliance was

considered an important aspect of racial elevation.<sup>21</sup> It was crucial to prove that blacks could be successful independent farmers and therefore disprove the argument that blacks were incapable of prospering outside of slavery.<sup>22</sup>

Agricultural pursuits were also endorsed by black leaders at the North American Convention.<sup>23</sup> Bibb, and other black leaders at the North American Convention, publicly encouraged black Canadians to become landowners. They resolved

that we warmly recommend to colored settlers in Canada, to use all diligence in obtaining possession of uncultivated lands, for the laudable purpose of making themselves and their offspring independent tillers of a *free soil*.<sup>24</sup>

An early letter to the *Voice of the Fugitive* agreed wholeheartedly with advocating that black Canadians follow agricultural pursuits to increase independence.<sup>25</sup> Another letter from a reader, endorsing agriculture for black Canadians, says "It is the first step we can take to strengthen our country, the land of Freedom, and to weaken the institution of slavery."<sup>26</sup> This letter indicates that some black Canadians were mindful of the effect their prosperity could have on antislavery arguments. It might also be concluded that blacks in Canada were aware that their achievements could inspire others in the black community to do their part for antislavery and racial elevation.<sup>27</sup>

The *Voice of the Fugitive* regularly had columns promoting agriculture and issuing agricultural advice.<sup>28</sup> The topics addressed included: growing hemp and flax, the way to produce good potatoes, farming implements, and methods for ploughing.<sup>29</sup> Further, Bibb undertook practical plans to help establish Canadian blacks in farming.

The *Voice of the Fugitive* advertised the Refugee Home Society land scheme. The Refugee Home Society arranged for fugitives coming to Canada West to buy land. For several black leaders, the acquisition of property was a key element in racial uplift. Acquiring property was a responsible and upright goal for many Canadians.<sup>30</sup> Land ownership for all Canadians, and particularly for black Canadians, was a sign of upward mobility. "For blacks who could achieve property or land, there was a particular sense of

pride and, because so few people of color owned their own homes or land on which to build, it automatically set those who did apart."<sup>31</sup> Bibb was part of a group of abolitionists who brokered the purchase of land for black Canadians.

The Refugee Home Society was an ambitious settlement program that bought large tracts of land in Canada West and then resold the land in parcels to fugitive slaves.<sup>32</sup> As early as April 1851 the *Voice of the Fugitive* began to solicit funds for what would officially become the Refugee Home Society.<sup>33</sup> Under the headline "What do the Fugitives in Canada Stand in Need of?" Bibb outlined a (preliminary) plan to purchase 20,000 acres of land in southern Canada West and resell it to black settlers.<sup>34</sup> Bibb believed in the idea of settling blacks on Canadian farmland and championed the Refugee Home society platform in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Bibb's rhetoric regarding the Refugee Home Society was typical of nineteenth century notions of self-help and the virtues of rural life.<sup>35</sup>

The Refugee Home Society was formally founded in May 1851. At that time, Henry Bibb was appointed to the Business Committee and the *Voice of the Fugitive* became the official organ for the society.<sup>36</sup> After meeting with the Refugee Home Society in Michigan, Bibb returned to Canada West and published an article that outlined the society's most recent plan to purchase 50,000 acres of Canadian land and resell it to black Canadians. The society saw the situation as this:

on their arrival, [refugee slaves] find themselves in a strange land, uneducated, poverty-stricken, without homes, or any permanent means of self-support; however willing they may be to work, they have neither means to work with, nor land to work upon.<sup>37</sup>

Bibb wrote, "It is no exaggeration for us to say that more than two-thirds of the refugees in Canada understand agricultural labor and would follow it for a livelihood, had they land or the means to purchase it."<sup>38</sup> Through the Refugee Home Society, fugitive slaves could buy 25 acre parcels of land for a ten percent down payment and equal annual payments.<sup>39</sup> The land was sold under strict conditions to fugitives.<sup>40</sup>

Information from the *Voice of the Fugitive* is of great value because no official records of the Refugee Home Society are extant.<sup>41</sup> Bibb listed donations to the Refugee Home Society in the *Voice of the Fugitive*.<sup>42</sup> As well, the constitution and bylaws of the Refugee Home Society were published in the *Voice of the Fugitive* in early 1852.

This Society would therefore represent to the refugees from Southern slavery, who are now in Canada destitute of homes, or who may hereafter come, being desirous of building themselves up in Canada, on an agricultural basis, and who do not buy, sell or use intoxicating drinks as a beverage, shall, by making proper application to this Society, and complying with its Constitution and By Laws, be put into possession of 25 acres of farming land, and their children shall enjoy the blessings of education perpetually.<sup>43</sup>

By 1853, the Refugee Home Society had purchased 1328 acres of land, of which 600 acres had been settled. A year later, the society had 2,000 acres, half of which had been sold to settlers.<sup>44</sup> Property ownership was depicted as a proud accomplishment. The Society said its aim was "to obtain permanent homes for the refugees in Canada, and to promote their moral, social, physical, intellectual, and political elevation."<sup>45</sup> The Refugee Home Society plan promoted the principals of education, morality, and industrial habits.

The constitution of the Refugee Home Society stipulated that settlers "do not buy, sell or use intoxicating drinks as a beverage."<sup>46</sup> "The temperance requirement was quite stringent. Potential Black settlers now had to prove their social acceptability and respectability by abstaining from alcohol."<sup>47</sup> In fact, a number of organizations aimed at assisting blacks in Canada West mandated that blacks follow similar rules of behavior. Black settlers living in Buxton, for example, were encouraged to follow a temperate lifestyle. Moral reform was a crucial element of black uplift. Temperance was a symbol that black Canadians could be 'properly' socialized. Black proponents of temperance held that adherence to the temperance ideology would help refute the racist stereotype that blacks were morally inferior. Attendance at temperance meetings would contribute to racial uplift. And, concerns from white society that black behavior was deviant, could be

mitigated with puritan resolutions opposing intoxicating beverages. Temperance was a goal in itself and a sign of respectability.

The Canadian temperance movement began in the early 1820s with strong religious themes. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, temperance had changed. Over time, temperance had "broadened out into a more secular plan for modernization and an instrument of social control."<sup>48</sup> Temperance was less identified with religious revivalism and more associated with 'progress'. During the mid-nineteenth century, temperance began to garner support as a respectable reform movement from an influential segment of the population and in the corridors of power.<sup>49</sup> By the 1850s, the temperance reform movement had swept North America and was a mainstream movement in Canada West.<sup>50</sup> Intemperance was seen as a major social problem in the larger white society where activists blamed alcohol for the general degradation of society and the breakdown of family life. Temperance leaders encouraged abstinence from alcoholic drinks as a way to remedy unemployment, criminal behavior, family instability, and economic ruin. Sobriety was touted as a cure for these social ills and was linked to good moral character.

Likewise, in the black community, temperance was a secular issue that was a symbol of middle class respectability. The temperance message was offered to black Canadians from the *Voice of the Fugitive* as a means of gaining respectability. It was used by black leaders as a tenet of racial elevation. Intemperance may have been a genuine problem in Canada, but the crusade for temperance was a symbol of moral uplift and racial elevation. The movement as a whole was connected with concepts of self-improvement and social status.<sup>51</sup> Temperance was a means of differentiating between those who were 'respectable' and those who were not. Temperance was a symbol of the respectable middle class.

Henry Bibb encouraged Canadian blacks to join in the temperance movement as a step towards racial elevation. The introductory issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive* states that the newspaper would advocate temperance and moral reform.<sup>52</sup> A subsequent article in

the *Voice of the Fugitive* contends that the press has a duty to advocate temperance.<sup>53</sup> In keeping with this policy, Bibb publicized news of the black Canadian role in the temperance movement in the pages of his newspaper. He advertised temperance meetings and enlisted black Canadians to join the movement.<sup>54</sup>

Temperance gained endorsement from black leaders and other members of the Canadian black community. On his arrival in Canada West, American black abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward wrote to Henry Bibb and the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Ward's introductory letter declares "Rum and Negro hate, the two great public evils of our adopted land, shall receive unyielding fight from me during my life."<sup>55</sup> At the North American Convention, Henry Bibb and other black leaders suggested that the black community abstain from liquor consumption. The gathered delegates resolved "that we recommend to the people, abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, that they may, by so doing, save dollars for themselves and their children."<sup>56</sup> Black leaders "espoused temperance not because alcoholism or drunkenness (was) a race preoccupation, but because abstinence so well represented the moral uplift and social control which lay at the heart of antebellum reform."<sup>57</sup>

From its beginning, women were active in the general temperance movement.<sup>58</sup> In fact, white women began temperance work before the movement was widely recognized.<sup>59</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, women made up a sizable number of the movement's members. Women were encouraged to join men in the public arena and denounce intemperance. Temperance literature utilized domestic imagery and social concerns to enlist women in the reform movement. Temperance images depicted men and women who sang temperance ballads together as the vanguard of the new, wholesome Christian family.<sup>60</sup> Women were in charge of socializing their children and teaching them basic standards of middle class propriety.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, "women were to assume a hallowed social role."<sup>62</sup> Although the *Voice of the Fugitive* does not mention the role of black women in the temperance movement, it can be presumed that they held a significant

role in the black community. Most likely, many black women instructed their families in the importance of temperance and attended temperance meetings.

The evidence suggests that a number of Canadian blacks supported the temperance movement.<sup>63</sup> In an account of his tour through Canada West, abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward reported on conditions in Buxton. He said, "In morals the settlement has no superior. There is not a drunkard in the settlement, and, if any habitual drinking, they keep it to themselves. No person sells--no person is allowed to sell--the accursed stuff."<sup>64</sup> Ward's description indicates that at least a portion of black Canadians espoused the antiliquor sentiment.

An 1851 issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive* reported that monthly temperance meetings were held in Canada West and that two-thirds of the black population attended these meetings.<sup>65</sup> The article noted that there were two *hard* cases of blacks who were not compliant with the temperance message. A decade later, a contemporary observer reported

Everywhere, the whites testify to the high moral standing of the colored people; and this is the more commendable from the fact that so many of them are from slavery, where there is no inducement for them to be chaste and virtuous. I have not seen any ardent spirits in a private house, since coming into the Province, and I am told that it is never bought and taken home, by the colored farmers or mechanics.<sup>66</sup>

One historian says "The contemporary eagerness for change helps explain why a movement which tended to be led by members of the middle class was able to win support among what was, in fact, a large and varied group of people."<sup>67</sup>

In his efforts to inform the black community of the tenets of moral uplift, Bibb encouraged black Canadians to espouse religion. In the premiere issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive* Henry Bibb pronounced that slaves had a claim to the Bible.<sup>68</sup> The church was a formidable platform for moral reform. Perhaps the earliest and most important institution in Canadian black communities was the church.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the churches were the center of religious, cultural, and social life for many Canadian blacks. Participation in organized

religion was also an aspect of black elevation. In the white community religion was important to respectability. For Canadian blacks seeking racial uplift, religious beliefs and church attendance conformed to the hegemonic values and practices of white society. Possibly black Canadians supported churches as a display of 'proper' conduct. Yet, most of the mainstream churches were irresolute on the significant issue of slavery and that frustrated blacks in Canada West.

Initially, blacks immigrating to Canada were served by existing churches. However, not all 'white' churches accepted black worshipers. One historian maintains that despite the Christian teachings of tolerance and acceptance, "Some congregations closed their doors to black members simply because they were prejudiced against blacks."<sup>70</sup> Consequently, by the mid-nineteenth century a growing number of blacks built their own churches and established their own congregations. Bibb's newspaper appealed for funds on behalf of groups trying to raise money to build churches. In July 1851, the *Voice of the Fugitive* advertised that the "ladies of Sandwich [Canada West]" were requesting donations for the erection of a new Baptist church.<sup>71</sup> The majority of Canada West's black-formed churches were Baptist or Methodist.<sup>72</sup>

The founding of black churches established a spiritual outlet for Canadian blacks and, importantly, allowed many blacks to avoid the prejudice that existed in 'white' churches.<sup>73</sup> Black churches were more accommodating (than white churches) to black Canadians, and thus, black Canadians might have been more comfortable pursuing conventional religious beliefs in segregated churches.<sup>74</sup> Likely, black parishioners wanted preachers who shared similar views and were part of the black community. The black churches also filled a social need for the black community of Canada West.<sup>75</sup> Church services were an opportunity for blacks to worship together and also to socialize.

Churches, though, were a source of dissension for some blacks in Canada West.<sup>76</sup> One source of conflict stemmed from the churches' general refusal to speak out against slavery.<sup>77</sup> Although church-based societies offered financial support to the antislavery

cause, the churches remained silent on the issue of slavery.<sup>78</sup> Understandably, the black community felt that voiceless support from the church was an insufficient means of assisting abolition. In the *Voice of the Fugitive* Henry Bibb attacked the passivity and dishonesty of churches. The headline "Pro-Slavery Appliance" introduced an article that charged "The pulpit has been made the ally and co-worker of unprincipled [proslavery] politicians in furthering their corrupt schemes of ambition."<sup>79</sup> In the *Voice of the Fugitive* newspaper, church leaders were admonished to take a stand against slavery.<sup>80</sup>

Many ministers in Canada West endorsed antislavery. However, individual denominations did not formally condemn slavery. For example, the Methodist Episcopal (ME) Church remained silent on the issue of slavery.<sup>81</sup> Henry Bibb believed the ME Church was proslavery. He defended articles published in the *Voice of the Fugitive* that claimed the church was followed and supported by slaveholders.<sup>82</sup> Henry Bibb denounced the hypocrisy of the ME Church and its slaveowning members in articles published in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Bibb addressed a number of reports to his former owner.<sup>83</sup> In a series of editorials titled "A Letter to my Old Master", Bibb challenges the beliefs and actions of his former master, Albert Sibley, and the ME Church. Bibb says to his onetime oppressor

For more than twenty years you have been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church--a class-leader and an exhorter of that denomination; professing to take the *Bible*, as your standard of christian duty. But sir know ye not that in light of this book, you have been acting the hypocrite all this while? I feel called upon as a christian to call your attention to a few facts with a [sic] regard to it.<sup>84</sup>

Bibb charges his former master and the ME church with disobeying the Bible and violating the Ten Commandments. In the same letter, Bibb contends the church sanctions the buying and selling of men, women, and children, the robbing of men of their wives and parents of their offspring. Bibb also accuses the church of permitting slaveowners to disregard the Sabbath, and commit theft, murder, incest, and adultery. He continues,

Now Sir, allow me with the greatest deference to your intelligence to inform you that you are miserably deceiving yourself, if you believe that you are in the straight and narrow path to heaven, whilst you are practising such abominable violations of the plainest precepts of religion.<sup>85</sup>

In a second letter to Sibley, Henry Bibb warns of the danger to slaveowners who, by owning slaves, disregard Christian scriptures. Bibb writes,

I mean that you shall know that there is a just God in heaven, who cannot harmonise human slavery with the Christian religion: I mean that you shall know that there is a law which is more binding upon the consciences of slaves than that of Congress, or any other human enactment.<sup>86</sup>

Bibb accuses his former master of disobeying the Holy Bible. Bibb says Sibley deprived wives of their husbands, children of their fathers, and mothers of their children. Further, Sibley, "a leader in the M.E. Church, and a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ,"<sup>87</sup> is reproached for stealing his neighbour's livestock. Finally, Bibb says that he has no confidence "in your sheep stealing, and man robbing religion."<sup>88</sup>

More generally, Bibb distrusted all denominations that did not take a firm stand on slavery. In the *Voice of the Fugitive* a headline asked "Why should we Leave a Pro-slavery Church?"<sup>89</sup> The article argued

As slavery is a great sin, and as there is no rule authorizing us to distinguish between this and other great sins, it follows that we are bound to withdraw from the church which sustains slavery, or else, that we are at liberty to belong to a church that sustains any other great sin, or all other great sins.<sup>90</sup>

The debate concluded, "every one that belongs to and sustains a slavery-defending church lends his influence to the support of slavery."<sup>91</sup> Black churches and black preachers did condemn slavery. Despite the rhetoric, however, they did not encourage antislavery action. Most churches were ineffective in facing a major issue--slavery. The churches, although a haven for the oppressed, were not an instrument for political change. One historian believes the black church served the immediate needs of blacks in Canada West, but not their future goals. Robin Winks contends that the black church believed in the passive acceptance of the plight of black Canadians.<sup>92</sup>

Henry Bibb believed his endorsements of emigration to Canada West, landowning and agriculture, and temperance, were steps leading black Canadians toward racial elevation. Although Bibb was critical of the churches, religion was an important part of respectability. By adopting values associated with the white middle class, Canadian blacks were reaching for racial equality. 'Respectable' blacks were the blacks trying to meet the demands of white society. 'Successful' black Canadians were tangible examples of racial progress. These efforts at respectability would serve to refute prevailing racist labels.<sup>93</sup> A scholar discussing the politics of respectable behavior among women in the black Baptist Church says

Respectability demanded that every individual in the black community assume responsibility for behavioral self-regulation and self-improvement along moral, educational, and economic lines. The goal was to distance oneself as far as possible from images perpetuated by racist stereotypes.<sup>94</sup>

To Henry Bibb, respectability, and the values associated with it, would eliminate the social subordination of black Canadians.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>"Speaking and writing in the characteristic rhetoric of the early 19th century reformers, [black leaders] stressed that the 'elevation' of the race depended on the 'self-improvement' of the individual." Frederick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," *American Quarterly* 24 (December 1972) : 604.

<sup>2</sup>R.J. Young, *Antebellum Black Activists: Race, Gender, and Self* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) , 113.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the emigration issue and various emigration projects, see C. Peter Ripley, ed., *Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 2, *Canada, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) , 32-39.

<sup>4</sup>A letter to the *Voice of the Fugitive* from James Theodore Holly supports Henry Bibb's efforts to promote emigration and Canadian settlement. Holly writes "I think it has now become the duty of the whole free colored population of the United States, to support your project as the most practicable one ever presented for their consideration, and the most available for the speedy emancipation of our enslaved brethren. We should regard you and those that immediately surround you in the noble project, as the head and centre of all our future efforts." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 June 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 138-140.

<sup>5</sup>A letter from James Theodore Holly to Henry Bibb and the *Voice of the Fugitive* praises Bibb and his efforts to encourage immigration to Canada West. Holly writes, "Your plan meets my hearty approbation, and I give in my adhesion to it, as an humble supporter of the same." *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 3 December 1851, 15 January 1852.

<sup>7</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 149-157.

<sup>8</sup>The committee concludes its report saying, "[The colored man] may educate his children for any of the learned professions, and when they grow up, there is nothing to prevent them standing side by side with their white fellow-citizens in public affairs if their qualifications are equal." Report of the Committee on Emigration of the Amherstburg Convention. Presented at the First Baptist Church, Amherstburg, Canada West, 17 June 1853. Ripley, *BAP*, 270-278.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>10</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 3 December 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 200-202.

<sup>11</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851. During a speaking tour, Henry Bibb reiterated his opinions on the subject of agriculture to inhabitants of Canada West. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 March 1851.

<sup>12</sup>In an editorial, Henry Bibb wrote "Canada is no place for barbers, boot-blacks and table waiters. Those who expect to follow such business for a livelihood will not find it profitable or elevating to themselves as a class in Canada. We want farmers, mechanics and professional men, for such will contribute something to the character and elevation of our race." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 30 July 1851.

<sup>13</sup>Cooper, "Elevating the Race," 610.

<sup>14</sup>James Theodore Holly writes to Henry Bibb and the *Voice of the Fugitive* "I have long been impressed with the necessity of some project to withdraw our people from the drudging employment of menials, about the towns and cities of the free states, and to locate them in a primitive community, where they might lay the foundation of their own future greatness, and at the same time afford a hospitable home to the escaping bondsmen." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 June 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 138-140.

<sup>15</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 3 December 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 200-202.

<sup>16</sup>Ripley explains, "During the 1850s, the free labor concept provided an ideological base for political antislavery in the northern United States and became a popular alternative to the moral arguments of abolitionists. . . . [I]t posited a harmony of interests between capital and labor that allowed wage earners to control the fruits of their labor, to have economic choices, and to work their way into a position of economic independence." Ripley continues, "Proponents of the free produce movement theorized that the organized boycott of slave-produced goods would reduce the profitability of slavery and thus destroy the institution." Ripley, *BAP*, 202n.

<sup>17</sup>Afua Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000), 227-228, 230-231. In a recent biography of Henry Bibb, Cooper says Bibb "saw agriculture as the basis for Black empowerment, independence, pride and self-esteem. For Bibb, Black landownership and agricultural pursuit would also lay the foundation for the restoration of Black 'manhood'." *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>18</sup>Michael F. Hembree, "The Question of 'Begging': Fugitive Slave Relief in Canada, 1830-1865," *Civil War History* 37 (1991): 321.

<sup>19</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 143-145.

<sup>20</sup>Historian Robin Winks says that most fugitives desired to acquire land. Winks goes on to say "Most of the whites shared this goal, representative as it was of the middle-class values to which the fugitives often attached themselves." Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2d ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 247.

<sup>21</sup>In the pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive* landowning and farming were advocated as measures of self-reliance and success. In a column titled "Progress of Anti-Slavery", Bibb observed, "In this section of the province the people of color, with but few exceptions, are highminded, and seem determined to elevate themselves by becoming landholders, that they may not only be able to produce what they consume, but to educate and save their children from ignorance and want." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1852.

<sup>22</sup>Many black Canadians were successful farmers. The Buxton settlement is an example of black Canadians successfully established in farming. For details on Buxton settlers and examples of other prosperous black-owned farms, see Fred Landon, "Agriculture Among the Negro Refugees in Upper Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 21 (July 1936) : 306-307, 311. Landon summarizes the experiences of black settlers, saying, "Of the Negro farmers in Canada before 1865 it may be said that they succeeded about as well as the average immigrant from other countries who came without capital." *Ibid.*, 312. Dr. Samuel G. Howe visited Canada West in 1864 to investigate the social and economic conditions of blacks. He reported that rural blacks did better than their urban peers. Generally, black farmers were landowners with no mortgage. "From the standpoint of cleanliness and comfort [Howe] found the [black] farmhouses differing in no respect from those of neighboring white settlers, and he found many evidences of distinct progress shown in permanent dwellings and barns, enclosed fields and livestock." Observations are from American abolitionist Samuel G. Howe's report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission. *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 22 October 1851.

<sup>24</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 149-157.

<sup>25</sup>The letter was written by J.T. Fisher from Toronto. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1851.

<sup>26</sup>The letter to the editor was written by J.T. Fisher. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 May 1851.

<sup>27</sup>Hembree says "Contemporary interviews, public meetings, and editorials indicate that blacks in Canada were well aware of the symbolism in their situation." Hembree, "Question of 'Begging'," 321.

<sup>28</sup>For example, articles in the newspaper discussed: agricultural meetings, advice on the chores to perform before summer, potato rot, and agricultural conditions. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 March 1851, 9 April 1851, 22 October 1851.

- <sup>29</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 March 1851, 21 May 1851, 1 January 1852, 8 April 1852.
- <sup>30</sup>Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 119.
- <sup>31</sup>Hutton, *Early Black Press*, 119.
- <sup>32</sup>The Refugee Home Society was founded by abolitionists and philanthropists. For an explanation of the organization and the leaders of the society see Ripley, *BAP*, 147n. Historian Afua Cooper discusses the Refugee Home Society and feud between Mary Ann Shadd and Henry Bibb over fund-raising. See Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 245-271.
- <sup>33</sup>In the spring of 1851 Henry Bibb toured parts of Canada West and lectured on the benefits of black Canadians pursuing agricultural employment. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 April 1851.
- <sup>34</sup>The scheme Bibb proposed needed 40,000 dollars to buy land. This article was the third in a series. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 April 1851. The first column told black Canadians "We must produce what we consume." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 March 1851. The second editorial said land was needed more than food or clothing. The article went on to say "Our plan, however, would not be to *give them land* directly, nor to settle our people *altogether* in countries or towns." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 April 1851.
- <sup>35</sup>Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 9.
- <sup>36</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 June 1851.
- <sup>37</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 208-211.
- <sup>38</sup>Land ownership was an indication that blacks had some important political and economic rights in Canada West. Bibb states, "But we say to the true friend of the refugees in Canada, that there never was a time when they could have conferred a more permanent blessing upon this people than to enable them now to purchase some of the land to settle upon." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 143-145.
- <sup>39</sup>These terms are stated in Article 12 of the Refugee Home Society Constitution. Article 11 states "This Society shall not deed land to any but actual settlers who are refugees from Southern slavery, and who are the owners of no land." Article 13 outlines the plan to use one third of the money paid for the land for educational purposes. Article 17 states that when six families have settled, they shall establish a school. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 208-211.

<sup>40</sup>The Refugee Home Society Bylaws state that no person shall receive more than five acres at less than cost; no person shall be entitled to a free grant of land (except widows, men with families, or aged persons) and land was to be cleared within two years of settlement (unless prevented by casualties); settlers must begin to make improvements within the first three months from the day they make the first payment; settlers shall not remove timber until the first payment has been made; dwelling houses erected on the land must contain at least two rooms and a brick or stone chimney; violations of the bylaws shall be arbitrated by the Executive Committee; settlers who violate the bylaws will be fined and subsequently expelled from the settlement. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 208-211.

<sup>41</sup>Landon, "Agriculture Among the Negro Refugees," 309.

<sup>42</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1851, 12 March 1851, 26 March 1851, 9 April 1851, 23 April 1851, 21 May 1851, 13 August 1851, 24 September 1851, 5 November 1851, 8 April 1852, 22 April 1852, 6 May 1852, 20 May 1852, 3 June 1852, 17 June 1852, 1 July 1852, 29 July 1852.

<sup>43</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 208-211

<sup>44</sup>Landon, "Agriculture Among the Negro Refugees," 310. Operations of the Refugee Home Society ceased in 1876. Although historian Afua Cooper commends the Refugee Home Society for the help it gave to refugees and its contribution to undermining slavery, Cooper does say that many blacks did not want or need help from this organization. "Though Henry and Mary Bibb . . . devised strategies to enable the fugitives to own land, most fugitives went their own way and worked out their own destinies themselves, without the aid of 'leaders', Black or white. Another issue to consider why some Blacks were not attracted to these land projects is that these schemes had agriculture as their *raison d'etre*. To qualify as a land buyer one had to be interested in becoming a farmer. Many fugitives were not attracted to agriculture, but desired urban opportunities. Therefore, these persons would not consider projects like the [Refugee Home Society] as a housing option." Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 273.

<sup>45</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 208-211.

<sup>46</sup>From the preamble to the constitution and bylaws of the Refugee Home Society. *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause'," 242.

<sup>48</sup>Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>49</sup>Noel, *Canada Dry*, 123, 139. "In the 1850s, moral reformers spoke out for change from positions of leadership not only in the churches but also in business and professional groups, in parliament and local governments, in the army, in the police, and even in the

Orange Order." *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>50</sup>Noel, *Canada Dry*, 123. South of the border, the American Temperance Society was founded by Lyman Beecher in 1826. In 1833 it was renamed the American Temperance Union. The society used example-setting, legal action, and propaganda, promoted by a network of agents, reports, and pamphlets, to curb drunkenness. Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860* (New York: Haworth Press, 1982), 73.

<sup>51</sup>Cooper, "Elevating the Race," 615.

<sup>52</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.

<sup>53</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 29 January 1851.

<sup>54</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851, 12 March 1851, 29 January 1852, 11 March 1852.

<sup>55</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 5 November 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 177-179. Ripley says "Ward contended that 'Rum and Negro-hate' were the two greatest evils degrading North American blacks. He sought to eliminate both. He argued that temperance would permit black men to spend a larger portion of their income on their families and businesses, thus alleviating the need for 'begging' to assist the black communities in Canada West. Ward perceived that alcohol consumption was far too common among blacks and called for statistics on alcohol consumption and temperance. . . . He also publicized black communities that practiced temperance, such as the Elgin settlement, in the hope of persuading other blacks to adopt the practice." *Ibid.*, 268n.

<sup>56</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 24 September 1851. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 149-157.

<sup>57</sup>Howard Law, "'Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence': Ideology and the Ex-Slaves in Buxton and Chatham," *Ontario History* 77 (June 1985): 115.

<sup>58</sup>Noel, *Canada Dry*, 99-101

<sup>59</sup>In 1822, in Russelltown, Lower Canada, Mrs. John Forbes formed a temperance society. For an account of Forbes' efforts see Noel, *Canada Dry*, 99.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 144. "In the aggregate, the socializing power of mothers and wives could inculcate social norms, suppress deviant behavior, and maintain social harmony." *Ibid.* Jan Noel says temperance literature "held up the ideal of a haven-like home, presided over by a female angel who subordinated personal desires and ambitions to the higher goal of nurturing the young." Noel, *Canada Dry*, 89.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>In a study of the American black press, historian Frankie Hutton has said middle class blacks overwhelmingly concurred with temperance. Hutton, Early Black Press, 109-110.

<sup>64</sup>Ripley, BAP, 259. The settlement observed the 1851 Maine Liquor Law which "prohibited the sale and manufacture of alcohol except by licensed agents for medical and industrial use." *Ibid.*, 264n.

<sup>65</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 April 1851.

<sup>66</sup>This was observed by former enslaved man William Wells Brown in 1861. Ripley, BAP, 482. Brown toured Canada West to promote Haitian immigration and wrote a series of articles on his travels. His account praises and compliments black Canadians and Canada West.

<sup>67</sup>Noel, Canada Dry, 124.

<sup>68</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.

<sup>69</sup>Daniel Hill says that the most important institutions in all black Upper Canadian communities were the churches. Daniel G. Hill, The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada, (Agincourt, Ont.: Book Society of Canada, 1981), 130.

<sup>70</sup>Linda Bramble, Black Fugitive Slaves in Early Canada (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 1988), 81. Bramble argues that "blacks had a more flamboyant style of worship that disturbed white parishioners." *Ibid.* Interestingly, an editorial written by Samuel Ringgold Ward for the *Voice of the Fugitive* discloses "The only thing to be feared, is, that some of the black people will act in such a manner as to increase, rather than diminish the prejudice against us. . . . The noisy behavior of some women among whom was a female preacher in one of the Toronto churches not long since, was any thing but creditable or elevating." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 224-228.

<sup>71</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 2 July 1851.

<sup>72</sup>Baptist churches had the most substantial number of black parishioners. The Methodist churches also had a sizable following. Winks, Blacks in Canada, 340, 354-355. Black Methodist churches were more self-segregated than Baptist churches. African Methodist Episcopal, Coloured Wesleyan Methodist, and British Methodist Episcopal were distinct sects for black Methodists. *Ibid.*, 355. First Baptist, Zion Baptist, and Union Baptist all were separate black associations within the larger Baptist church.

<sup>73</sup>Winks, Blacks in Canada, 338. An editorial in the *Voice of the Fugitive* praises the

'white' church's treatment of black Canadians. A correspondent writes to the newspaper, "Not a single denomination, have we in Canada, where ministers uphold or sanction this [the] illegal and unchristian treatment of black persons. I have travelled much, and mingled freely with all sects, and I find it invariably true that in their places of worship and in their religious devotions whites and blacks, are on a common footing." Samuel Ringgold Ward to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 224-228.

<sup>74</sup>"Most blacks welcomed the opportunity to worship peaceably and without the self-consciousness that goes along with being different from the rest of a group of appraising onlookers." Bramble, *Black Fugitive Slaves*, 81. Also see Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 338-339.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>Samuel Ringgold Ward, who opposed separate black churches, said "Some of our preachers of the Methodist and Baptist denomination, are really too ignorant to instruct any body." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 224-228.

<sup>77</sup>In the late 1830s, Baptist associations were the first denomination in Canada to denounce slavery. However, the Baptist Church as a whole took no clear stand. For more information see Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 219.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 12 February 1851.

<sup>80</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 11 March 1852.

<sup>81</sup>Winks maintains that the Methodist Episcopal Church did not denounce slavery because of its members from the southern United States. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 223. "Although the Methodist church had an antislavery heritage, it had accommodated itself to the institution of slavery by the end of the 1820s. The rise of militant abolitionism in the 1830s reawakened concern among some northern Methodists, placed southern members on the defensive, and nurtured controversy that led to a schism along sectional lines in 1845. The Methodist Episcopal church, South, was subsequently founded and confirmed slavery as a biblically supported positive good." Ripley, *BAP*, 221n.

<sup>82</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>83</sup>Bibb wrote four letters to his former master. *Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 September 1852, 7 October 1852, 4 November 1852. Two letters are reprinted in Ripley, *BAP*, 217-220.

<sup>84</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 23 September 1852.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 7 October 1852.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1852.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>Winks argues that churches were "ineffective in meeting the major problems--partially because they did not see those problems in terms of future goals so much as in terms of immediate needs, and partially because their solutions too often arose from the oldest method of all: solving a problem by failure." Winks, Blacks in Canada, 360-361.

<sup>93</sup>Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 196

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

## Conclusion

Black leaders in Canada West insisted that there was great antislavery value in their efforts to create a new life north of the forty-ninth parallel. They believed that black progress in Canada's open and free society would refute widely held assumptions about black inferiority that were the intellectual and emotional underpinnings of American slavery and racial prejudice.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1815 and 1840 there was a marked increase in the number of American fugitive slaves crossing the border into Canada. Initially blacks were accepted as a unique minority. However, as the black population increased, white Canadians began to resent and feel threatened by the presence of blacks in Canada West. By 1850, and the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in the U.S., 'negrophobia' was a significant prejudice among white Canadians. The social climate of Canada West in the mid-nineteenth century was discriminatory against the black community. Blacks in Canada West suffered the effects of racism in the communities, the schools, and the press.

As a response to anti-black actions and sentiment, and as a platform for racial uplift, Henry Bibb established the bi-monthly newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive*, in Sandwich, Canada West. Bibb's opinions were broadcast in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, as were antislavery news, agricultural reports, pleas for emigration, information on religious and educational activities, and responses to prevailing racist stereotypes. Moreover, Bibb advised and promoted tenets of racial elevation to black Canadians. In the introductory issue Bibb told his audience

We mean to speak out our sentiments as free men upon all subjects that come within our sphere, and if others differ with us as they probably will on some subjects, all we

shall ask shall be the toleration of opinion and free discussion which is the refutation of error and the bulwark of liberty.<sup>2</sup>

The *Voice of the Fugitive* began publication on January 1, 1851 and was Canada's first black newspaper. The importance of this newspaper in the history of Canada and Canada's black population has been largely ignored. This thesis introduced information on particular black Canadian ideologies, aspirations, and viewpoints that were presented in the *Voice of the Fugitive*. Specifically, it closely examined the ideology of racial uplift. This thesis makes a significant contribution to existing research by examining racial uplift in a Canadian context.

The 1850s was a time of transition for many blacks in Canada West. A large number of Canadian blacks were getting their first taste of freedom and Canada would be the testing ground for a new identity for these blacks. Yet, discrimination from white-controlled institutions was part of the Canadian black experience. Most of Canada West's newspapers were unsupportive to the abolitionist movement and aspirations for black equality and elevation were certainly not addressed in the white press. Bibb and some other black Canadians were dissatisfied by the unfair representation of blacks, and the lack of discussion of the issues affecting them, in the white Canadian newspapers. Bibb sought to redress these errors and used his own paper to address the plight of Canadian blacks.

Henry Bibb used the *Voice of the Fugitive* as a personal platform to advance and promote missions and causes that he felt would strengthen Canada's black community. The mid-nineteenth century was a crucial time in Canadian antislavery activity and Bibb was an abolitionist leader with a significant following. Henry Bibb was committed to promoting antislavery in his paper, defending blacks, organizing newly arrived fugitives, and leading black Canadians in racial uplift. Racial uplift was seen as a means of moving towards racial equality for blacks by adopting values associated with the white middle class. The *Voice of the Fugitive* attached great importance to having Canadian blacks assimilate to the dominant society's norms of manners and morals.

Articles in the *Voice of the Fugitive* advocated 'proper' conduct, behavior, and ethics for blacks in Canada West. Through the pages of his newspaper, Bibb promoted the precepts of respectability that he thought would help black Canadians become accepted into white society.<sup>3</sup> Bibb argued that black education, religion, land-ownership, and agriculture would demonstrate self-sufficiency and accomplishment and prove that blacks were fit for freedom and deserving of respect.

For some black Canadians, racial elevation was an attempt to refute discriminatory stereotypes. If we are to believe the reports of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, the majority of Canadian blacks were committed to the ideals of racial elevation. The pages of the *Voice of the Fugitive* suggest that many black Canadians were trying to define themselves through the tenets of racial uplift. It appears that some black Canadians set out to prove that they could elevate themselves socially, politically, and morally. However, racism, poverty, indifference, and perhaps very different cultural values meant that many blacks did not move in the direction that Henry Bibb and his newspaper idealized.

It is difficult to know how much of the black community espoused the tenets of racial elevation. This thesis puts forward evidence that indicates that some black Canadians accepted racial elevation. However, we cannot claim that ideas of racial uplift were supported by the entire black community. Although not all Canadian blacks espoused tenets of racial uplift and respectability, we need to recognize that Henry Bibb's promotion of racial uplift for Canadian blacks represented an effort to survive and succeed in the racist social climate of Canada West.

When Henry Bibb established the *Voice of the Fugitive*, he intended his paper to be "a mouthpiece for the [black] refugees in Canada."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the *Voice of the Fugitive* was a badly needed voice for Canada's black community. More than a century after the demise of Canada's first black newspaper and its editor Henry Bibb,<sup>5</sup> one historian says

Bibb's newspaper, for the most part, was true to its initial editorial policy statement. The *Voice of the Fugitive* covered in depth the activities of the Underground Railroad,

providing the black community with lists of newly arrived fugitive slaves. Bibb also devoted significant coverage to the temperance, religious and educational activities of Canadian blacks. In his editorials Bibb consistently encouraged American blacks to emigrate to Canada West, where collectively they could oppose white Canadian prejudice and build a better life.<sup>6</sup>

Henry Bibb believed the lofty goals published in the *Voice of the Fugitive* would help foster self-respect among blacks and demonstrate black respectability to whites. Articles in the *Voice of the Fugitive* consistently urged blacks to build a better life, uplift their race, and strive for moral integrity through abolition, education, agriculture, religion, and temperance. Bibb encouraged black Canadians to internalize the values associated with racial elevation and strive for respectability. Though met with vehement racism from white society, Henry Bibb's efforts to elevate Canadian blacks were an courageous achievement in Canadian and black history.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>C. Peter Ripley, ed., Black Abolitionist Papers Vol. 2, Canada, 1830-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 182. In the words of black abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward, in an editorial to the *Voice of the Fugitive*, "The only thing to be feared, is, that some of the black people will act in such a manner as to increase, rather than diminish the prejudice against us. . . . But if we act rightly, all will be well." *Voice of the Fugitive*, 4 November 1852. Reprinted in Ripley, BAP, 224-228.

<sup>2</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Author Frankie Hutton concurs with this observation. Hutton finds that editors of America's mid-nineteenth century black newspapers generally espoused middle class values. Frankie Hutton, The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), xi.

<sup>4</sup>*Voice of the Fugitive*, 1 January 1851.

<sup>5</sup>On August 1, 1854, at the age of 39, Henry Bibb died. He was buried in Windsor, Canada West. Interestingly, August 1 is Emancipation Day, the anniversary of the end of slavery in the British West Indies. The British West Indian Emancipation Act of 1833 took effect on August 1, 1834. It was celebrated every August 1 after 1834. Ripley, BAP, 74n, 80n. After 1855, Mary Bibb married Isaac Cary (brother of Thomas Cary who was married to newspaper editor Mary Ann Shadd) and the couple lived in Windsor, Canada West. Afua P. Cooper, "Black Women and Work in Nineteenth-Century Canada West: Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb," in 'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 157; Afua Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb, Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," Ontario History 83 (March 1991): 50.

<sup>6</sup>Jason H. Silverman, "'We Shall be Heard!': The Development of the Fugitive Slave Press in Canada," Canadian Historical Review 65 (March 1984): 60.

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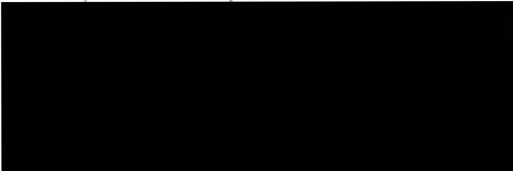
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