An historical analysis of Edward Wilmot Blyden, 1821-1912

Alfred Emmanuel Brimah Worley
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ABSTRACT

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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN, 1821-1912

Committee Chair: Josephine B. Bradley, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated May 2015

This study investigated the productiveness of the legacy of Edward Wilmot Blyden as an educator, Pan-Negro Patriot, politician, and missionary from 1821 to 1912. The study was based on the premise that Blyden contributed to the re-Africanization of freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Historical analysis was used as a methodology for the investigation of Blyden’s effectiveness on the various roles he fulfilled toward helping freed blacks in their struggles to become African. The researcher found that freed blacks who had emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone, in West Africa, were able to adapt and to improve their lives intellectually; they were also able to improve their political and social status through the teachings of Edward Wilmot Blyden’s philosophy of re-Africanization. The conclusion drawn from the findings reveals that Blyden was successful in each activity undertaken—especially in the re-Africanization of the emigrants.
AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN, 1821-1912

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ARTS
IN HUMANITIES

BY

ALFRED EMMANUEL BRIMAH WORLEY

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 2015
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Without the help of my late grandmother, Mrs. Naomi Tity Grant-Worley who first taught me the letters of the English alphabet and ensured that I received a primary, secondary and college education, this journey would not have been successful. I also thank my grandfather, the late Tom Worley, my father, the late Melvine Thomas Worley, and my mother of blessed memory, Madam Hawanatu Koroma. I am grateful to my wife, Mrs. Mary Worley, our children, Nathaniel and Doris, for all their love, support, and patience through this endeavor.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRA</td>
<td>Civil Rights Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>Doctor of Divinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Doctor of Laws</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Lit.</td>
<td>Doctor of Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKK</td>
<td>The Klu Klux Klan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>no date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAL</td>
<td><em>Perspective in American Literature: A Research and Reference Guide</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIA</td>
<td>United Negro Improvement Association</td>
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Emigrant - Refers to moving abroad, moving overseas, leaving one’s country, migrating; relocating, resettling, defecting.

Immigrant - Refers to the following: a newcomer, settler, incomer, migrant, emigrant; non-native, foreigner, alien.

Legacy - “A thing passed on to somebody by people who lived before them or from earlier events.”¹

Potency - “A dynamic and potent force, having great power, having a strong effect, likely to persuade people, convincing, potent arguments/reasoning.”²

Productiveness - Producing efficiently.

Re-Africanization - Refers to learning how to be African in attitude, culture and tradition.

Repatriation - The word refers to a person who is living outside his country.


² Ibid., 902.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the productiveness of the legacy of Edward Wilmot Blyden as an educator, a Pan-Africanist, a politician, a linguist, a writer, a missionary and an activist for re-Africanization of freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia from 1821 to 1912. This historical analysis of Edward Wilmot Blyden emerges out of the events that occurred in the United States between 1821 and 1912, such as Emancipation, disruption of the African-American community, and the decision of freed Blacks to emigrate to Africa. These events combined with issues such as racial political, cultural, social, and economic struggles caused their insecurity. In addition, the disruption of the opportunity to develop one's intellect and the ability to participate in meaningful employment following emancipation, as well as psychological problems resulting from the enslavement of Africans, further accelerated their insecurity. The events, which impacted the freed blacks and their decisions to emigrate to Africa, were: The Abolitionist Movement 1759-1854, Emigrationism 1773-1854, Armed Resistance, Civil War 1861, and Reconstruction, The Emancipation Proclamation, and the founding of Liberia as a Republic and Sierra Leone (The Province of Freedom), in West Africa. This research utilizes an historical analysis to investigate the potency of Blyden's legacy for African-American Studies, African History, and American History.
Blyden emerges as a social change agent committed to what constituted the long-term impact of the re-Africanization of freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Liberia was founded in 1822 and Sierra Leone in 1792. Prior to the emigration of freed blacks to Liberia and Sierra Leone, the African coastal strips of Sierra Leone and Liberia were used as slave trading coasts from which slaves, who were captured from the inter-lands, were transported to Goree Island, and the Elmina Castle which housed the bigger slave pens.

One of the streets in Freetown, Sierra Leone, named Goree Street, is established in remembrance of the slaves who passed through the Goree Island slave holdings. The legacy being described in this study is the history of the events in the life of one prominent individual and the impact that the events have had on his people and his nation. The word legacy, as used in this research, is defined as, “A thing passed on to somebody by people who lived before them or from earlier events.”¹ Also the term potency is used in this research to describe the following: a dynamic and potent force, having great power, having a strong effect, and likely to persuade people.²

This study is significant in that it provides information on the involvement of African Americans in the emigration of freed blacks to Africa. The study also provides information on the life of Edward Wilmot Blyden who left a legacy for African Americans and freed blacks that emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone. There is limited research on the potency of Edward Wilmot Blyden’s legacy in the Re-Africanization of

². Ibid., 902.
freed blacks who emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Presently, there are authors who have written biographical accounts about him, but not to the extent of enumerating his legacy in education, religion, government and politics, which extended to other parts of the African Continent, especially in West Africa. Two of Blyden’s biographers, Hollis R. Lynch, in his text *Edward Wilmot Blyden Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912*, and Davidson Nicole, who was also principal of the University of Sierra Leone, describe Dr. Blyden as “A great man; a man so great indeed as to require the writing of a full length of biography of him, as one of the greatest sons of Africa.”

Nicole also mentions the need for a full length biography of Blyden as one of the greatest sons of Africa and to research the effectiveness of his achievements as “Literateur, educator, theologian, politician, statesman, diplomat and explorer,” which passed on as a legacy to other Africans and African Americans. The freed blacks had problems first in the United States as immigrant slaves, then as emigrant freed blacks.

With all the problems of not having the opportunities for education, economic development and access to work, including their political struggles against injustice, incarcerations and Jim Crow laws, in the United States, when the freed blacks arrived in Liberia and Sierra Leone the problems did not disappear; instead they had to contend with the same problems. Apart from the various diseases they experienced in their new homeland, they experienced problems of acculturation and inferiority complex. Some of them suffered from an inferiority complex about their personhood and their blackness.


4. Ibid.
Furthermore, the freed blacks had the problems of feeling that they were still
strangers on their return to Africa. On the beginning of their journey back to Africa,
Mavis Campbell in her book, *Back to Africa George Ross and the Maroons: From Nova
Scotia to Sierra Leone*, reveals that, “The first feelings of fear and frustrations of the
freed blacks in the Trelawney Town in the Parish of St. James Jamaica caused the
Maroons to continue in fear of a repeat of the same problems.”\(^5\) It happened that these
freed blacks fought heroically against the slave system in Jamaica, before they finally
gained their freedom in 1738 and 1739. According to Campbell,

Within the wider slave society relationships, not surprisingly, became
increasingly strained until finally in 1795 hostilities broke out between the
Trelawney Town Maroons, the largest of these groups, and those from the
colonial state. They saw themselves to be strange in living permanently in
Jamaica or in Nova Scotia’s Nordic Clime, and they were not reticent in
pointing this out to the authorities there.\(^6\)

They made their objections known to colonial authorities through petitions, memoranda
and finally their refusal to work until they were sent to a place more like that from
which they came. This group of Maroons who were from the United States were settled
in Freetown, Sierra Leone, after they had originally emigrated to Nova Scotia, and then
to London under the supervision of George Ross of the Sierra Leone Company in 1797.
In September 1780, there was a revolt in which the second set of Maroons who rebelled
against the U.S. government was taken directly to Sierra Leone. It was the second set
of Maroons who changed the name of the capital city from the Province of Freedom to

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6. Ibid.
Freetown. The second set of Maroons who were later transported to Sierra Leone named their settlement Trelawney Town, in remembrance of Trelawney Town of Jamaica from which they originally came.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study relates to the perceived notion of double consciousness, an attitude which emigrant freed blacks seemed to have experienced with their American blackness in a foreign culture, and their Africaness. The emigrants were under the tutelage of Edward Wilmot Blyden as a teacher and as a Pan-Africanist as they sought to function as productive members of Sierra Leone and Liberia. The end of the institution of slavery brought some new problems and variations of old ones primarily related to their position as freed individuals after years of enslavement.

Edward Wilmot Blyden recognized the legacies which these freed blacks brought with them upon their emigration to Africa, and proceeded teaching them how to re-live their lives through Re-Africanizing them in many spheres of African life. He worked to help the emigrants grasp the politics, economics, culture, social structures, and education of being Africans. For this study, the following functions of Edward Wilmot Blyden are important for analysis: Blyden as an educator, politician, missionary, Pan-Africanist, and an activist who worked through a process of re-Africanization in efforts to ensure the successful relocation of emigrants who returned to Africa. It was also Blyden's goal to ensure that the emigrants benefitted from their decision to become African citizens.
Conceptual Framework

This research is positioned within the humanistic ideology of assimilation, which is reflective of the challenges of helping individuals to assimilate into a new society, which in this case is the African society. The general approach of working with freed blacks was to help them assimilate into the American lived experience without the bonds of enslavement. However, emigration of people from America to Liberia and Sierra Leone required a different approach if indeed their return to Africa was to become a meaningful undertaking. The researcher has chosen to address this endeavor as a form of re-Africanization.

Re-Africanization provides a means for understanding the need and protocol for helping freed slaves reconnect with their blackness and Africaness. Their return to Africa, now as Africans, who did not have any true clarity about Africa, enhanced their anticipation of the freedom that they could not experience in America. Re-Africanization necessitated an educational or training experience that included helping the emigrants develop:

- A sense of self, that is, who they are outside of being slaves;
- An understanding of African culture—that is, traditions and rites, as African rather than a syncritization of Africaness and the western notion of culture;
- A resurrection of their way of life;
- A change in one's approach to freedom Rather than slavery with its threats or realities of harshness;
- A resurgence of the spiritual;
• An opportunity to participate in religious activities; and
• An understanding of governance and politics needed to establish a participatory role in a working government that allowed them to embrace both their American experience and their entry into an African culture.

Blyden in his re-Africanization thrust had several factors which aided in his transformation efforts with the emigrants. The freed blacks exhibited a sense of the communal, collective work and responsibility, a spiritual foundation and belief in freedom, some limited rites of passage, and survival strategies for dealing with racism and oppression. Any study of people of African descent has to accept, comfortably or uncomfortably, an unromanticized narrative of chattel experiences. The experiences include the state of enslavement, the loss of identity as a person of African heritage, the struggles for freedom and liberation, the issue of psychological and cultural alienation, and closed opportunities for economic and political equality. Even emancipation and the era of reconstruction did not change the status of freed blacks to one of equality.

In response to the changing tides of pseudo-freedom, the acceptance of the oppressor's impact led to the over-identification with the oppressor and accordingly the embracing of his lifestyles and belief systems. The conceptual framework for this research also includes W. E. B. Du Bois’ concept of double-consciousness which lies at the heart of black crisis identity. Emigration was perceived perhaps as an opportunity to remove oneself from oppression of white America. Du Bois proclaimed that double consciousness is the center of the notions of difference and otherness. Double consciousness as defined by Du Bois refers to the individual being torn between being
American and Negro. The emigrants were torn between being African and American Negro in their native land. This otherness presented a different set of issues. Those advocating the return to Africa, including Marcus Garvey, had not included plans for the emigrants’ assimilation as residents of Sierra Leone and Liberia. The assumption was that their assimilation would not be an issue because they were African descendants; but Blyden perceived the need for preparation for assimilation into the African culture and traditions. Moreover, emigration can be viewed as a form of liberation.

According to Robert Hill and Barbra Bain those espousing a return to Africa argued that enslaved individuals had forgotten the, “Good and perfection in themselves.” Within the enslaved population, a distortion or loss of their African sense of humanity and integrity and other African values occurred as Blyden advocated his thrust for re-Africanization. Joseph Baldwin’s notion of the misorientation of blacks which he, like Blyden viewed as advocating the need for the re-establishment of cultural links and cognitive restructuring of the emigrants’ sense of being African.

Garvey advocated the Black Star Line under the auspices of the Universal Negro Improvement Association as the carrier of people of African descent in returning to the land of their heritage. This venture failed due to the legal challenges presented to Garvey by the United States government. Others joined the back-to-Africa movement with the America Missionary Association’s support of Liberia and Britain’s ground plan of a return to Sierra Leone.


Methodology

Historiography or historical research analysis is the research method of choice selected because according to B. Johnson and L. B. Christensen, this “is a method for discovering, from records and accounts, what happened during some past periods . . . seeks to offer rhetorical explanations for various historical events.”9 Also historical analysis allows for investigation among other factors, past and contemporary issues of education, social, political and race. Historical analysis permits the researcher to ultimately integrate the significance of a past event or the life of a person with the present as well as the future. According to Bruce Beng, historical research is the:

Collection of information and the interpretation or analysis of the data, and is conducted for one or more of the following reasons: 1) To, uncover the unknown. 2) To, answer questions. 3) To seek implications or relationships of events past from the past and their connections with the present. 4) To, assess past activities and accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions. 5) To, aid generally in our understanding of human culture.10

This research engages all of the above reasons, but especially reasons 3, 4, and 5 in the study of Edward Wilmot Blyden and the potency of his accomplishments during his lifetime. Also, historical analysis allows for an assessment of the significance of two cultures, American and African, on the lives of Blyden and the freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia from America. The analysis relies upon written primary and secondary sources related to Blyden and the freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

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10. Ibid., 267.
Research Questions

The following are the research questions that prodded this research:

1. Given that Edward Wilmot Blyden was not an African by birth and was himself an emigrant to Africa, what was the level of his productiveness as an educator in the re-Africanization of freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia?

2. What legacy did Blyden leave as a Pan-Africanist politician and a missionary for the freed blacks who emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone?

3. In what ways did Blyden prepare African-Americans emigrating to Africa for re-Africanization?

Chapter Organization

Chapter I, which is the introduction, presents the statement of purpose, the objective of the research, the significance of the study, a conceptual framework, methodology, and research questions. Chapter II provides the historical background of the founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Chapter III provides an overview of the events that led to the emigration thrust of freed blacks. Chapter IV reveals the findings related to the political activities of Edward Wilmot Blyden. Chapter V provides an interpretation of the potency of Blyden’s legacy. The final chapter, Chapter VI, presents the study’s conclusion and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This chapter provides a historical account of the countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa, including the founding of these two countries, and the significance of the two countries in the settlement of freed blacks who immigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone. These freed blacks were under the leadership of Edward Wilmot Blyden who had also emigrated to Liberia where he was educated as a freed black. His Liberian experience occurred after his denial of admission to the United States seminaries for him to study to become a missionary. Through the settlements of these freed blacks in two West African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone, a political relationship evolved between the United States of America and Great Britain. Events in the United States such as the Abolitionist Movements, Armed Resistance, the Civil War, Emancipation and Reconstruction also provided an impetus for the emigration of freed blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The History of Liberia

The history of Liberia begins with this notable Liberian adage, "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here." Harrison Church, the geographer and economist, states that "Liberia resulted from the efforts of the American Colonization Society (founded in

1817) and other societies to settle American ex-slaves in West Africa. Americans, with very varied motives, had been impressed by British efforts at the re-settlement of former slaves in and around Freetown in Sierra Leone. Church describes the first settlement as, an abortive effort by the American Colonization Society to settle freed blacks from the United States at Sherbroe Island in Sierra Leone in 1820 on Province Island at Monrovia. Many more parties of freed blacks emigrated there and elsewhere in subsequent years, including blacks freed by the American Navy. For a view of the boundaries of Liberia in relationship to Sierra Leone and other African countries see Figure 1, Political Map of Liberia. The map shows county boundaries patterned after counties in the United States of America.

Figure 1. Political Map of Liberia.

2. Ibid.
The capital city of Liberia, *Monrovia*, was founded by freed blacks from America in 1822, occurring before Edward Wilmot Blyden was born in 1832. The America-Liberians ultimately established themselves on the upper part of the diorite ridge of cape Mesurado and built a town, the style of which is reminiscent of the southern states of America. According to Church, “The foot of the settlements on Bushrod Island are, by contrast, rather squalid, though no more so than similar quarters in other West African Ports.”\(^3\) The American Colonization Society had some responsibility for the government of their settlements until 1847 when Liberia became an independent state with the aforementioned motto. In 1857 the colony of “Maryland in Liberia with its capital at Harper was admitted as a county in Liberia. Blyden and Church agreed that, “From the beginning Liberia had tremendous problems. The ex-slaves, who had come mainly from America, were generally several generations away from tribal life, and were more American than African.”\(^4\) However, unlike others advocating emigration such as the American Colonization Society, Edward Blyden addressed this problem by teaching the emigrants the culture of their new homeland as well as helping them to adapt to the new environment since they lacked techniques, experience and capital needed for successful survival as emigrants.

While the American Colonization Society provided subsidies for emigrants from year to year, the allocations were insufficient to enable them acquire specific skills or

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4. Ibid., 330.
set up trades in their new nation. Even if freed blacks had possessed technical training, they were anxious to forget their past and to live comfortably in the present and future. Church indicates that these ex-slaves (freed blacks) with their limited background were situated in what is probably the worst part of West Africa. Church described the area thusly: “It has the heaviest rainfall, a very difficult shoreline and leached soils.” Initially, they encountered the hostility of native Africans and European powers, especially the French and the British, who were unhelpful and, on several occasions, aggressive in their relationship with the new state.

Liberia as any newly emerging country encountered major socio-political, economic and cultural adjustments. Until 1926, Liberia was chronically in debt and exported only small quantities of palm oil and kernels, piassava and coffee. From 1924 to 1926, the Firestone Rubber Company of America secured a concession to plant rubber. In return the Liberian Government was granted a new substantial loan and yearly revenue from various parts of the concession’s activities. The greatest impetus for economic advancement occurred in 1942 when the Americans secured a right to land troops in Liberia at a time when this area was of strategic importance in the Second World War. Africans were recruited to join the American forces during World War II.

Beginning in 1941, Liberia had in President William Tubman who had won the presidential election, a most enlightened and energetic head of state. Researchers note that, “President William Tubman was related to Harriet Tubman of the Underground Railroad Movement. His parents had emigrated to Liberia with the African Americans

5. Ibid., 331.
(freed blacks) who decided to emigrate under President Monroe's assistance to freed blacks who wished to be settled in Liberia. The combination of Tubman's drive, American money, Firestone revenues and iron ore royalties helped Liberia in its struggle for economic autonomy. Also, Liberia had two water ports, a first class airport and roads, which although insufficient, did include one through Guinea bringing transit trade and links with Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast.

There have also been political reforms, whereby the Africans of the interior were associated with the government of the country. The deep-water harbor on Bushrod Island, just north of Cape Mesurado built as an American land lease project between 1945 and 1948, was operated by an American Company. Monrovia is a free port and the only one in West Africa at the time. Until 1950, this area was entirely in the hands of Americo-Liberian-descendants of freed blacks. Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden who died in Sierra Leone, in 1912, was instrumental in helping the Loyal blacks (as they were called) from America to settle in neighboring Sierra Leone.

The History of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone according to Church is "Britain's contribution to the settlement of freed Blacks based on historical facts." Local legends also allege that Hano, the Carthaginian, watered his ship in the Freetown Estuary about 500 B.C. during a Portuguese voyage to the coast. To the rugged and high peninsula on which Freetown


now stands, Church writes that "Pedro da Cintra gave the name, Sierra Leone or Lion Mountains, either because the shape of the mountains as seen from the sea reminded him of a lion. The name was later extended to the whole country. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the Rokel Estuary was constantly visited by European slave traders to buy slaves."⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century the mountainous peninsula became the scene of Britain's partial preparation for her part in the slave trade. With the support of the British Government and a few philanthropists, Granville Sharp assembled a pioneering party of 351 destitute ex-slaves. Some fifty white women of doubtful character came later from London. These groups were joined by 1,131 former American slaves who had fought with the British in the War of American Independence. They, according to Church, "had been assembled in Nova Scotia, whence they were taken for settlement at Freetown in 1792. Among many other early immigrants and emigrants were the 800 Maroons from Jamaica, who arrived in 1800, though most of them and their descendants later migrated to the Gold Coast or returned to Jamaica."⁹

It should be noted that most Africans who had been enslaved in Jamaica were mainly from the Gold Coast, Grain Coast, and Yoruba-land. The whole western coast of Africa was called the Grain Coast or Slave Coast. These returnees and some of their ancestors had been originally taken to Jamaica and other Caribbean Islands. This town of freed Blacks, most of whom had not been born in Africa, endured hostility from the people of the interior, and attack from the sea by the French during the Napoleonic

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⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Ibid.
Wars. The French intended to disrupt the British settlement and prevent the British from colonizing Sierra Leone. If the French had been able to win then Sierra Leone would have been one of the French West African territories, thus destroying the British Naval efforts in using Freetown as a naval base. Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, was founded in 1792 as atonement for the evils and miseries of the slave trade.\textsuperscript{10} The Map of Sierra Leone illustrates the territory’s boundaries, its provincial and district divisions, and its relationship to Liberia (see Figure 2, obtained from M. Alpha Bah. \textit{Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone. A Case History of Twentieth-Century Among the Kissi of Koidu}. New York, Paris: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1998, 157).

It was chosen as a well-known site, superior to most places on the Sierra Leone coastline. It has a hilly environment at the northern end of the peninsula, adjacent to which is a deep channel of the easily-entered, sheltered and large estuary. Pure water was also available. It was therefore ideal also as a naval base for suppressing the slave trade and, in times of war, has been important to the defense of the Atlantic and protection of convoys. The military base in Benguima, and the old airport at Hastings villages serve as proven evidences of the Atlantic protection bases.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 308.
Figure 2. Map of Sierra Leone.

According to Church, in 1808, Britain took control of the new settlements by proclaiming the Sierra Leone Peninsula a Crown Colony and the slave trade illegal. From 1817 to 1819 several hundred discharged African soldiers were settled in Freetown, and in the appropriately named nearby villages of Waterloo and Wellington. The British Navy played the major role in suppressing the slave trade by sea from West Africa. Freetown was the main naval base, and between 1808 and 1854 whenever slave ships were captured and freed they were resettled in and around Freetown, if their homeland could not be determined or reached. According to Church, “Up to 1833, 34,000 slaves had been liberated at sea and sent here, to such aptly named villages as Wilberforce, which was founded in 1811.” Descendants of ex-slaves (freed blacks) are generally known as Creoles who are often characterized by their mixed blood, non-African culture and higher standards of education and literacy than most Africans of the interior.

11. Ibid.
After the initial hostility of the local Africans, there was little territorial advance beyond the peninsula. However, with the general 'Scramble for Africa' in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it became necessary to define the boundaries with Liberia and French Guinea, the latter having expanded around the northern and eastern sides of Sierra Leone which hemmed it in. By 1898 the Protectorate had come into existence and all boundaries were defined, except for one sector with Liberia, which was finally agreed upon in 1911. Thus, organization of the Protectorate started a century after that of the Colony. The Protectorate advocated European ideas and methods for a relatively short while. Church comments further saying, "As Freetown was the main, naval base and the senior British settlement, it was responsible during much of the nineteenth century, for the government of other territories down the coast."  

Many Creoles were engaged in assisting Edward Blyden, who was employed by the British government and the education departments, to establish the foundations for Islamic education. This project was conducted in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and some northern states of the African Continent. Other Creoles were in business and in education, but as the other territories developed their educational systems they became economically and politically more powerful than Sierra Leone; thus the Creoles no longer found their position so privileged. Although Sierra Leone has a longer history of education and social services than any other territory in West Africa, it has been overtaken in recent years by the larger states, where greater and more varied resources have brought larger revenues.

12. Ibid.
Sierra Leone, unlike Nigeria or Ghana, began mining mineral resources only in 1929. It was at the time an important producer of diamonds and iron. It is important to note that it was after the death of Edward Wilmot Blyden in 1912, that mineral mining began in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. The reason for this development was that the colonial powers blockaded the development efforts of the Creoles. They accused the Creoles (African Americans) of being responsible for poisoning the minds of the natives against the colonial powers. Church posits:

Until the advent of the Colonial development and Welfare acts, Sierra Leone was one of those poor countries which became relatively poorer because of her inability to afford necessary expenditure upon such things as bridges and roads. She has also been retarded by the Colony-Protectorate division, but upon independence in 1961 this administrative division was eliminated. 13

Moreover, the freed black’s anticipation that they were going to become rich upon their emigration to Africa proved false as some of them lived in poverty. Others who established their own companies obtained reasonable economic gains, but when they were confronted by the Colonial powers’ blockade they began to experience serious economic challenges. Creoles no longer had a privileged position in village commerce; they were gradually moved to Freetown and its suburbs from the villages where they were first settled on arrival from the United States via Nova Scotia and London.

Finding Suitable Lands Fitting for the Emigrants

Ellen Gibson Wilson, in her text The Loyal Blacks, reports that “In March, 1792, a fleet of fifteen sailing ships dropped anchor in the mouth of the Sierra Leone River

13. Ibid., 302.
and disembarked 1,100 men, women and children on a bush-covered shore which had just been named Freetown.¹⁴ These men, women and children were Black, of African ancestry, and were former American slaves. More than 400 people of similar heritage and history had preceded them to the West African Coast.

There were various reasons given for the founding of these lands in West Africa, such as the one given by Ellen Gibson Wilson that the remarkable British philanthropists and capitalists who backed the Sierra Leone Company were interested in developing profitable-trade in African products to drive out slave traffic, as well as civilizing the inhabitants. The Sierra Leone Company had welcomed the Black Americans who asked to go there, but the settlers rapidly acquired a reputation for being “perverse and ungovernable.” This appears to be one of the problems which Edward Blyden noted among the freed blacks who emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone. The freed blacks wanted total freedom, to be all by themselves and governing themselves, but this was not the case. They were under the control of the white company which had transported them back to Africa after the Emancipation Proclamation that gave them their freedom.

The emancipation of these 1,500 people was for their return to Africa, to rebuild their lives after slavery and to create an identity which has lasted to the present. The settlements in Sierra Leone and Liberia consisted of blacks who were all from America for whom the American Revolution was the work of a slave-owning society. It had the unintended effect of liberating several thousand slaves. For some 1,500 of these, the war

years were the start of an adventure which was to guarantee them a place in the annals of the British Empire as ‘The Turbulent Black Settlers of Sierra Leone.’ In America they were rejected, and they became only shadowy figures in Sierra Leone, because the officials of the Sierra Leone Company were all whites who had full control of their settlement, and their other needs.

Moreover, as the first blacks to return to Africa from North America and who were seen as men and women inoculated with the revolutionary virus, they were the natural agents of another revolt involving typically American notions of free land, political rights and religious liberty. This attempt to reconstruct their lives and times began with the great debate over freedom which agitated sections of the Colonial Society on the eve of the American Revolution. Wilson explains that, “The pre-war social climate kindled hopes among half million blacks—one fifth of the population and overwhelmingly slave in status—as well as within the white majority (a good number of who were bonded servants) for an improvement in their condition.” The cry was for liberty with ideas of individual rights, social justice and democratic government. The colonial supervisors who had travelled with them from Nova Scotia and London to Liberia and Sierra Leone were at the top of the administrative hierarchy.

However, the effect of a language of protest which had such an obsessive preoccupation with slavery served as a metaphor for a political condition which had a profound effect on black bondsmen. Wilson posits that “slavery was an eighteenth-century word for “absolute political evil” and an unconscious admission of guilt for the

15. Ibid., 1.
traffic in African men and women and the institutionalization of slave labor in Southern agriculture. Anti-slavery voices were not numerous, but were also not new, and the fruitless prewar attempts of the colonial legislature and the Continental Congress to prohibit imports of slaves reflected not only irritation with British commercial domination but uneasiness about the business itself. The central contradiction was that almost everyone thought that abolition would be ruinous, economically or socially.

Before 1750 there had been at least fifteen published attacks in America on black slavery. Nearly all came from Quakers and appeared in the North. But they were known and discussed in Southern circles and were part of a Trans-Atlantic dialogue among Americans, British and French. The argument quickened in the later eighteenth century, as the freedom of white colonies was associated in some minds with the emancipation of blacks. Ellen Wilson recorded that the Massachusetts attorney James Otis predicted in 1763 that “those who every day barter away other men’s liberty, will soon care little for their own.” Furthermore, Gibson posits that “By coincidence, the rebellion of Black Loyalists in Sierra Leone occurred in the same year as “Gabriel’s Insurrection, the most sophisticated and ambitious slave conspiracy in American history.” For both groups of blacks, the Revolution of 1776 was unfinished.

Those in Africa were free but did not have their land, which was the prerequisite for liberty or political independence as they saw it. Those in Virginia were still slaves.


17. Ibid.

18 Ibid., 405.
Both incidents were political manifestations for solving grievances and replacing governments. In both cases, conditions at the time were better than they had been before the Revolution, but both places were on the brink of developments which would result in harsher controls. For blacks everywhere, as for whites, the revolution had heightened expectations of freedom.

The American antecedents of the Sierra Leone settlers were mentioned by Wilson as, “A source of belligerence and resistance to authority, but no one put the point more bluntly than chauvinistic young Governor Thompson, who took over from Ludlam in 1808.”19 He hated the Nova Scotia Settlers. He loathed their pretensions to social equality. He resented them because, in reaction to his wholesale denunciations of the previous regime, they entered a kind of alliance with the agents of the Sierra Leone Company who had remained behind to wind up its business or go into commerce on their own. Edward Wilmot Blyden played an important role in trying to calm down some of the settlers who had encountered whites who still continued to treat freed settlers as insubordinates. After all it was for freedom that they had decided to emigrate.

Kevin Shilling in his text, *History of Africa*, indicates that

the foundation and growth of Sierra Leone and Liberia were direct results of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Sierra Leone had been founded in 1787 as a settlement of four hundred freed blacks from England who adhered to the belief that leaving America and relocating to Africa would find suitable land fitting for the promise of land ownership, political freedom, self-government and opportunities for economic growth.20

19 Ibid.

As the history of Sierra Leone has demonstrated, it was not an easy task for the freed slaves to come to terms with the challenge of settling down in their new environment. It was because of these challenges that leaders like Blyden decided to serve their fellow pilgrims in finding hope and satisfaction in their new land.
CHAPTER III

EVENTS THAT LED TO EMIGRATION

The decision of freed blacks to emigrate to Africa was in some ways motivated by the same factors that influenced Blyden's emigration to Africa. Both were efforts to obtain equality of opportunities and the promise of freedom not available in the United States. Multiple events that impacted the decision related to emigration of freed blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia were:

- The American Revolution
- Armed Resistance
- The Abolitionist Movements (Abolitionism) (1759-1833)
- The Philanthropists- Abolitionists (1772-1807)
- George Ross and the Maroons (1739-1792)
- Emigrationism (1773-1864)
- Civil War (1865)
- Emancipation and the Emancipation Movements (1863)
- Reconstruction (1867-1877)
The American Revolution

The American Revolution was the work of a slave-owning society, and according to Ellen G. Wilson, "It had unintended effect of liberating several thousand slaves."¹ For some 1,500 of these slaves, the war years were the start of an adventure which was to guarantee them a place in the annals of the British Empire as, "The Turbulent Black Settlers of Sierra Leone."¹

Armed Resistance

Maulana Karenga’s discussion of armed resistance details the struggle of the enslaved to empower themselves by obtaining freedom. Resistance activities against slavery and oppression led to the subsequent emigration of freed blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Karenga defines Armed Resistance as, "Obviously the ultimate criticism of resistance to a society is armed action against it. And enslaved Africans engaged in this form of resistance not only in the U.S. but also on the disease-ridden death ships on which they were transported here."² Again, the term abolitionism refers to the day-to-day resistance against slavery. This form of resistance includes all efforts dedicated to abolishing slavery. Karenga, in his text, Introduction to Black Studies, says that

this form of resistance to abolishing slavery was conducted by both free Africans and formerly enslaved Africans like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas and Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart, William Wells Brown, Ellen


and William Craft and others3 who as early as 1797, African fugitives from enslavement petitioned Congress, to consider ‘Our relief as a people.’ And in 1800, a group of Philadelphian Africans petitioned Congress to revise federal laws concerning the enslavement of Africans and fugitive enslaved Africans and to adopt measures for eventual emancipation.4

The freed Africans also campaigned for the revision of the federal laws concerning enslavement. By 1830 freed Africans had organized fifty anti-enslavement societies dedicated to the abolition of the system of enslavement and the contribution of aid to assist enslaved Africans escape their bondage and to those who had escaped or were freed by purchase or other means. The freed Africans were also founding members of multi-racial anti-enslavement societies, such as the American Anti-Slavery Society and the New England Anti-Slavery. According to Karenga “there were 400 of the 450 original subscribers to William Garrison’s famous anti-enslavement paper, The Liberator.”5 The diversity and intensity of the activities of the Black Abolitionists were very impressive.

Among these activities were: 1) fundraising efforts for purchase, aid and legal defense of enslaved Africans and anti-enslavement literature; 2) provision of security forces for defense and anti-enslavement rallies and to prevent kidnappings of fugitive and free Africans by former slave holders and slave catchers from returning runaway slaves to slavery; 3) massive publication efforts involving at its height major narratives of enslaved Africans, anti-enslavement books and 17 newspapers, including the first

3. Ibid.,130
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
Black paper in the U.S. *Freedom's Journal*; 4) establishment of a distinguished speakers bureau consisting of both formerly enslaved and free Africans to disseminate information and call for support in the struggle in the U.S. and Canada, and throughout Europe for social justice and equality; 5) boycott efforts against products which though largely unsuccessful were significant as an expression of exhausting all economic and social avenues; 6) establishment of legal committees to defend free and enslaved Africans against re-enslavement; 7) establishment of vigilance committees, self-help and mutual aid societies to aid formerly enslaved Africans in adjusting to freedom; and 8) the creation and maintenance of the Underground Railroad, a system of freeing, transporting and placing formerly enslaved Africans in the North or Canada.

Karenga stresses two of the aforementioned activities: “first the publication efforts also included such works as *David Walker's Appeal* (1820) which was a severe and famous criticism of enslavement, a call for revolt by enslaved Africans and for aid by the free. Secondly, the Underground Railroad represented clearly “the determination of the abolitionists to destroy slavery.”6 Other works of importance include: George Moses Horton’s *Hope of Liberty* (1829), Robert Young’s *Ethiopian Manifesto* (1829), Mary Prince’s *A West Indian Slave* (1831), Lucky Delaney’s *From Darkness Cometh Light or Struggles for Freedom* (n. d. - not documented), Henry Highland Garnet’s address (1843), *Frederick Douglass’ Narrative of My Life* (1845) and Linda Brent’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Further, Karenga described the Underground Railroad as “A direct act against the system of enslavement, depriving it

6. Ibid.
of its key units, its objects of labor and inspiring in them thoughts of freedom and a sense of possibility.7 John Hope Franklin, as reported in Karenga’s text, explains that “both the fear and effectiveness of this underground effort to free enslaved Africans are expressed in a governor of Mississippi’s claim that between 1810 and 1850 the south lost 100,000 slaves valued at more than $30 million.”8 Karenga describes Harriet Tubman’s role stating that “although the Underground Railroad had many distinguished “conductors” or group leaders, none was as outstanding in the management and guidance of the operations as Harriett Tubman. Freeing herself, she also freed her children, her sister and mother and father as well as hundreds of others. Karenga notes that “The largest bounty ever on the head of an enslaved African went south at least 19 times defying death and capture, and refusing to let any enslaved African return back under penalty of death.”9 Harriett Tubman was also known as an excellent lecturer and raised funds for the abolition of slavery, setting an example of the determination of the enslaved to be free and their dedication to freeing others they had left behind.

Moreover, John Hope Franklin and Robert Moss report that Tubman was so dedicated to the struggle for freedom that “she would take several months off whenever she was running low on funds and hire herself out as domestic servant in order to raise money for conveying (enslaved Africans) to freedom.”10 Confronting the racism of the


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 132.

10. Ibid.
white women’s movement and the sexism of the abolitionist, the condition of black people, and the wants of their children required resources. Binding together in networks of friendship and sisterhood, blacks organized politically; they lectured, taught and engaged in a myriad of activities that abolitionism required and encouraged—these activities also informed and inspired abolitionist activities of other women and men.

In addition to the armed resistance, Karenga also noted that “Four other basic forms of revolts stand out as methods used in resistance: (1) ship mutinies, (2) guerilla warfare, (3) Afro-Mexican alliance and struggle, and (4) Afro-Native American alliance and struggle.” Of the 250 revolts or more recorded in the U.S., “the most notable are: (1) the New York City Revolt in 1712; (2) the Stono, South Carolina Revolt in 1739; (3) the Southern Louisiana Revolt in 1811; (4) the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831; and (5) the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy in 1822.” A revolt by definition is an unsuccessful revolution, that is, an unsuccessful armed uprising which does not end in seizure of state power. The importance of these and other revolts, including attempted revolts, arises not so much from their military effectiveness but rather from: 1) what is revealed about rebels, especially their leaders; 2) the chilling effect they had on the slave holders; and 3) the effect they had on the enslaved Africans and eventually their descendants.

Moreover, the major revolts empowered rebel leaders who were conscious of and prone toward the use of religion as an instrument of unity and struggle. Both historical African religion and Africanized Christianity were used to call the rebels to


12. Ibid.
arms, to justify the moral right to rebellion and freedom, and to prepare them against overwhelming odds. Karenga explains that "the rebel leaders, especially Prosser, Vesey and Turner, were aware of and sought to use current political realities to their advantage." Prosser expected French help in his struggle; Vesey looked to Haiti for inspiration and support, and Turner saw in the internal debates on slavery a good omen reinforced by the religious-political visions he had of war and liberation. Each having taught himself to read and write, kept up with the news and used the concepts and arguments for freedom and rights in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Rights of Man, thus demonstrating a grasp of the ideologies of the age of Revolution. Karenga further notes that "finally one is struck by the dedication, determination and audaciousness of these rebels, risking all to be free even though being as knowledgeable as they were, they knew the overwhelming odds."

The reactions of slaveholders and other whites to the armed resistive actions of the enslaved were invariably reflective of their fears and anxiety. The blood-letting they engaged in and the stringent laws they passed after each revolt showed their fear and tended to erode their contrived image of invincibility. The Prosser Conspiracy is an example of the determination of the slaves to revolt against the slave holders. The effects of the Prosser Conspiracy were profound. Some may argue that the capture and death of the conspirators (i.e. their lack of success) discouraged other enslaved Africans from similar behavior; this is only partly true. Some were encouraged by the


14. Ibid.
audaciousness shown by rebels in risking their lives and those of their loved ones against such overwhelming odds. The political commitment of one enslaved African in 1800 slaveholding America is particularly impressive. He, according to Karenga, informed his captors who asked him what he had to say during his trial thus:

I have nothing more to offer than what General Washington would have had to offer, had he been taken by the British officers and put to trial by them. I have ventured my life in endeavoring to obtain the liberty of my countrymen, and am a willing sacrifice to their cause, and I ask a favor, that I may be immediately led to execution. I know that you have predetermined to shed my blood. Why then all this mockery of a trial?¹⁵

Nat Turner also reports an exchange between himself and a newcomer to his group of rebels which indicates a similar political commitment to the freedom struggle: “Turner asked will the (newcomer) tell how he came to join the revolution. He answered (that) his life was worth no more than others, and his liberty as dear to him. I asked him if he meant to obtain it. He said he would lose his life.”¹⁶ This commitment was noted and respected by enslaved Africans in the popular song praising Nat Turner:

You mought be rich as cream
And drive you coach and four-horse team
But you can’t keep the world from moverin’ round
Nor Nat Turner for gainin ground.
And your name it mought be Caesar sure.
And got you cannon can shoot smile or more,
But you can’t keep de from moverin, round
Nor Nat Turner for gainin, ground.¹⁷


¹⁶. Ibid.

¹⁷. Ibid.
It is this legacy also which has: 1) inspired the descendants of the once enslaved Africans, 2) negated the lies their oppressors have told them about their fore parents' resistance, 3) taught possibilities of struggle and the strength to endure and prevail based on historical precedence and models; and 4) demonstrated to the enslavers, the enslaved Africans, their descendants, and the world, the impossibility of destroying the will and thrust of African peoples to resist oppression and be free.

Ship mutinies constituted a second form of armed struggle to slavery. These struggles also stand out for overcoming the obstacles placed in the way of freedom. Not only were the crews well-armed with canons, guns and knives, but guards stood on constant watch. Also the “Enslaved Africans, men, women and children, were chained in compartments only three feet three inches high and sometimes no more than 18 inches to prevent their sitting erect.”\(^{18}\) Forced to lay in a spoon fashion to increase carrying capacity and prevent any defiance, the enslaved Africans often were rubbed raw by rolling ships, caught all kinds of diseases and died out of suffocation. But in spite of this oppressive and restrictive Middle Passage ride, the enslaved Africans, although weakened by confinement and ship- contracted diseases, often rebelled and attempted to seize the ship to return to Africa.

Maulana Karenga posits that “from evidence, ship mutinies seemed to have been more successful than revolts on land. Among the many successful mutinies were those on Little George (1730), the Jolly Bachelor (1740), and the Amistad (1839).”\(^{19}\) In the

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18. Ibid.

case of the Little George, the ship had sailed from the Guinea Coast in 1730 with ninety-six enslaved Africans. Freeing themselves from shackles, they put the crew to flight in the cabin below. They guided the ship into Sierra Leone River, removed all the women and children and left the ship. The Jolly Bachelor which was carrying captives down the Sierra Leone River in 1740 was attacked by Africans who freed the enslaved Africans and stripped the ship of its sails and rigging and then abandoned the ship.

Perhaps the most famous ship mutiny in African American shared history, however, is the Amistad mutiny in 1839. In this mutiny, a group of Africans, led by Joseph Cinque, an African prince, seized the ship, killed their captors and attempted to return to Africa. Intercepted by a U.S. naval vessel, they were captured and brought to trial. Abolitionists hired John Quincy Adams to defend them and they were freed and allowed to return to Africa.

The third form of armed resistance to enslavement was guerrilla warfare conducted by members of Maroon or independent communities. Karenga indicates that “although attention and credit have been given to Maroon societies and struggles in other parts of the Western Hemisphere, comparatively little has been written on Maroon societies and warfare in the U.S.” 20 There is evidence of the establishment of at least fifty Maroons communities between 1672 and 1864 with varying life spans. These communities existed in the forest, mountain and swampy regions of states such as Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. However, the most notable and largest communities existed in the Dismal

20. Ibid.
Swamp, along Virginia-North Carolina border, and in Florida in union with the
Seminole Native Americans. Karenga explains that "these Maroons sought in varying
ways to duplicate the African societies from which they came."\textsuperscript{21} They built communal
agricultural societies, raised crops and animals and fowls, maintained families with
African kinship patterns and even engaged in trade with whites in certain areas.

According to Karenga the significance of the Maroon communities as a source
of resistance existed on five basic levels. First, they represented a reality and possibility
of self-determination and power to other enslaved Africans. Both their existence and
their victories against search-and-destroy expeditions and successful attacks on
plantations reaffirmed this reality and possibility. Secondly, they were sources of
asylum for fugitives daring enough to escape and reach them. Thirdly, they were bases
from which to launch attacks on plantations for supplies or in retaliation on the slave
system itself, even if only in a minor isolated way. Fourthly, they often raided
plantations to free enslaved Africans. Fifthly, they often provided leadership and
inspiration for revolts among the enslaved.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, although isolation, limited means of
subsistence and regular search-destroy measures reduced the Maroon communities’
capacity to expand and consolidate and wage more effective guerilla warfare, the
contribution they made to the overall process and legacy of resistance stands out and
should be recognized and respected.

\textsuperscript{21} Maulana Karenga, \textit{Introduction to Black Studies}. (Los Angeles, California:
The University of Sankore Press, 1993), 139.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
Additionally, an Afro-Mexican alliance and struggle offer a fourth form of armed resistance by Africans against enslavement. Runaway enslaved Africans arrived in Mexico early in the 1800s to seek freedom. This was due to three basic reasons. First, Mexico was close to the South, especially close to Texas, Louisiana, and Florida from which most escapees came. Secondly, local Mexicans often protected them from pursuing Anglos whom they resented or hated. Thirdly, the Mexican government was favorable toward enslaved Africans, having abolished slavery in 1824 and put it in the Constitution in 1857, the same year the U.S. Supreme court ruled in "Dred Scott decision that blacks had no rights whites were bound to respect."  

Mexico's anti-slavery position was both humanitarian and political. In its war with Spain, it had raised the cry of freedom for all and took it seriously. In terms of its political position, it saw Africans as barriers against Anglo invasion and encroachment on their lands. Thus, they offered Africans and Native Americans land on their border in states such as Tamaulipas and Coahuila where blacks who have not totally merged with the indigenous population still live today. Further, Karenga implies that "in the early 1850's hundreds of Seminoles (Afro-Native Americans) migrated from Oklahoma to Columbia forming military colonies and buffers against Anglo soldiers and slave raiders." Other blacks received land in a state of Vera Cruz for development and were exempt from all taxes and from military service, thereby barring foreign invasions.


24. Ibid.
A fifth and final form of armed resistance was Afro-Native American alliances and struggles. One of the earliest known examples of Africans and Native Americans working as allies in resistance and war was in an uprising in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1657. Bennett reports that from 1657 onwards, “A continuous series of plots, insurrections and armed actions against Europeans by Afro-Native American joint action. In fact in New York City rebellion of 1712, Native-Americans fought jointly with Africans.”25 These alliances and joint actions were rooted in their association as fellow slaves, their common mistreatment by the European, their intermixture and need to defend themselves from the threat of conquest and enslavement.

Additionally, the most apparent and impressive example of Afro-Native American alliance was the Afro-Seminole Alliance in Florida. In no other Native-American nation or ethnic groups were Africans treated with such deference and ascended to such leadership roles in politics and war. As early as 1738, enslaved Africans began to regularly escape from South Carolina taking refuge among the Creeks or Seminoles in Florida. The Seminoles were a group of Creeks whose name means runaways and who in 1750 seceded from the Creek nation and went to a territory in Florida. There they settled near African Maroons and began to build a strong bond. Maulana Karenga reports that “in fact, it can be argued that the Seminole nation developed early into an Afro-Native American nation controlled and run by Africans.”26

25. Ibid.

Karenga acknowledges that Porter attributes this rise to political leadership by Africans among the Seminole to four basic factors:

1) Africans' knowledge of the European and his culture and thus their value in war and peace exchanges; 2) their indispensability as negotiators, guides and interpreters, often speaking French, Spanish and English; 3) their agricultural skills and thus value in creating and sustaining agricultural economies; 4) their courage and skill in war.27

The Africans were valued as allies and associates and accepted as equals, and later as leaders in war and politics. Moreover, in the Seminole Wars, Africans were both generals and soldiers. They fought freely, won many victories and would not often surrender because of the certainty of enslavement. They also used their key political and military positions in the Seminole Nation to refuse emigration to Oklahoma Territory suggested by the U.S. Government and prolonged the struggle to maintain self-determination and avoid re-enslavement. This is why General Jessup, a U.S. commander in the war, argued that Seminole wars were, "An (African) not a (Native-American) war which if not quickly put down would affect the enslaved African population."28 However, the Africans, even though accepted by Seminoles, and fought with them against the Americans, were among the Maroons who decided to emigrate to Sierra Leone. They developed a community in Sierra Leone called Maroon Town located in the capital city of Freetown.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 142
Abolitionism and the Maroons

In Britain the movement advocating the return of freed slaves back to Africa was already established and came to be known as, “The Back to Africa Movement.” The movement could be attributed to the sacrifices made by freed blacks from Trelawney Town in the Parish of St. James, Jamaica. The Maroons, as Mavis Campbell observed, “All of them of African descent, fought heroically against the slave system in Jamaica, and finally gained their freedom in 1738 and 1739 under peace treaties with the government.”29 With Quasi-independent black communities co-existing within wider slave society relationships, not surprisingly, became increasingly strained until finally in 1795 hostilities broke out between the Trelawney Town Maroons—the largest of these groups—and the colonial state. The result was, according to Campbell, that “They were eventually deported to Nova Scotia after being tricked by the government into laying down arms. The Maroon sojourn into Nova Scotia though fleeting occurred from 1796-1800.”30 This has nevertheless left some lasting impressions. The Maroons did not want to stay in Nova Scotia. They had come from the delectable mountainous regions of tropical Jamaica, and, as reported by Campbell, “saw themselves to be strange in living permanently in Nova Scotia’s Nordic clime, and they were not reticent in pointing this out to the authorities there.”31 They made their objections known to the colonial authorities, through petitions, memoranda and finally refusal to work until they


30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.
were sent to a place more like that from which they came. The ‘Back to Africa
Movement’ was timely for them. The Maroons of five hundred and fifty participants
were sent to Sierra Leone which was already in existence as a colony for freed blacks. It
was George Ross, an employee of the Sierra Leone Company, who was commissioned
by the Sierra Leone Company to supervise the transportation of the Maroons from Nova
Scotia to Freetown in Sierra Leone, in September 1800.

The original ‘Back to Africa’ plan in Britain was predicated upon considerations
of race and economy. Britain had a few blacks in her midst, mostly from Africa, from
around the middle of the sixteenth century. However, according to Campbell, “As the
Atlantic Slave Trade expanded steadily during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
the Black presence in Britain increased enormously, and by the third quarter of the later
century they were computed (probably by conjecture) to have been between ten and
twenty thousand.” These blacks consisted of those who served the British Navy and
were eventually discharged, invariably without compensation; those (mostly mulatto
slaves) who accompanied their absentee masters from the British West Indies, and those
who were brought into the country by captains of the slave ships. However, as
Campbell reports:

The greatest influx of blacks into Britain came as a result of the termination
of the American War of Independence in 1783. Under the recent soubriquet,
‘Black Loyalists,’ they constituted some of the Afro-Americans who fought
with Britain and were finally discharged from the British army and navy after
the war. The increased population became a source of alarm. There were loud
cries in Britain about black presence. Fearing that there would be more blacks
coming into Britain especially after 1772’s decision, a master could not reclaim

32. Ibid.
a former slave while in England. The fear that many more blacks reaching
Britain would declare themselves free, implored the deportation of those
already in the country.33

By such an act, the people of Briton wanted to “be preserved from stain and
contamination. Some nervously saw in every town and in almost every village, a little
race of mulattoes, mischievous monkeys, and infinitely more dangerous.”34 Most of
these blacks were seen as a potentially burdensome on the welfare of the country. The
blacks were distressed and unlike the loyalist whites who returned to Britain after their
discharge from the British Army and Navy, they were given no assistance when they
made claims. The blacks, Campbell reports, were told that, “they should regard
themselves as fortunate to have been in a country like Britain where they would not be
recognized to a state of slavery.”35 As the years passed, their misery became alarming.
This was especially so in the streets of London where their problems were constantly
reflected in the news and media of the period. Blacks were “Emancipated and forlorn,
and in a state of beggary. . . there were also starving Indians, abandoned by returning
Nabobs from India, all wretched in a strange land, cold, hungry, naked, friendless.”36

The British government’s aim was to evacuate them from England by any means
whatever. The British government accepted a plan submitted by Henry Smeathman to
the Committee for the relief of the ‘Black Poor’ established by some private individuals

33. Mavis C. Campbell. Back to Africa: George Ross and the Maroons. From
Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone. (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press. 1993), iii.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., iv
in England to remove this group. In 1787, after much coercion and false promises, to
the blacks, by the officials, the removal of 411 or 441 blacks was the aim of the
philanthropists William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and his
brother John Clarkson.

The experiences of the rebellious black Americans, who were destined to be
repatriated to Portugal, Haiti or Brazil after the Civil War by President Jefferson, were
eventually sent back to Africa. The first sets of freed blacks who were settled in
Freetown, did not find life easy in the new land as some of them died, while others
survived. The Sierra Leone Company maintained their interests in the lucrative Slave
Trade, which still continued on the West African Coast, until the Committee for the
abolition of the Slave Trade was formed in 1787. After the American Civil War, the
Company officials were looking around for more settlers. The Sierra Leone Company
was happy to admit another group before the Maroons came on the scene. These were,

The Afro-Americans who won their freedom by fighting, as did some
of the Black Poor, on the British side during the American War of
Independence. They were first sent to Nova Scotia but when the promises
of land and other prerequisites that were made to them by the British were
not kept, they made representations in England.37

This was the most propitious time when the sentiments of the enlightenment led by
Granville Sharp and the abolitionists, or the ‘Clapham set’ or ‘sect’ or ‘the saints,’ in
England were bent on reclaiming not only the blacks of the Diaspora, but also those
from the continent of Africa. According to Campbell, by 1792, “Some 1,190 of them
sailed for Sierra Leone, supervised by John Clarkson (brother of Thomas Clarkson).

37. Ibid.
The groups of Maroons freed blacks were settled on Trelawney Street in Maroon Town, in the center of the capital city Freetown, Sierra Leone."\textsuperscript{38}

**James Somersett (1772-1807)**

The famous test case in England in 1772 of James Somersett (sometimes spelt Somerset) had important repercussions for the American slaves. Granville Sharp brought the case that the slave James Somersett should be returned to his master from whom he had escaped. Campbell reported that the case resulted in a decision by Lord Mansfield that "Somersett’s master could not forcibly return him to the West Indies."\textsuperscript{39} This judgment became widespread news reported in colonial newspapers and widely and erroneously taken to have emancipated the slaves then in England and, "To assure that any slave who set foot on English soil would become free."\textsuperscript{40} It tempted some blacks in America to try to reach Britain, where they imagine they would be free. According to an advertisement in the Virginia Gazette, "Running away was the most common form of Black protest, but there were many other expressions of it: thieving, resistance to work (laziness, pretended sickness, self-mutilation, sabotage) suicide, or, more rarely, assault on owners or overseers."\textsuperscript{41} Slave conspiracies were a continual source of alarm to owners of laborers fresh from Africa.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
However, the idea of restoring freed blacks as colonists from the countries of their exile in the Americas to Africa, the land of their fathers, originated in England with Granville Sharp and a few other philanthropists. It was through the efforts of Sharp that a decision was obtained from Chief Justice Mansfield. The principle laid down by Chief Justice Mansfield in 1772 and included in the British Emancipation Proclamation were similar to the principles laid down by Abraham Lincoln in his Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863.

In the North, slaves tried legal methods such as petitions and lawsuits. Despite pitifully small resources, slaves often encouraged by sympathetic whites, had initiated twelve legal actions before 1750 in Massachusetts alone. In all of the American colonies, slaves were awakened to the facts that they should no longer serve as laborers for the farmers and often they were assisted by some whites in their protest against slavery. Arguments and plans for settling freed blacks among whites in the Alleghenies and the Mississippi River were unsatisfactory. Also there was the fear that if African Americans were sent back to Africa they would encounter even more difficult problems than they were encountering in the United States.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

The philanthropist William Wilberforce, a member of the British Parliament in 1787, started to plead against the institution of slavery. It was not until 1807 that he was able to plead the cause for the abolition of slavery, and the British Parliament had a vote on the topic. The result was that 284 members voted against slavery, and about 24 voted that slavery should continue. Members of the British Parliament opposed to slavery won
the votes at the time. Consequently, slavery and its institution were abolished completely in Britain, and its territories; but slavery continued in America until the 1830's, when the Slave Trade was totally abolished.

The Wilberforce University in Ohio, United States of America, was founded by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in memory of William Wilberforce, a philanthropist. Interestingly, Sierra Leone achieved a Crowned Colony status of the British Sovereign Empire in 1807, with the help of William Wilberforce. A road in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, is named in honor of William Wilberforce. One of the Methodist Churches is named the Wilberforce Street Methodist Church, and the Wilberforce Town (Village) is also named in memory of this great man.

Marcus Garvey and the Back to Africa Movement

The role of Marcus Garvey and the ‘Back to Africa’ movement cannot be ignored in this research. Garvey, a powerful force in the “Back to Africa” movement who was also a Jamaican, was influenced by the works of Edward Wilmot Blyden. He embarked on the project of the movement aiming to assist freed blacks who wanted to return to Africa. The movement he started was the Black Star Movement which advocated freed blacks returning to Africa. Garvey also started a “Sea Merchant Business.” His aim was to get a set of fleet of ships to be running from Jamaica, via America, England and then to Africa.

The business of sending the fleets to Africa with goods for the settlements in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and throughout the West African Coasts, flourished until the company, The Black Star Company, went bankrupt and was eventually out of
business. However, this company is still remembered presently in Africa, not as a company owned by Marcus Garvey and his co-partners, but by the Ghana West Africa Company which was established by the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first Executive President of the Republic of Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) under the British Colonial Government. The lone black star on the Ghanaian national flag with the green, red, yellow, colors depicting the concept, Pan-Africanism, is to honor the works of Marcus Garvey who was as an advocate of African returnees and a financial supporter for their journeys back to Africa.

**Emigrationism (1773-1854)**

Another key form of African resistance to slavery was emigrationism, the push to emigrate back to Africa or go elsewhere where Africans could be free and self-determining. As early as 1773, a group of slaves in Massachusetts petitioned colonial officials for permission to work in order to earn money for transportation to, "Some part of the coast of Africa where we propose a settlement."\(^{42}\) Also in 1787, a group of eighty Boston blacks petitioned the state legislature to assist them in getting to Africa, providing them money to pay their passage and buy land. Campbell indicates that "These Africans were members of the African Society which was dedicated to encouraging emigration to establish a self-determining self-reliant African nation on the West Coast of Africa."\(^{43}\) Paul Cuffe, a Black Quaker, was one of the early advocates of

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43. Ibid.
emigrationism and used his own money to repatriate 38 Africans to Sierra Leone in 1815. Before his death in 1871, “Paul Cuffe also petitioned the U.S President and Congress for aid in this project in 1814 but to no avail.”

Another important source in the emigration process was the Negro Convention Movement. In 1817 the Negro Convention Movement was organized in Philadelphia and became in time a source for the ardent advocacy of emigrationism even though it focused on sending blacks to Canada. The 1854 Convention met to consider emigration to other areas including Africa, the Caribbean and Central America. Some of its best known members were, according to Campbell, “Martin Delany, who argued for the indispensability of Black nationhood; James Holly, who stressed the need to go to Haiti and develop it; and Daniel Payne and Alexander Crummell, giants of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.” Although only some members of the Convention Movement advocated emigrationism, all of them opposed the colonization schemes of the American Colonization Society. This was, according to Karenga, “Essentially a white initiated and dominated organization which had supported the founding of Liberia and advocated that all blacks including freed blacks return to Africa.”

The free Africans opposed this wholesale immigration for four basic reasons: 1) they saw it as a way to get rid of free blacks to better secure slavery; 2) they considered it their duty to stay and fight for emancipation; 3) they assumed it would give weight to the arguments

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44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.
of black inferiority and inability to cope with "civilization;" and 4) they reasoned that they were as much Americans as whites in terms of their contribution and birth. Given these strong positions and the fear of emigrationists, sentiments were manipulated by racist Americans wanting to get rid of all blacks. Emigration lost much of its appeal and appeared strongest at times when there was extreme oppression or anti-Black agitation.

The Civil War (1861-1865)

The Civil War which started in the 1850s included a series of events that made war almost inevitable. First was the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law which made the fugitive guilty until proven innocent, denied his/her testimony and was retroactive. It gave abolitionists another opportunity to expose the viciousness and recalcitrance of slaveholders and slavery advocates. Secondly, in 1854 Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Territory Act which increased the bloody struggle in the territory and foreshadowed larger battles. Thirdly, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott case (1857) that neither free nor enslaved Africans were citizens and had no rights whites were bound to respect. Fourthly, John Brown, a white radical abolitionist attacked Harper's Ferry in 1859 to gain arms for at least 500 enslaved people and wage a war in the South. Although Black abolitionists like Frederick Douglas and Harriett Tubman thought correctly that this move was premature and unwise, Douglas later benefited from the move and became a martyr of the Abolitionist Movement whose activities foreshadowed the coming Civil War.

The Civil War, which was partly precipitated by activities related to slavery and the election of Abraham Lincoln, began with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumner,
South Carolina in April 1861. The Civil War is important in African-American history not only because it led to their emancipation, but even more importantly, because they fought heroically and in great numbers in the war and played other significant roles in it. Thus, they took up arms and became self-conscious agents of their own liberation. Karenga explains that “at first the whites resisted the idea of the blacks serving in the army, feeling that: 1) to call and depend on blacks implied their inadequacies; 2) arming blacks meant arming potential rebels; 3) serving in the armed forces would change the social attitude and status of blacks and thus pose a problem for white rule and power.” 47 They also pretended to doubt the fighting qualities of blacks, but this was irrational and based more on racist ego than evidence as the war proved. By the summer of 1862, after a series of military defeats by Union forces, Congress passed the Confiscation Act and Militia Act which opened the way for freed Africans to aid the war effort. Moreover, Lincoln, seeing the indispensability of African American participation in the war, if it were to be won, issued in the same year the Emancipation Proclamation.

However, the Emancipation Proclamation was not a blanket declaration of freedom for Africans in the states and parts of the states in rebellion against the U.S Government. Loyal Slaves state like Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware were exempt. The Proclamation did not actually grant freedom; it only “declared” it—a declaration totally unenforceable in many parts of the United States. The Emancipation Proclamation only declared freedom for enslaved Africans in the Confederacy, but this is a land that had already rejected U.S. jurisdiction and was at war with it to defend its decision. The value of the Proclamation, therefore, was to serve as a propaganda

47. Ibid.
document to appease abolitionists and radical Republicans, give the war the moral character it lacked, and contribute further to the rebellion among enslaved Africans which had already reached a high level.

Africans anxious to fight for freedom, respect, and a better status and role in society enlisted in large numbers and served in various capacities. In addition to serving as regular soldiers and sailors, they served as guides, scouts, intelligence agents, engineers, nurses, surgeons, chaplains, construction workers, teamsters, cooks, carpenters, miners, farmers, commandos and recruiters. It is recorded by Karenga that "an estimated 186,000 Africans participated as soldiers and 29,000 as sailors accounting for 25% of U.S. sailors."\(^48\) The real number of participants is probably much higher but was disguised by many mulattos being registered as whites. Moreover, blacks served in every theater of operations, fought in 449 engagements, thirty-nine of which were major battles and won seventeen Congressional Medals of Honor on land and four on sea. Karenga comments that: "These achievements were made in spite of vicious racism exhibited in treatment, pay and time differentials, poor equipment, bad medical care, excess fatigue details, reckless and hasty assignments and the no-quarter policy of the South against Black soldiers."\(^49\)

The Civil War ended April 9, 1865, with the surrender of General Robert E. Lee to General Ulysses S. Grant. Firstly, the end of the war and the Union victory was important to the nation as a whole and to African Americans in particular. For African Americans it was an end to slavery that lasted almost 250 years.\(^50\) Secondly, it represented a victory won only as a result of their entry and heroic participations in the struggle which was not only to free themselves but also to win respect and a new status in society. Thirdly, it meant the beginning of a new struggle to secure economic and political rights which did not automatically come with emancipation. For the nation, the victory meant the federal government had clearly established its sovereignty over the states, freed the south from a morally indefensible, politically and economically

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49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.
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**Emancipation Proclamation and the Emancipation Movements**

The Emancipation Proclamation was another important event that impacted the emigration of freed blacks to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Michael Vorenberg in his text, *The Emancipation Proclamation: A Brief History With Documents*, remarks that “if there was one defining moment of the American Civil War, it was Abraham Lincoln’s signing of The Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The moment was not as dramatic as the three-day battle at Gettysburg later that year, nor was it as poetic as the address that Lincoln delivered at Gettysburg four months after the battle.” Despite its

50. Ibid.

weaknesses, the Proclamation by declaring emancipation as one of the aims of the Union War did more than any other act or action during the war to signal a shift in the conflict and in the direction of reunification of the United States.

Before these actions, emancipation became an explicit union aim, as slavery’s death grip on the country remained firm. As late as December 1, 1862, a mere month before he signed the Proclamation, Lincoln had proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that might have allowed slavery to exist in the country until 1900. Meanwhile, a constitutional amendment approved by Congress in 1861 that protected slavery where it existed for eternity remained before the states, awaiting ratification. Lincoln had promoted the measure in his first inaugural address and the state legislatures of Maryland and Ohio had quickly voted for its ratification, and the Illinois State Constitutional Convention in 1862 had endorsed it. The amendment remained before the states during the Civil war and after. As stated by Karenga “the constitution gives Congress no authority to recall an amendment. But the measure was rendered meaningless by the Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in December 1865, which prohibited slavery.” 52 Before the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, however, the Emancipation Proclamation declared what many had believed since the war began: Slavery was on the path to destruction.

Prior to the Civil War, American leaders had gone to extraordinary lengths to keep the institution of slavery from dividing the nation. Some of the delegates to the nation’s Constitutional Convention of 1787 had suggested abolishing the institution, but

52. Ibid., 2
the knowledge that pressing such proposals would dissolve the Convention led to those inclined against slavery to accept a number of measures that helped preserve the institution well into the nineteenth century. Among these was a clause requiring fugitive slaves to be returned to their owners, a clause that Congress invoked when passing the first Fugitive Act in 1793. The Constitution also prohibited the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade for twenty years after the Constitution’s ratification, and it enhanced slave owners’ power in the House of Representatives counting every slave, whom the law generally treated as a nonperson, as three fifths of a person for the purposes of congressional representation.

Perhaps most significant, at least in hindsight, the Constitution gave no explicit power to Congress over slavery in the states. Most lawmakers in the nineteenth century read that “omission as evidence that only state law makers or slave-owners themselves could free slaves.” However, the Constitution made some concessions to those opposed to slavery. Those wanting a prohibition of slave importation from abroad were gratified in 1808 when Congress abolished the Slave Trade. Those wanting the Constitution to give the national government some power to destroy slavery were heartened that Congress had sole jurisdiction over the federal territories. If Congress wished to abolish slavery in these areas, no state law could stand in its way. Finally, those who were embarrassed that slavery would still exist in the country, no matter how much the Constitution weakened it or set it on the road to destruction, could take solace in the fact that “the document never used the word slave, slaves, or slavery.

53. Ibid.
held to service or labor’ was as close as the document came referring to the institution directly." Yet, enslaved African-Americans were not convinced that the political actions meant freedom for them. Moreover, President Abraham Lincoln’s Final Emancipation Proclamation was made on January 1, 1863. Unlike the preliminary Proclamation, the final version specified the areas affected. Exempted were, “The Border States; some areas in the Confederacy where there was strong Unionist support, such as Eastern Tennessee; and most areas under Union army occupation, including Southern Louisiana. Also exempted were the western counties of Virginia, which became the free state of West Virginia.” Thus, The Emancipation Proclamation was declared in 1863. Slaves and free African Americans had long spoken and sung of the “day of Jubilee” to come, “And many saw the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation as a fulfillment of that prophecy.” Copies of the Proclamation circulated among slave communities even though southern officials regularly punished, even executed, those found carrying copies; and African-Americans already freed, including those in Union-occupied areas, held celebrations where the Proclamation was read. The Pacific Appeal, a Black abolitionist paper in San Francisco, captured what the Proclamation signified to African-Americans throughout the country. While the Emancipation Proclamation ensured a level of liberation from slavery, it still left some areas exempt from the declaration of the Proclamation. This still left many people of


55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.
African descent in the cross fires of enslavement and liberation. The enslaved viewed
Emancipation thusly:

How long, how long, O Lord, before our deliverance shall come to pass? Today
they are permitted, under broad shield of the United States Government, to stand
erect as men. Today they arise above the status mere bondsmen, allied to the
brute creation of a property sense, by soulless political theories of the impious
slaveocracy. Today the Government has washed its hands clean of the stains of
slavery in the States and parts of the States that are in rebellion. America,
henceforth, looms up with grandeur. “She has burst the bands that have bound
her, from her infancy to her maturity, and declares, before High heaven, she
must be free! Giant-like, she now appears, with her implements of war, not only
to strike terror to traitors and domestic foes at home, but, with added strength
from her loyal colored sons, she may with confidence hurl defiance at her
enemies abroad. America, today, takes a proud stand, confronting the world
unabashed majesty.”

The Emancipation proclamation was one of the events that led to the emigration of
freed blacks to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Reconstruction

The period of Reconstruction 1865-1877 represented for African Americans
“The best of times and the worst of times.” It was a time of great leaps forward and of
hope and great disappointment and betrayal. For the U.S. it represented a time of great
possibility to realize its ideal of freedom, justice and equality for all. But after a strong
start it betrayed its own ideals and failed in solving the problems the post-war period
posed, i.e., the problems of Reconstruction. These problems were essentially: 1)
rebuilding the South’s economy on the basis of free labor and its industrialization and
reintegration into the national economy; 2) politically subduing and transforming the

57. Ibid.

California: The University of Sankore Press, 1993), 144.
south; and 3) integration of the freed Africans into the social fabric, especially in the South and protecting them from re-enslavement, exploitation and abuse.

However, early events seemed to suggest an alternative outcome. The Freedman's Bureau was established by Congress in 1865 to guide and protect the freed Africans. It was to: 1) set up schools for them; 2) provide medical services; 3) write, supervise and enforce their contracts; 4) manage, lease and sell them confiscated and abandoned lands; 5) resettle them; and 6) provide legal assistance and protection.

Furthermore, Congress passed three cornerstone Amendments directed toward the integration of blacks in the social fabric of American society on the basis of equality, that is, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Essentially, the Thirteenth Amendment freed them; the Fourteenth made them citizens, and the Fifteenth gave them the rights to vote. Also, Congress passed the 1866 Civil Rights Act (CRA) declaring blacks citizens again; the 1870 Civil Rights act to expand and strengthen the 1866 CRA; and the 1871 CRA which sought to establish equal rights in the public facilities and jury duties. Congress also passed the 1871 Enforcement Act which outlawed white terrorist societies like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

However, economically, Congress did not give blacks the support they needed and they were essentially reintegrated back into the Southern economy under semi-enslaved conditions as sharecroppers. Whites, never accepting the freedom and equality of African-Americans, passed Black Codes. Franklin posits that “patterned after the antebellum Slave Codes which made the control of blacks by white
employees, about as great as that which slaveholders exercised.”59 In spite of the general assumption among blacks that the federal government would provide them with lots of forty acres, and the tacit encouragement given this assumption by the creation of the Freedman’s Bureau, the government never did fulfill their promise, thus posing one of the main problems of Black economic adjustment. With no land of their own, the majority of freed African-Americans slowly but inevitably returned to the plantation more or less at the mercy of the employers and their former slave owners.

Moreover, those who did go to urban areas were met with crippling discrimination and severe exploitation during the period of Reconstruction, as black carpenters, bricklayers, painters, blacksmiths, and other skilled workers were strongly opposed by white artisans in their employment efforts. Skilled and unskilled workers were denied union membership and white employers often used blacks to break union strikes, thus splitting the labor movement and casting blacks as essentially strikebreakers and ones who would work for the lowest wages.

Karenga states that “in 1869, African Americans created two unions, the National Labor Convention of Colored Men and the National Negro Labor Union, and sought affiliation with white labor unions, but to no avail. By 1874, due to this exclusion and other factors, these Black labor union thrusts were effectively ended.”60 The Reconstruction period, however, did provided some political gains for African-Americans although they were short-lived. During this period twenty two (22) African

59. Ibid., 146.

Americans served in Congress. Two (2) served in the Senate, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce, both from Mississippi, and twenty (20) served in the House. In spite of the racist claims that they were uneducated, ten (10) had gone to college and five (5) had degrees. Moreover, most had some political experience before going to Congress as delegates to constitutional conventions and as local and state senators and representatives. Although African-American legislators were unable to pass much legislation in Congress, at the state levels they were able to achieve much more. They expanded suffrage, instituted free public education, improved the tax system, reorganized the judicial system, and repealed imprisonment for debt laws as well as negative labor laws of 1865 and 1866 which were part of the Black Codes.

Eventually, however, as Karenga reports, “The efforts to reconstruct the life of the African-Americans and the South on the basis of freedom, justice and equality failed for several reasons.” These included: 1) the failure of federal government to give Blacks land and equipment, thus forcing them into semi-enslaved status; 2) the return of Southerners to status of respect represented by the repeal of the loyalty oath requirement for re-entering national political life; 3) The rise of the white terrorist societies like the KKK and the Camellias in spite of the 1870 and 1871 laws against such societies; 4) the supreme Court’s eroding constitutional and legislative gains for Blacks through rulings favorable to the South; 5) the disintegration of the old coalition of abolitionists, radical Republicans and Northern naturalists through fatigue, retirement, disenchantment and the push for social peace in the South which would

61. Ibid., 147.
allow economic growth; and finally 6) the Hayes-Tilden Compromise in 1877 which saw President Hayes grant the South federal troop withdrawal, assistance in internal improvements and better representation in Congress for its electoral votes. In 1878, federal troops were withdrawn leaving Blacks at the mercy of racist governments and terrorists societies.

As Karenga rightly points out, the withdrawal of federal forces worsened the fragile condition of African-Americans. He states that Reconstruction took a different turn when, “In 1894 federal marshals were withdrawn and in 1896 the Supreme Court issued its *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision, the “separate but equal” doctrine that lasted until 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education* Decision.”62 The Reconstruction Period was also an important event that impacted the emigration of freed blacks to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

62. Ibid.
CHAPTER IV
WHO WAS EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN?

Through Edward Blyden’s text, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, the ideas that guided his contributions to the lives of emigrants to Sierra Leone and Liberia can be outlined as mainly his belief in Christianity, his understanding of Islam, and his support for the Negro Race. Further, the current research presents an historical analysis of Blyden’s areas of interests, his actual activities which occurred as he carried out his work, and the potency of his social change ideas and values on generations that came after him.

Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden was one of many freed blacks who progressed to an upper socio-economic status from a lower status. A native of Saint Thomas, West Indies, Blyden lived most of his life on the African continent. In an introduction by the Honorable Samuel Lewis in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, Blyden is described as, “A child of the purest Negro parentage.”¹ Hollis R. Lynch, also in Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912, explains the motivation for Blyden’s career in these words: “It was the humiliating lot of the Negro as a human being, which drove Edward Wilmot Blyden to becoming the greatest Negro champion of his race in the nineteenth century.”² Edward Blyden was born, the third of seven

children, on August 3, 1832, on the then Danish West Indian Island of Saint Thomas  
and was described by Hollis Lynch as being:

‘Of ebony hue,’ he [Blyden] later claimed to be of ‘pure Negro’ parentage  
from the Ibo tribe in eastern Nigeria. He was of relatively privileged birth.  
Both his parents were free and literate. His mother, Judith, was a school teacher,  
his father Romeo, was a tailor.  

The family with its reasonably high economic status lived in a predominantly Jewish  
and English-speaking community in the capital, Charlotte-Amalie, and Blyden romped  
with Jewish boys on Synagogue Hill. Blyden later proudly pointed out that, “Judah P.  
Benjamin, 1811-1884, the eminent American statesman and jurist, was born in the same  
neighborhood.”

The Blydens attended the integrated Dutch Reformed Church, and young  
Edward attended the local primary school but also received private tutoring from his  
mother. In 1842 the family left for Porto Bello, Venezuela, where Edward, who  
eventually became a linguist, first discovered his facility for learning foreign languages.  
After two years, by which time he was fluent in Spanish, the family returned home. The  
sensitive and intelligent Negro youth noted and puzzled over the fact that not only was  
the majority of his race in slavery in St. Thomas, but in Venezuela, too, where Negroes  
did most of the menial work. On his return to St. Thomas, Blyden attended school only  
in the morning, and in the afternoon served a five-year apprenticeship as a tailor.


3. Lynch, 3.

4. Ibid.
Inspired in early youth, with a love of the fatherland, and a desire to labor for its amelioration of slavery he went to the United States in his seventeenth year, with a view of pursuing certain studies at major institutions of higher education in order to qualify him to work in Africa as a missionary. Edward S. Curtis notes that “Influential friends endeavored to secure for him admission there, but so strong was the prejudice against his race at that time the effect proved unavailing.”5 After traveling from St. Thomas to the United States, Blyden was recommended by the Reverend John P. Knox to attend Rutgers’s Theological College which was Knox’s alma mater. Blyden was frustrated in not being admitted to Rutgers’ Theological College in the U.S. in 1850 or to two other seminaries to which he had applied because he was black. Blyden had come to the U.S. at the worst possible political moment. It was the year “President Millard Fillmore signed into law the Fugitive Slave Act, which required the help of law enforcement officials in the capture and re-enslavement of “fugitive” slaves in the North.”6

Failing to gain admission, Curtis indicates that, “He was advised to proceed at once to Liberia, where the Board of Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was about to establish a High School, under the guidance of the Reverend David A. Wilson (later Dr. Wilson), a graduate of Princeton college.”7 His decision to leave behind his family and to start life far away from home proved fruitful for him. He


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 5.
accepted this challenge of going to Africa knowing very well that this was a golden opportunity for him to obtain the education he was denied in the U.S. as a freed black.

**Education**

After a few months of residence in Liberia, young Blyden entered the new institution as one of its first pupils. By diligence and perseverance, he soon rose to the leadership of the school, after filling the office for three years, to the satisfaction of all concerned. He was, in 1862, elected to a professorship in the newly-founded College of Liberia. Professor Edward Wilmot Blyden, after visiting Egypt and Syria and after studying Arabic, returned to Liberia and instituted the study of Arabic in the curriculum of the college. In 1871, he resigned his professorship, and after a brief visit to Europe, spent two years in Sierra Leone. He was later awarded the honorary degrees of “Master of Arts (MA), Doctor of Divinity (DD), and Doctor of Laws (DL), by different American Universities.”8 Dr. Blyden, as an educator, was influential in assisting the people of Liberia to accept the “Vei Script” Alphabet (see Figure 3). The alphabetic system consists of signs and symbols that exist traditionally in Liberia, but have not been generally accepted as the standard orthographic system in the country. Dr. John Mbiti in his text, *Introduction to African Religion*, explains that the Vei Script “was invented by Doalu Dukere in the first of the nineteenth Century.”9 It is interesting that the translation comes from the German source, Zeichen, which means value.

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Figure 3. The Vai (Veï) Script of Liberia

The Vai Script, before Blyden's ennoblement of its status, was not used frequently or universally in Liberia. They were all overshadowed by the English and other European writing systems. The traditional system of education in which Ethiopian and Aramaic alphabets are used is also common (see Figure 4). This traditional type of informal education as described by Europeans is also practiced in Southern Liberia. Moreover, Blyden established the study of African culture and customs so that freed Blacks (African-American freed slaves) would try to find their true identity as liberated people through a study of their past culture which would help to establish their new
identity. In many of his written works, Blyden talks about teaching indigenous culture to the Africans who had not received any formal western type of education.

Figure 4. Ethiopian and Aramaic Alphabets
(Translated from German source: Zeichen means symbol or sign; Wert means value or equivalent)
The Role of Education: The Missionaries

The various missionary societies were instrumental in establishing schools and colleges to educate especially the children that were born to freed blacks as well as the children of the local inhabitants. The missionaries were already trained and qualified church workers who were ready to help with the settlement of African-Americans, even though many had passed through Nova Scotia on the way to the African Continent.

With the establishment of Madrassas (Formal English and Arabic type schools) by Blyden, there was a turn in the trends of the education of freed blacks. Some of the freed blacks had not received appropriate education in the U.S., because of segregation. It should be noted that while leaders of the African-American communities were struggling with members of the Board of Education those who emigrated seized the opportunity to return to school. As discussed earlier, one such freed black was Edward Wilmot Blyden who had no opportunity to attend a theological college in the United States, or to acquire the type of education needed to qualify him for an overseas missionary appointment. He traveled to Liberia, in West Africa, from his native town of St. Thomas Island of the West Indies. There he excelled as an academic thinker to become a graduate of the newly-established missionary Saint Augustine High School in Liberia and to later become a president of the University College of Liberia (see Figure 5 which shows Blyden at age 40). As a freed black who did not get the opportunity to study in the U.S., he lobbied for freed blacks who were Muslims to be able to obtain an English education combined with Arabic in both Sierra Leone and Liberia. The effort was also extended to other parts of West Africa. All of the schools and colleges were established by Christian Missionary Societies. To graduate from any of the missionary
schools meant that the individual accepted conversion into the Christian faith. Blyden was able to persuade the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone to establish this type of schools for Moslems, and he succeeded. His translation of most of the Bible into the Arabic language was disturbing to Bishop Ajayi Crowther, the Bishop of Freetown and British West Africa. Consequently, freed blacks were now able to read and write in the three languages of Arabic, French and English, as well as the sharing of their cultures. Blyden believed that, “the Oriental aspect of Islam has become largely modified in Negro land, not, as is too generally supposed, by degrading compromise with Pagan superstitions, but by shaping many of its traditional customs to suit the milder and more conciliatory disposition of the Negro.”

The colonial government also became contributors to education, and together with the missionary societies sent secular workers, such as teachers and administrators, who later became principals, head teachers, and managers of established schools. With both government and mission support, education was extended to other parts of West Africa.

Figure 5. Blyden at Age 40
Religious Ideologies of Blyden: The Missionaries

As a missionary, Blyden’s activities related to encouraging emigrants to Sierra Leone and Liberia in understanding the relationship between Christianity, Islam and the Negro race. Blyden served as an advocate for Re-Africanization with an emphasis on helping emigrants to comprehend African culture and traditions. Blyden who looked forward to the evolution of African churches freed from the burden of European precepts and examples by comparing and contrasting Christianity, Mohammedanism, and ‘Paganism.’ Blyden notes that, “it is the African converts to Mohammedanism and the Negro colonialists from Christian countries, who have, thus far, done most for the permanent advance of civilization in equatorial Africa; and it is these who seem to me to be only capable and efficient agencies for the work of African generation.”

Further, Blyden posits that “Mohammedanism, by its simple, rigid forms of worship, by its literature, its politics, its organized society, its industrial, commercial activities, is rapidly superseding a hoary and pernicious Paganism.”

The exiled Negro in the Western hemisphere, in spite of the bitter prejudices, and the dark passions of which he has been the victim, has come under influences which have given him the elements of a nobler civilization. Blyden also states that, “The seed of a spiritual, intellectual, industrial life has been planted in his bosom, which when he is transferred to the land of his fathers, will grow up into beauty, expand into flower,


11. Ibid.
and develop into fruit which the world will be glad to welcome."\textsuperscript{12} Other Blyden’s texts included articles he had previously written; these texts were described in the Preface to his book as

\ldots not only the sentiments of a careful observer and diligent student, but they are exponent of a purpose of a lover of his race. Many of the thoughts are new, but they are such as will be read with profit by all who are interested in the solution of the great problems which beset the work of the civilization of Africa, and the genuine progress of humanity. He traces the influence from: “The three streams of influences have penetrated into Negro land: one, from Egypt, through Nubia, to Bornu and Hausa; another, Abyssinia to Yoruba and Ashantee; the third from Barbary State across the desert to Timbuktu.\textsuperscript{13}

The first two streams, Egypt and Arabia, exchanged their productions for raw materials of the Sudan. The third stream refers to the ports of the Mediterranean, through the Great Desert, having Timbuktu as a center, which became outlets for the wealth of Nigritia.

After describing within the text, the entrance of Islam into Africa, Blyden concludes with the following: “We entertain the deliberate conviction gathered not from reading at home, but from travels among the people that whatever it may be in other lands, in Africa the work of Islam is preliminary and preparatory.”\textsuperscript{14} The expression above is very important in the genealogical account of the Israelites since the controversies indicate that Ishmael’s descendants are left out of the inheritance of their Grandfather Abraham because Ishmael’s mother was a slave girl from Egypt in Africa.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
He relates this to the life of the Mohammedans, by explaining that, “The African Mohammedans, as far as we have observed, are tolerant and accessible, anxious for light and improvement from any quarter.”

The Muslims were willing to have Christian schools in their own town, to have Christian scriptures circulated among them, and to share with Christians the work of reclaiming the Pagans.

Blyden in closing this argument declares that, “In view, then, of the work which it may yet accomplish for Africa and the Negro race, and the work of Islam has already accomplished, one day the true laborers may find in Africa a harvest ready for their reaping.”

All throughout the era of the founding of the schools, churches and the establishment of hospitals, there have been controversies of sabotages by ordained clergy of the Christian Missionary Societies. Blyden was a Presbyterian ordained clergyman who was hired by the Colonial government to establish Mohammedan schools in Sierra Leone and Liberia, which he did effectively. Some of the Bishops representing the Church of England did not support the efforts that were underway.

The second main theme provides an explanation of the word “dogma” especially in the article, entitled Christianity and the Negro Race. By the word ‘dogma’ Gladstone, according to Blyden’s interpretation, evidently meant not to establish a petrified formula of any particular sect or race, deduced according to their view from the word of God, but the whole system of Christianity itself. Blyden argues bitterly


16. Ibid.
against the church for its organization of slavery, especially taking Africans to be of low status, thus leading their movement into enslavement.

Finally, Blyden explains the two types of Christianity faced in West Africa as, “American Christianity, though having its roots in Europe, differs from European Christianity in many important respects- in the wide tolerance which pervades it, in the form which it is assumed, and the impression which it leaves on the mind. It is the religion of the democratic people.”\textsuperscript{17} It may be assumed that Blyden might have established a base in Sierra Leone and Liberia for the spread of Mohammedan education may be the result of the obstructive operations of hostile Mohammedans, for which Liberia was blamed. . . . [thus] with all these serious difficulties which environed the situations, Liberia, and her influences compare favorably with all these.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Political Mission}

Blyden’s third theme is on colonialism and the partition of Sierra Leone and Liberia, two nations often referred to as sister states. The harmony which exists between states whose territorial limits are conterminous, and peopled by members of the African race who have also adopted the habits of Western culture, cannot be but united by the ties of one common duty.

In 1864, Blyden was appointed Secretary of State by the Liberian President Roberts, but declined it and accepted the position of President of the Liberia College from 1880-1884. He served in the Liberian cabinet as Minister of the Interior and


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
Secretary of Education 1880-1882 and in 1885 unsuccessfully contested the Presidential election. He was Liberia's first accredited diplomat abroad to the court of St. James in 1877-78, and again in 1892, and to London and Paris in 1905.\footnote{\textsuperscript{19}}

Subsequently, he became a stalwart politician after his appointment as Secretary of the Interior. This position afforded him the opportunity for extensive travel as well as the enhancing of his skills as an astute politician. As Secretary of State, he was deeply involved in the transformation of the Liberian settlements in Sierra Leone, especially with the Recaptive Creoles, Greboes, Krues, Bassas of Freetown, the Vais and Golas of the Southern tips of Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition, Blyden was inspirational in experimenting with the "Vais Script of Liberia," with the intention of teaching the freed blacks the indigenous languages, Africa art, symbols, music, dance, and the celebrations of the events of life of the African individual and community (see Figure 6 depicting Blyden as a Statesman).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{blyden_statesman}
\caption{Blyden as a Statesman}
\end{figure}

The intention of Blyden was to develop the African culture and politics in the Pan-Africanist settings, and even education. Liberia was viewed, even at the time of

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
Blyden, as a failed state in decay. The falling into decay or the degenerate state of affairs of the Liberian Republic caused Blyden to turn his attention back to religion. Lynch posits that, “Blyden’s picture of a spirit of lawlessness in Monrovia, and of ineptitude both in the conduct of the Government and of the College was confirmed by reports of other Liberians. This degenerate state of affairs was reported in the Negro Republic as something that “Drove Blyden to his characteristic admonitions.”20 A speech of admonitions delivered in Monrovia on December 1, 1873, was to encourage Liberians to show themselves equal to the responsibilities set aside for them by the dominant society. Blyden expressed his admonitions thus:

> Fail not to use every effort to gain a position of prosperity for yourselves, and to open to civilization and Christianity the great continent of which you occupy the border; your un-success will only deepen the impression that the Negro is indeed an inferior race, and that the Caucasian will feel justified in scorning him as an equal and a brother.21

He urged Liberians to amalgamate with the ‘athletic’ and vigorous tribes of the interior: the Madinka, the Fula, and the Hausa. Blyden noted that “it is now accepted that the relations of Liberia and Sierra Leone will become more intimate, and that there will be, in course of time, uniform tariff regulations, by which the trade of the two countries may be carried on under the same rules.”22 He continued to discuss the impact of the dispute between United States and England over boundaries. The dispute gave rise to the rebel war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, fought from 1988 to 2001. Army General


21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.
Charles Taylor emerged as commander of the “Diamond Wars.” On the grounds of justice, humanity and expediency, Blyden and others had asked for the U.S. government to provide aid to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Blyden explains that “in contemplating the possibility of such assistance, the only drawback that occurs to us is that the emigration might be so excessive as to imperil the vital interests of the colony.”

Pan-Africanism

Many of Blyden’s biographers viewed him as a Pan African Nationalist and his work as a contribution to the Mohammedans in the Diaspora. Blyden’s position in relationship to Pan-Africanism was influenced by his overall religious experiences as an ordained Presbyterian minister, later as the Minister of Truth and Director of Mohammedan education. His experiences affected his practice and interests in culture, Islam, Christianity, and the Negro race. The most important issue for Blyden remained the level of his commitment in, and practice of, a Pan-African Nationalist philosophy. (See Figure 7, a depiction of Blyden in his Mature Years.)

Figure 7. Blyden in His Mature Years

23. Ibid.
Blyden once declared that the work to be done beyond the seas is not the reproduction of what we see in this country, but a distinct race perception and entire race devotion.²⁴ In the text _Returning Home: A Century of African-American Repatriation_ , Robert Johnson Jr., claims that the African Nationalist ideology of Edward Wilmot Blyden, in comparison to John Russwurm’s achievement of political power in Cape Palmas, failed to articulate a clear philosophical rationale for the political development of the colony and the function of religion. Blyden was in short, “A pragmatist who, though highly educated, did not struggle with broad concepts such as African Nationalism and Pan-Africanism.”²⁵ If this is true of Edward Blyden, then it can be assumed that Edward Blyden was possibly a Pan-Negro Patriot.

Some scholars who wrote about this subject agree with Blyden’s Pan-Africanist perspectives. Blyden described the white academic education that African-Americans received as mediocre. One African-American scholar, Carter G. Woodson, says that “until the close of the Civil War in America the slave power had shaped the conceptions of Western World as to the African, his character, possibilities, and destiny.”²⁶ After his sojourn in Sierra Leone in 1871-1873, Blyden returned to Liberia, and although from 1885 he traveled regularly across West Africa, he retained the belief that the success of the Republic was one of the main hopes of advancing the interest of his race; and he continued to serve it whenever he had the opportunity. Hollis R. Lynch, in his book,


²⁵. Ibid.

²⁶. Ibid.
Edward Wilmot Blyden, 1832- Pan Negro Patriot-1912, remarks that “in 1874 he resumed his role as educator and as late as 1900 was actively associated with Liberia College, but his most important educational assignment was as President of Liberia College from 1880 to 1884.”27 He served in the Liberian Cabinet as Minister of the Interior and Secretary of Education (1880-1882), and in 1885 unsuccessfully contested the Presidential election. He served as Liberia’s first accredited diplomat abroad to the Court of St. James (1877-1888, 1892) and to London and Paris (1905).

Pan-Negroism versus Pan-Africanism

Robert Johnson, Jr.’s book Returning Home: A Century of African-American Repatriation is a biographical sketch of an African-American nationalist who advocated for African-American repatriation. Returning Home is the first comprehensive analysis of repatriation movements in the nineteenth century. It begins with a review of Paul Cuffe’s journey to Sierra Leone as an entrepreneur in 1815 and ends with Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the American Methodist Church’s efforts to promote repatriation as reparations for slavery. The book chronicles the lives of national thinkers and activists such as John Brown Russwurm, a graduate of Bowdoin College (1826), and founder of the first Black newspaper Freedom’s Journal, and Governor of Cape Colony of Liberia. The book also reviews the Haitian Revolution as the genesis of African-American nationalism in the nineteenth century and assesses the British experiment in Sierra Leone and its impact upon American colonization efforts. The non-African controlled

efforts are analyzed through the organizational structure and ideological perspectives of
the American colonization Society and its chief supporters, Northern industrialists and
Southern plantation owners. Furthermore, conflicting views on repatriation are critically
assessed through the writings and career choices of free Africans who elected to
repatriate to sections of Africa other than Liberia and Sierra Leone, or who elected to
settle in Canada or elsewhere in the western world.

However, from 1847 to the end of the century a clear Pan-African ideology did
emerge from the Continent. Its architect was Edward Wilmot Blyden. He, and to a
lesser extent, Alexander Crummell, struggled with a theoretical paradigm that made
Africa the center of the African person’s worldview. It was Blyden, however, who
created a rationale that grew out of the rich legacy of African communalism and
spirituality. According to Johnson, “Blyden, born is St. Thomas, West Indies in 1832,
and brought to the United States by the American Colonization Society, was convinced
that national consciousness could be planted and nurtured in Liberia.”28 Johnson states
that, “colonization in the nineteenth century, a product of the American Colonization
Society, represented but another form of political and economic imperialism.”29
Johnson uses the term “Blydenism,” and defines it by stating that, “Blydenism” was
non-comprising with racist western ideologies and philosophers.

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29. Ibid.
African Nationalism, on the other hand, accepted the racist assumptions of white missionaries and political leaders. "Blydenism" refused to accept actual differences between indigenous and returned Africans as the basis for political participation or lack of it in the African nation. Liberia and the experience of the Americo-Liberians exemplify the pitfalls of nationalist ideologies that are centered round the African-American experience with little appreciation of African history and cultural values. Without a philosophical perspective such as "Blydenism" resettlement in Africa inevitably leads to caste antagonisms between the returned and the indigenous African. "Blydenism," though lessening the caste antagonisms between Africans of differing geographical and ethnic backgrounds, lacked a cogent plan of action that would ultimately lead to the economic development of the continent. "Blydenism" clearly articulated a philosophy that recognized the universality of the cultural and religious aspects of the African existence. However, its weakness was that it did not postulate a politico-economic plan of development under which a unified Africa could strive for self-reliance.

Hollis R. Lynch in Edward Wilmot Blyden Pan-African Patriot, 1832-1912 dedicates the text, "To all strivers, past and present, after the Pan-African ideal." In his biography, Edward Wilmot Blyden is described as, "One fired in the idea of voluntary repatriation to Africa of Black Americans, who became a directing force in the

30. Ibid.

settlement of Liberia, and an early philosopher of Black Nationalism.”32 A freed West Indian by birth and a Liberian by adoption, Blyden was familiar with America, Europe and much of West Africa, and became Liberia’s first ambassador in London and in Paris. Blyden’s story in brief could be compared to Russwurm. In this text, Lynch praised four other American Negroes who elected to repatriate to Liberia, which included Reverend Coker, Lott Cary, Paul Cuffe and John Russwurm.

Lynch said, “If the four above mentioned Pan-Negro nationalists owed much of their ideas about the future of Africa to humanitarian and missionary propaganda, they added their own contribution by asserting or implying that the Negro race had a worthy past and that undoubtedly a great future awaited Black Africa.”33 Although the status of freed American Negroes continuously deteriorated, no other American champion of the Pan-Negro cause succeeded before the half century had run its course; but as if by way of compensation for the lapse, a new champion came on the scene; that was Edward Wilmot Blyden.

Re-Africanization

Blyden’s text African Life and Customs provides an essential collection of Blyden’s articles that examine the socioeconomic structure of African society. It was through his written text that Blyden strongly defended the unique character of Africa and its people. In African Life and Customs, Blyden examined the culture of “pure” Africans, that is, those untouched by European and Asiatic influences. He identified the family as a basic unit in African society and polygamy as the foundation of African

32. Ibid., 274.

33. Ibid., 9.
families. He described African social systems as cooperative, where everyone worked for each other. No one went without work, food or clothing—all which were essential for the successful Re-Africanization of the freed Blacks emigrating to Liberia and Sierra Leone. (See Figure 9: Blyden at the Height of His Power.)

Blyden challenged white racial theorists who defined Africans as inferior and whose arguments were prejudiced. He considered African to be “distinct” not inferior, and he analyzed African culture within the context of African social experiences. Some people regarded Blyden’s views as controversial during his time, but today his work is seen by many as an important attempt to perform a holistic analysis of African society. His book is an African-centered interpretation of African culture. Blyden notes that:

The following pages have been written with the desire, if possible, of unfolding the Africa, who has received unmixed European culture, to himself, through a study of the customs of his fathers. . . It is now recognized on all hands that the usefulness, true progress, and happiness of the African, and the success of the European in Africa, depend largely, if not entirely, upon accurate knowledge on the part of the latter of the people and country which he is attempting to exploit. . . Until the close of the civil war in America the Slave Power (Black Power) had shaped the conceptions of the Western World as to the African, his character, possibilities, and destiny. He believes that, “Divines and
politicians, psychologists and scientists, exhausted the resources of their intellect in the endeavour to prove the Negro only quasi-human an excellent animal, but only an animal-born to serve a superior race.34

He describes how African writers during the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century have introduced a new school of thinkers on African racial questions.

Nevertheless, M. Finot in his research indicates that in all the essentials of real manhood, physical, intellectual and moral, the Negro is not inferior to any other section of the human race. The Negro is capable of equal development and progress under conditions similar to those which have contributed to the development of the more advanced portions of mankind. That is to say, the Negro is in no way less capable of playing well the part assigned to him in the great drama of the world’s life than any other section of humanity, granting him equal conditions of mental and moral growth. Finot comments that, “the conclusion forces itself upon us that there are no inferior and superior races, but only races living outside or within the influences of culture. The appearance of civilization and its evolution among certain white peoples, and within certain geographical latitude, is only the effect of circumstances.”35

Blyden explores the topic relating to the social and economic arrangement of the African. He discusses the arrangements which, “Evolved in the course of the centuries that the African has lived and thrived, generation after generation. And we must

34. Edward Wilmot Blyden, African Life and Customs (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1908), iii, 7-8.

premise that, we are dealing with the African pure and simple—the so-called Pagan African—the man untouched either by European or Asiatic influence.\footnote{Ibid., 10.} He points out the following: First, the family, which is in Africa, as everywhere else, is the basic unit of society. Every male and female marries at the proper age. Every woman is required and expects to perform her part of the function of motherhood, that is, to do her share in continuing the human race. Second, property: The land and the water are accessible to all. Nobody is in want of either, for work for food, or for clothing. Third, social life: This is communalistic or cooperative. All work for each and each works for all. Fourth, the tribes have been regulating every function of human life and the laws are known to all the members of the tribe, and justice is administered by the tribal chiefs in the presence of the whole people in the villages or town, where any violation of tribal law may have taken place. There is no need for Standing Armies. All the people of the village or town are jointly guardians and preservers of the peace. The foundation of the African family, and/or plural marriage, rests upon the will of the woman, and this operates to protect from abuse the functional work of the sex, and to provide that all women shall share normally in this work with a view to healthy posterity and an unfailing supply of the population.

Compared to European climatic conditions Blyden’s argument about African indigenous family and farm practices is that, “in the temperate regions the climatic conditions produce a periodical invigoration of exhausted nature. For six months in the year nature furnishes a close season when vegetable and animal life undergoes rest and
recuperation." But in Africa, while in the vegetable kingdom there are brief periods, when the rains cease, during which the leaves fall, the ground refuses to bring forth, and Nature compels rest, while in the animal kingdom, where man has introduced his inventions there is no rest; and it is difficult without artificial intervention for a first-class breed of animals to be produced.

In the text, African Life and Customs, Blyden reports that, “it is not generally known that the connection with this system there is among Africans a regular process of education for males and females, for a period of at least three years, to prepare them for life they are to follow, and the system under which they are to live.” This text perhaps sets the stage for Blyden’s commitment to education for the emigrants both male and female. Education also involves the teaching of traditions and customs of the indigenous people of both Liberia and Sierra Leone to the emigrants. For example, a very important custom involves the society for girls which goes by various names in different parts of Africa (Bundo in Sierra Leone neighborhood, and Suna further North among the Jollofs). The teachers are women only; it is usually the older women in the neighborhood who are selected for this office. Moreover, they are always women of experience. Instructions are given in everything which prepares a woman for her responsibility in the existing social order. The women are taught everything necessary to enable the young mothers perform the functions which are their position involves.


38. Ibid.
The women who impart these lessons are either married or aged widows, and unpaid. It is part of the communal work. These activities were identified as “Schools for Brides.”\textsuperscript{39} Africa has had these institutions from time immemorial. The Bundo society is a most ancient Order of Women, whose origin no one knows, and no one in any of the tribes can imagine a time when the society did not exist. All its officers are filled, and all its rites and ceremonies are performed; all its teachings also are imparted by women only. There are no male pupils or male teachers.

In the Bundo School, instruction is given about all the normal and abnormal diseases to which women are prone, especially as wives and mothers. Also the women receive training on all the known remedies for the prevention and alleviation of such diseases. As part of the prescribed course of training, the woman is prepared without extraneous aid, everywhere and at all times, in the bush or in the town, to take care of herself in any emergencies. The idea of males attending to females under delicate circumstances rarely occurs.

The Porroh Society is a similar Order for men. Some Europeans, missionaries and laymen, in Sierra Leone Protectorate and elsewhere, have been admitted to membership in the Porroh society. Blyden also describes the ‘Sociology of ‘Marriage,’ as a polygamous practice and one that Africans behold with respect.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 18.
CHAPTER V

THE LEGACY OF EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN

Revival of Pan-Africanism began with the African struggle for independence from European colonial rule. States that were ruled by the British and the United States used the term ‘Pan-Africanism,’ whereas leaders of the African States ruled by the French, Belgians, and the Spaniards used the term ‘Negritude’ to describe, teach and practice Pan-Africanism. Each of the movements for independence across Africa was shaped by local conditions, such as the specific grievances against the colonial regime; relations between ethnic groups, classes, and sexes; and particular experiences of colonial rule. In some colonies, independence was achieved by relatively peaceful, negotiated means, whereas in others, freedom from colonial rule came only after protracted, violent conflict. Dennis Lauman posits that, “nevertheless, we can identify a number of transformational ideologies that not only influenced the specific demands of independence struggles but also guided their rhetoric and organization. Chief among these were Pan-Africanism (Pan-Negroism) and Marxism and, for parts of the continent, Islam and Christianity.”¹ These three ideologies are concepts that Blyden used extensively in the re-Africanization philosophy, as the researcher has defined the term.

Political and Historical Context

The first colonies in Africa to win independence were in North Africa, starting with Egypt in 1922 even though the British maintained a military presence there until 1947. With the exception of Algeria, the remaining North African colonies became independent in the following decade: Libya in 1951 and Morocco, Tunisia as well as Sudan in 1965.

Before Edward Wilmot Blyden died in 1912, he had explored all of the North African colonies and influenced them through the teachings of the Negro identity, Christianity and Islam. Laumann indicates that, "a variety of ideologies, i.e., nationalist, communist, Islamic, influenced the independence movements in North Africa, where the earliest parties associated with each other, such as Tunisia’s Nationalist Destour Party, Egypt’s Communist party, and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, played key roles in the struggle against colonial rule."² All the African states had leaders who had been educated in Europe, so they knew that the struggles for independence would benefit their countries.

The first colony in Sub-Saharan Africa to win its independence was Ghana in 1957, and its example, and especially the rhetoric of President Nkrumah, inspired other anti-colonial movements throughout the Continent. Sierra Leone became an independent state in 1961, whereas Liberia won her independence and a republican status as early as 1847, the first before the colonial era. In North East Africa, Ethiopia had achieved independence roughly at the same time as Liberia before the colonial era,

². Ibid., 65.
but Liberia was more stable than Ethiopia until the revolutionary war that started in Liberia in the 1980s.

Indeed, Nkrumah emerged as the leader of a new, more militant generation of Pan-Africanists. Often frustrated by the discrimination that Africans faced dealing with Europeans, and particularly the prevailing ideology of racism of the time, these leaders sought to defend African culture in light of scorn and condemnation by European Christian missionaries in West Africa. This influence was most evident in the establishment of independent African churches, beginning in the 1860s especially in South Africa, where the desire for independence most fully developed into an ideology of resistance against alien rule. Dennis Laumann remarks that “concurrent with Ethiopianism was the concept of ‘African Personality’, which was first articulated by academic and politician Edward Blyden . . . . Edward Blyden was born on the Caribbean Island of St. Thomas but living most of his life in Liberia, Blyden employed the language of the time to argue that Africans constituted a “Great Race,” and the legacy of his ideas is evident in the words of Kwame Nkrumah.”

Further, Laumann declares that Nkrumah used Blyden’s ideas in making the speech at Ghana’s independent celebration:

At long last, the battle has ended! And thus Ghana, your beloved country is free forever. And yet again I want to take the opportunity to thank the chiefs and people of this country, the youth, and the farmers, the women who have so nobly fought and won the battle. Also I want to thank the valiant ex-service men who have so co-operated with me in this mighty task of freeing our country from foreign rule and imperialism . . . . I made it quite clear that from now on- today- we must change our attitudes, our minds, we must realize that from now on, we are no more a colonial but a free and independent people. But also, as I

3. Ibid.
pointed out, that also entails hard work. That New African is ready to fight his own battles and show that after all, the Black man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, that we are prepared to lay our foundation. I said in the assembly just minutes ago, I made a point that we are going to create our own ‘African Personality and Identity.’ It is the only way that we can show the world that we are ready for our own battles.

Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of Africa. Let us now fellow Ghanaians, let us now ask for God’s blessing and for only two seconds in your thousands and millions, I want to ask you to pause for one minute and give thanks to almighty God for having led us through our difficulties, imprisonments, hardships and suffering to have brought to the end of our troubles today. I am depending upon the millions of the country, and the chiefs and people, to help me reshape the destiny of this country. We are prepared to pick it up and make it a nation in the world. We know we are going to have difficult beginnings, but again, I’m relying upon your hard work. Seeing you in this... it doesn’t matter how far my eyes goes, I can see that you are here in your millions and my last warning to you is that you are to stand firm behind us so that we can prove to the world that when the African is given a chance he can show the world that he is somebody. We have awakened. We will not sleep any more. Today, from now on, there is a new African in the world!

This excerpt from the popularly known “Midnight Speech” neatly summarizes the fight against European colonial rule and the challenges facing newly independent African countries. The victory over colonialism, even in those colonies where Africans did not have to resort to violence, was a hard and difficult struggle, during which countless people were imprisoned and otherwise persecuted, one that was fought by ordinary men and women, such as farmers, traders, and veterans, but led by Western-educated elites like Nkrumah. The anti-colonial movement was a continuation of the resistance movements to fight against suppression, discrimination, and depravity of Africans, especially freed blacks on how to create their own African personality and identity in

4. Ibid., 62-63.
spite of being emigrants. The term re-Africanization has been substituted for Pan-Negroism and is viewed as a movement that was pioneered by Edward Wilmot Blyden. The anti-colonial movement was sparked not only by injustices that Africans face under European rule and natural desire of all humans for freedom from oppression but also by the inspiration of ideas and struggles particularly the shared experience of African peoples worldwide.

At a time when Africans around the world faced racism, segregation, and colonial rule particularly on the African continent, Nkrumah and the others took up the legacy of Edward Wilmot Blyden. They were determined to disprove those who doubted the ability of Africans to govern themselves, which was the prevailing European sentiment. They were also committed to assist other Africans who remained under colonial rule, such as those in the European settler colonies in Southern Africa. The Pan-African (Pan-Negro) movement would have died a natural death if in the early nineteenth century Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois had not embraced the legacy when they initially revived the legacy of Edward W. Blyden.

Marcus Garvey and the Back-to-Africa Movement: A Potency of Blyden

Marcus Garvey was significantly instrumental in the movement of the return to Africa. The movement he started was the Black Star Movement. This movement for the avocation of freed blacks returning to Africa was to start a “Sea Merchant Business” with the aim to have a fleet of ships running from Jamaica, via America, England and then to Africa. Marcus Garvey had studied Edward Blyden’s works, but distinctly preferred to adopt the term Pan-Africanism which Du Bois advocated rather than
Blyden’s distinct Pan-Negroism terminology. This business flourished until Garvey did not get full financial support.

Influenced by the writings of an earlier generation of Pan-Africanists, as well as the African-American leader Booker T. Washington, Garvey first founded the Universal Negro Improvement Society (UNIA) in 1914 in Jamaica and then in 1918 in the United States he founded the influential newspaper *Negro World*. Based in New York, Garvey attracted a wide following while advocating a return to Africa for those in the Diaspora, eulogizing the creation of Black-owned businesses, and promoting pride in African identity, history, and culture, especially in Blyden’s re-Africanization processes.

At its height, UNIA had exceptional memberships and chapters throughout Africa and the Diaspora. Garvey also had a shipping business called the Black Star Line which was intended to ferry Africans in the Diaspora back to the Continent. Although scholars debate the success of Garvey’s schemes and criticize what some considered to be flamboyant aspects of his personality, such as his penchant for presenting himself as a monarch, his influence on colonial Africa was widespread. UNIA organizers travelled to West and South Africa, “Distributing *Negro World* (which was banned by colonial authorities), and establishing local chapters throughout both regions of the continent.”5 Indeed, historians have discovered reports by European colonial officials which raised concerns about Garveyism and rumors about the coming of a Black King to liberate African rural communities. Many of the first generation of African leaders, including Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta as well as early anti-colonial figures like Harry Thuku,

5. Ibid., 66.
Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta as well as early anti-colonial figures like Harry Thuku, had been strongly influenced by Garveyism. Garvey was a disciple of Edward Wilmot Blyden’s ideology of Pan-Patriotism.

The other towering figure of the twentieth century Pan-Africanism was W. E. B. Du Bois, the African American intellectual and activist. Dennis Laumann explained the function of Du Bois as someone who had founded one of the earliest civil rights organizations in America, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and who—toward the end of his life—became a member of the American Communist Party. Du Bois also advocated pride in African identity and unselfishly connected the struggle of the blacks to those of other colonized Nations. Further, Du Bois viewed capitalism as the cause of oppression, which may be hard to escape from as Garvey argued. Du Bois understood segregation and colonialism as inherent in capitalism. After all, according to Lenin, imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, and thus he viewed the struggle against colonial rule in Africa and segregation in the United States and oppression globally as a fight against capitalism, one that would be won only with the transformation to socialism.

The Pan-Africanist Congress was introduced in 1919 in Paris, as a means of advancing the ideology of Pan-Africanism, and Du Bois was recognized as the leader of the movement. At these meetings, which were held outside of Africa, often in the capitals of European imperial powers, Africans from throughout the Continent and across the Diaspora met to discuss the plight of black people and to generate petitions

6. Ibid.
demanding the end of abuses of colonial rule and segregation. The most influential and largest of these congresses took place under the leadership of Du Bois in 1945 in Manchester, England, where many recently formed Africa Political Parties, trade unions, and student associations were represented. It may seem ironic that Pan-Africanism thrived in the metropolises, but it was in cities like London and Paris where African workers, students and intellectuals of diverse origin met, learned about one another’s struggles, and forged a common African identity. In attendance at the Manchester Congress were future African leaders like Nkrumah and Kenyatta, who as students abroad were exposed to the writings of Washington, Du Bois and others. The spirit of Blyden was believed to be present with these leaders as they followed his teachings and adopted them as a legacy with which to continue the fight against oppression and segregation.

Contributions to Culture, Religion and African Family Life

To most African-Americans, it seemed as though America was finally living up to its national creed and becoming concerned about the plight of African people. In reality, this change across the Southern landscape resulted from African-Americans registering to vote in a way that benefitted them. From the text, *Returning Home: A Century of African-American Repatriation*, the author Robert Johnson identified Edward Wilmot Blyden’s potency in helping freed blacks to repatriate to Africa. Now he is helping readers to see that “progress did not result from benevolence. Many European-Americans were still unsure as to whether African-Americans should even
remain in America."\(^7\) Even Abraham Lincoln, the author of the Emancipation Proclamation, asked Ben Butler, a Massachusetts politician, to develop a plan for deporting freed blacks. Many African-Americans, unaware of Lincoln's true feelings about their destiny hailed him as their liberator. The murder of Lincoln on the heels of Emancipation Proclamation served to reinforce even further the myth that Lincoln fought the Civil War to free them. This inaccurate belief that the President of the United States had placed his life in jeopardy in order to ensure freedom for African people endeared many to America. As a result interest in Liberia was displaced by devotion to Lincoln and the Republican Party.

**Culture**

It was in the context of an economically powerless Republic that, "Blyden had to plant the seeds of African Nationalism."\(^8\) Blyden, considered the father of West African Nationalism, developed a philosophical rationale for repatriation that projected Africa as the center of the African person's universe (Figure 10 illustrates European Territorial Claims to Africa on the eve of the 1884 Berlin Conference). Blyden, though fully aware of the motives of the Colonialization Society, believed the organization was the most effective vehicle to achieve his goal of African repatriation to Liberia. He also believed that every race of people commanded respect from others by being part of a strong nation, and that for Africans to gain respect, whether in America or West Indies,


\(^8\) Ibid.
they must develop and support the Continent of Africa. Blyden went further to say that, “nationalists were as natural as creation, and that Africans were divinely predestined to repatriate to Africa and build a strong nation.”

Central to Blyden’s concept of a strong nation was a fervent race pride. For Africa to regenerate itself, Blyden believed Africans must develop positive attitudes toward themselves. Blyden’s teachings were badly needed as many leaders of the Liberian government believed that because of their light complexion, “They were socially superior to the mass of the people. Blyden on the other hand, taught that the darkest of the race constituted the purest and that the more mixed the race became, the more degenerate African people became. Therefore, he envisioned a Liberia consisting of pure Black people.”

To that end, he urged the

![Figure 9. European Territorial Claims to Africa on the Eve of the Berlin Conference, 1884](image_url)

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.
American Colonization Society to send only pure Blacks to the Republic. Blyden realized that Africans had to resurrect their self-image particularly after the pervasive attempts by missionaries during the nineteenth century to portray Africans as heathens and savages. Many missionaries taught the Africans that if they wanted to be saved by God, they had to abandon their inferior traditional customs.

Blyden was trained to be a missionary to the people, so he started to develop his theories about racial purity at an early age in the West Indies. This theory is what this researcher termed, The Philosophy of Re-Africanization of Freed Blacks as applied in the West Indies (Blyden’s birth place), in Liberia and in Sierra Leone. The society he saw in the West Indies approximated that of Liberia to the extent that many of the people who were afforded social status by the colonialists had light skins. Blyden held disdain for the light-skinned West Indians and unsparingly lashed out at those in Liberia. Blyden taught that the greatest attribute of African people was to be pure black, of unmixed African parents, and to have a love for Africa.

He thought that as long as African people remained in close contact with European culture, they would lose their sense of self-worth. Blyden’s experiences of self-worth are reported by Johnson in the text, Returning Home: A Century of African-American Repatriation. According to Johnson, Edward Blyden was afraid that the Africans in Liberia would lose their self-worth if they remained in close contact with European culture. Johnson observes:

From the lessons he everyday receives, the Negro unconsciously imbibes the conviction that to be a great man he must be like the white man. He is not bought up . . . to be the champion, the equal, the comrade of the white man, but his imitator, his ape. . . . To be himself is to be nothing . . . .
Every intelligent Negro, in the lands of exile, must feel that he walks upon the face of God’s earth a physical and moral incongruity.  

However, Blyden did not believe that African people would always be ignorant of themselves, but that the inevitable redemption of Africa would lead to the rise of African people throughout the world. He saw the interest in Africa and repatriation as a manifestation of God’s will to create a strong Africa. Therefore, he urged Africans to partake of the glorious moment of African development: “We need some African power, some great center of the race where our physical pecuniary and intellectual strength may be collected.” 11 In order for “African Power” to become a reality, he envisioned a fundamental change in the minds of African people in Africa and America. In order for the Africans, who had been in America, to establish their correct relationship with Africa and its people, they must purge themselves of poisonous western values and settle in Africa.

Religion

Blyden believed that, “The African traditions closely paralleled the teachings of Jesus.” 12 In Western societies he saw contradiction between the principles of socialism that Jesus professed and materialistic individualism. He even asserted that religion


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.
originated in Africa, and that Africa would have a critical role to play in teaching righteousness to the world with the proclamation that:

Africa may yet prove to be the spiritual conservatory of the world. . . . When civilized nations in consequences of their wonderful development, shall had their spiritual perceptions darkened and their spiritual susceptibilities blunted through the agency of a captivating and absorbing materialism, it may be that they may have to resort to Africa to recover some of the simple elements of faith. . . Perhaps there is no people whom the religious instinct is deeper and more universal than among Africans. And, in view of the materializing tendencies of the age, it may yet come to pass that when, in Europe, God has gone out of date . . . or when that time arrives in the development of the great Aryan race . . . when the belief in god will be as the tales with which old women frighten children, when the world will be a machine, the ether a gas, and God will be a farce; then earnest inquiries after truth leaving the seats of science and the “higher civilization” will take themselves to Africa to learn lessons of faith and piety; for “Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.”

However, Blyden did not believe that Africans alone possessed divine favor, but that all mankind had the potential to be good. Although Edward Blyden received training in the Christian tradition, he respected Mohammed just as much as he did Jesus. After his voyage to Egypt and the Middle East in 1866, he acquired knowledge of the Arab language and the Muslim religion.

Nevertheless, he saw Christianity playing a significant role in the development of nationalism in Africa. However, the role of Christianity was to inspire the African with a feeling of preeminence in God’s plan for the rejuvenation of mankind. No doubt Blyden saw himself as an African Moses compelling his people to leave their oppressors and build for themselves in their own land. If they stayed in America, they

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would eventually lose their African virtues and adopt the ways of the oppressors.

Repatriation was, therefore, the only answer to both spiritual and physical degradation of black people in America. Blyden says that:

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\text{We have been dragged into the depths of degradation. We have been taught a cringing servility. We have been drilled into contentment with the most undignified circumstances. Our finer sensibilities have been blunted. There has been an almost utter extinction of all that delicacy of feeling and sentiment that adorns character. The temperament of our souls has become harder and coarser, so that we can walk forth here, in this land of indignities, in ease and in complacency while our complexion furnishes ground for every species of social insult which an intolerant prejudice may choose to inflict.}^{15}
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Edward Blyden undoubtedly qualified as one of the most original African thinkers of the nineteenth century. As with most repatriates of the period he was sponsored by the American Colonization Society, but he did not allow those who controlled his finances to influence his philosophy. In a period when many of the African leaders had not come to any firm conclusions about African people’s destiny, Blyden offered a clear and convincing philosophical basis for repatriation. He recognized that Africans in Africa had a role to play in the larger world that could never be realized when a portion of its people were scattered around the world. In that sense, he was one of the earliest repatriates who had a Pan-African perspective. He envisioned the day when Africa would be strong, respected and loved by all African people. Johnson indicates that “Before he [Blyden] died in 1912 he had already left African people of the world a rich legacy and a clear challenge. For him, African consciousness consisted of a richness

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and uniqueness that add new dimensions to world culture." From his legacy of the theory of national philosophy, it was clear that he might have realized that the philosophy could be a failure, as he further predicted that the philosophy had a little chance of success in Liberia.

The national philosophy of Edward Blyden did in fact have limited success in Liberia. Essentially two forces prevented the young Republic from adopting an ideology that would give it a philosophical basis for its existence. Johnson posits that, "the first [was] caste discrimination demonstrated by the elite class toward the indigenous Africans. These settlers even engaged in the military conquest of the interior of Africa in complicity with the beliefs held by nineteenth-century European explorers that African land could be claimed by discovery." These two factors continued throughout the 1900s. It started first with the Hut Tax which was introduced first in Sierra Leone by the British, and it spread across the other states of West Africa through the indirect rule system. It was in 1898 that this 'Great Hut Tax War' between the indigenous Africans and the freed blacks, whom they believed had assisted the white man's colonial government to impose a tax, fee on their own property.

The pursuit of territorial gains invariably led to wars between Africans in the interior and the settlers. Unfortunately the indigenous Africans were easily defeated through the guns of the settlers and colonial powers. Some ethnic groups, such as the

16. Ibid.

Gola, Grebo, and Kru however resisted the settlers and colonial powers for a while as a result of their guerilla warfare tactics, but they were soon overpowered. These conquests led to the deepening of suspicion and hatred between the groups. Even the twentieth-century hostility between the two groups remains considerable. The following letter from an African in Kpelle University, Liberia, epitomized the division that continued to prevail in Liberia. He states:

We students had to elect a class president. Some of the Americo-Liberians got together and said they didn't want anyone from the tribes. So we interior students got together, and we agreed to select a Gio boy. We felt we had a majority. These people are too hard in their hearts, they cannot change... there will be a civil war. They think so much of themselves and who are they. You know, they think they are better than us, but they are sons of slaves, they were slaves here in Africa before they went to America, that is how they were sent.  

This report stands as a witness that Liberia was an access coast land territory for the transportation of slaves to Elmina and other ports of no return (Slave Pens) prior to being shipped to the New World.

**Economic Setbacks**

The second factor that prevented Liberia from adopting the national philosophy of Edward Blyden was economic. After the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation, interest in emigration among Europeans and Africans declined. As a result, as interest among whites sifted from Liberia, so did the finances that supported the colony. In addition, the new Republic failed to stimulate economic growth. The bulk of the economic aid received by the Republic came from Great Britain in the form of long-term loans. Liberia remained dependent upon Britain until 1908 when it sought

18. Ibid.
economic aid from the U.S. government. During this period the greatest need as seen by the country's leaders was economic aid and expertise. Blyden brought neither when he came to the Republic.

The sixty-one years of independence from 1847 to 1908 was a time of grave economic uncertainty for Liberia. Immediately after independence, the nation had to procure loans from European bankers at a high interest rate in order to set up its military. In addition, the political leadership embezzled large sums of money. President Edward Roye was impeached in 1871 for conspiracy to embezzle state funds. The fledging Republic constantly faced the possibility of bankruptcy and, had it not been for loans, the country probably would have fallen into a state of economic destabilization.

Independence fell upon the shoulders of the leaders before any of them had an opportunity to prepare for it; therefore, the results were disastrous. In an atmosphere of economic instability, the nationalist philosophy of Edward Blyden would have meant a radical reapportionment of the meager resources that existed in the Republic. The integration of the indigenous Africans within the Republic would have required more equitable distribution of the national wealth, which would have affected the social position of the Republic's leaders. Social class divisions and privilege constituted another factor that had a bearing on the future of African Nationalism in Liberia.

Essentially the Republic had to choose between economic independence and neocolonialism. The choice was easy for the leadership that was more concerned with maintaining its privileged positions than with charting a separate economic path involving more reliance upon indigenous Africans. As a result of this type of attitude
among the political leaders, the move into neocolonial camp was inevitable. Blyden's role on the economics of the Republic may be summarized as follows:

Liberia is not an independent nation at all; but a poor miserably mockery- a burlesque of a government- a pitiful dependency on the American Colonizationist, the Colonization Board at Washington city in the District of Columbia, being the Executive and Government, and the principal man, called president in Liberia, being the echo-a mere parrot.19

Robert Johnson Jr. concludes that "economic dependency can be directly related to the failure of Liberia's leaders to forgo Western aid and adopt the nationalist concepts of Edward Blyden."20 As a result of this failure, Liberia never became an economically independent African state that could have been a symbol of African freedom, but instead it became a neo-colony of American economic interests. Edward Blyden's philosophy of nationalism was not totally adopted by the Liberian Republic mainly because of his disdain of the whites and mulattos he called the oppressors.

In Sierra Leone, Blyden attempted to put into practice his ideas on race. He inspired among a small group of educated Africans an ethnocentric movement which was characterized by a revolt against attempts at Europeanization of Africans. This movement placed emphasis on racial differences, and the assertion that there was need to develop, "The special attributes of the Negro race, and to maintain a distinctive

19. Ibid., 206.
20. Ibid., 207.
African culture.” These teachings, this writer has previously termed the Re-Africanization of the freed blacks who emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Blyden’s ideology was not an attempt to get rid of West Africans or Europeans. Instead, it was one of Blyden’s major goals to persuade the British to extend their influence and jurisdiction in West Africa and thereby help to pacify, unite and develop this vast territory—an imperialist role that Liberia had been unable to fulfill.

The existing condition which favored Blyden’s fostering of ethnocentrism was the tension that existed between the African pastors and the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) over the control and management of the native pastorate and the rampant sectarian rivalry in the colony. Under the efforts of Blyden, this tension within the C.M.S. erupted into an open controversy and assumed a wider significance when some lay Africans joined the issue on the side of the clerics. The Africans charged the European missionaries with creating unnecessary sectarian divisions among them by showing contempt for African customs and institutions, and destroying the wholesome base of African society. They claimed, according to Lynch, that “these evils created by European influence could be eliminated by setting up an independent, non-sectarian African Church, and a secular University, run by Negroes themselves.” Blyden’s actions and influence in Sierra Leone can best be understood against the background of two pertinent decisions taken in England. The first was in the forward looking plan of Henry Venn, the honorary secretary of the C.M.S. from 1841 until his death in 1873.


22. Ibid., 85.
The very first Secondary School for Boys in West Africa was founded by the C.M.S. in Freetown in 1845. It was the Sierra Leone Grammar School, from which this researcher is one of the school’s products. Following the Boys’ School was the Girls’ School, The Annie Walsh Memorial Secondary School for Girls, founded in 1849.

Blyden and other African Americans insisted that giving only primary school education to Africans was a form of oppression of the African intellect. The secondary schools were set up to bridge the gap that existed between the basic elementary school and the secondary school foundations necessary for preparations for College or University work. The plan suggested by Henry Venn was for the creation of self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating native churches. The Report of the Select Parliamentary Committee of 1865 recommended that, “future British policy in West Africa should be directed towards encouraging the natives in the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to them the administration of all Government . . .” 23 Under Venn’s plan, C.M.S. missionaries were to establish the nuclei of Christian communities, provide them with African leadership, and then withdraw to repeat the process elsewhere, while continuing to exercise a moral influence ab extra. To carry out this delicate and difficult task Venn gave practical instructions to his missionaries. The salient features were that they were to study the national character of the people among whom they worked and to show the utmost respect for national peculiarities.

23. Ibid.
Moreover, Venn like Blyden assumed that there were irrepressible race
distinctions and warned missionaries that these would rise in intensity with the progress
of the mission, but they were not to react as Lynch observed by, “Charging the natives
with presumption and ingratitude, or by standing upon their British prestige; they were
to expect that as the native church assumes a national character it will supersede the
denominational distinctions which are now introduced by Foreign Missionaries.”

However, the wise policy and advice of Venn did not find favor with European
missionaries; in Sierra Leone, as elsewhere, missionary work fell short of what he had
recommended. Venn had provided Africans with the grounds for criticizing European
missionary shortcomings and had set forth the goal of a national independent church.

In Sierra Leone on All Saints Day, 1861, “A Native church pastorate was
formed with nine pastors in charge of many parishes, but contrary to Venn’s
recommendations, policy remained under direct European supervision. It was left to
enlightened Africans to attempt to bring to pass Venn ‘s goal of an independent African
Church which they had adopted as their own.”

It is significant that in a sermon on
May 1871, during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the native Church
pastorate, J. H. Davies, one of the African pastors, emphasized the need for an
independent African Church. Davies said, “We are pleading for an institution . . . which
alone can bring true liberty to the soul and body of man . . . we request you to aim at

24. Hollis R. Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912

25. Ibid.
establishing at Sierra Leone a pure Native Church... not only for our own and
children's use, but for the use of Africa at large." In like manner, the
recommendations of the 1865 Parliamentary Committee had tended to encourage
greater African assertion in their own affairs, and although the British Government did
not find it convenient to implement the recommendations, they affected the thinking of
colonial Governors in British West Africa for at least a decade.

Thus, during his governorship in Sierra Leone (1868-72), Sir Arthur E.
Kennedy implemented a policy of appointing qualified Africans in preference to
Europeans to vacant government positions. Among these new appointments was, "That
of the Reverend George Nicole to the colonial chaplaincy of the Gambia—the first to be
appointed to such a position." In a letter of gratitude to Kennedy, the African pastors
of Sierra Leone saw the appointment as an era in the history of West Africa, possibly
leading to the end of racial prejudices. In addition, Kennedy had increased African
representation on the Legislative Council from one to two, and shortly before his
governorship ended, successfully prompted educated Africans to form a Sierra Leone
Native association to promote their own interests. Educated West Africans had
immediately endorsed the recommendations of the 1865 Parliamentary Committee.

One of the most articulate endorsements was from James Africanus Horton, a
Sierra Leonean medical doctor trained at the University of Edinburgh, who became an
admirer and friend of Blyden while on a visit to Monrovia in 1866. Horton described

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 87.
the recommendations as a 'Grand Conception' and looked forward to the time when West African nationalists would occupy a prominent place in the world’s history, as well as command a voice in the Councils of Nations. Blyden cited the recommendations of the 1865 committee and their reputed tradition of humanitarianism in West Africa in his attempts to persuade the British to extend their jurisdiction in this area. Based on Liberia’s efforts, Blyden envisaged them culminating ultimately in the formation of a large West African state which he hoped would command world-wide attention.

Blyden wanted to continue his traditional teachings of re-Africanization to the freed blacks.

On fleeing Liberia, Blyden went to Sierra Leone and after a few weeks there left for England at Salisbury Court, London, the headquarters of the C.M.S. Blyden met Venn, the productive representative of the liberal British evangelistic and humanitarian movement, and a man much revered by Christian West Africans. Blyden was interviewed by the C.M.S. Committee and persuaded its members to agree to pursue the Society’s work and influence into the interior. Highly impressed with Blyden’s ability as a linguist, members of the committee offered him a position in this capacity in the C.M.S. at Sierra Leone, and regarded him as a key figure in interior work. In preparation for this position, Blyden was to teach Arabic to select African students at Fourah Bay College, where he studied and reduced to writing the Fula language.

Blyden left England in early August with great enthusiasm for his new job with high hopes for the results. Once within the C.M.S. he had hoped to reform its operation by seeking to persuade European missionaries to show greater respect and appreciation for
African customs and institutions, to accelerate the process of delegation of ecclesiastical authority to train Africans and to extend their activities into the interior. By merely taking up his appointment, Blyden created a crisis within the C.M.S. at Sierra Leone. Lynch states that:

Henry Cheetham, the dynamic new Bishop of Sierra Leone, a man with a low opinion of African ability and with no patience for the ‘pretensions’ of the African pastors towards ecclesiastical independence, was strongly opposed to his appointment, partly because the Negro Scholar was already known to have been adversely critical of Christian missions, while launching the influence of Islam, partly because rumor had reached Sierra Leone from Liberia that Blyden had committed adultery with Roye’s wife and had been forced to flee the Negro Republic.  

In contrast to the cool reception given by Cheetham and other European missionaries, Blyden, no stranger among them, was enthusiastically received by the African pastors and educated laymen, “Who ascribed charges of immorality against him to the machinations of his political enemies.” Moreover, Edward James Roye won the election and became the president of Liberia in 1870.

These political machinations were evident earlier in Liberia where Blyden had escaped the plight of being lynched by the mulattoes with whom he had never reached a compromise. This is the reason Blyden had to go to Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, in self-exile, and later returned to Liberia when things calmed down. He returned to Sierra Leone, and used it as a base of operation until his death in 1912. The statue of Blyden has been erected in front of the William Wilberforce Memorial Hall

29. Ibid.
named in memory of the philanthropist William Wilberforce. The name was changed after Sierra Leone achieved a Republican status under the stalwart politician, Trade Unionist, and Pan-Africainist, the late President Siaka Probyn Stevens in 1970.

In the interim, Blyden continued to show interest in linking Sierra Leone with its hinterland, and he conducted an expedition for this purpose. Even before his suspension from the C.M.S. mission Blyden had urged Governor Arthur Kennedy to permit the Liberian Benjamin Anderson, “To explore the territory between the colony and the headwaters of the Niger. Blyden’s letter was forwarded by Kennedy and created much interest in the Colonial Office... [and was labeled] as being “Very interesting and a good specimen of what the Negro can attain to, and Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary, thought it important enough to have a copy sent to Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary.” Blyden succeeded in arousing curiosity about himself at the Colonial Office; however, no action was taken on his letter. Two months after his first letter, Blyden offered to explore the hinterland of Sierra Leone in the interest of geography, ethnology, history and commerce. This time his plea succeeded and Blyden “was officially appointed by Governor Kennedy to go on a mission of Peace and friendship to the Kings and Chiefs of the Falaba and Sangara Country.” Blyden began his expedition from Freetown on January 6 of 1872, determined to show the British why they ought to extend their influence into the interior.

31. Ibid.
After three days travel he arrived at Kambia, a trading town of considerable importance situated on the south bank of the Great Scarcies River. The Muslim Chief Almami Al-Hay, and his leading men, according to Lynch indicated that:

the interior was in a very unsettled state as a result of a protracted war between runaway slaves led by Bilali, a native of Kissy Country, and a slave-holding combination led by Almami Mumineh, Chief of Kukumah in the Susu Country. Blyden reported to Kennedy that the King of Kambia was anxious for the British Government to restore the peace and security of the country, and thus pave the way for the revival of trade; while the King requested, too, that schools be set up in his town for the instruction of children in the English language.32

After two days of further travel, Blyden reached Kukumah, the headquarters of Mumineh, and where Lynch reported that he assured the Muslim chief that, "were he to desist from his aggressive pro-slavery policy, the Government of Sierra Leone would enter into a treaty of friendship with him."33 Mumineh, whose resources had been exhausted by the war, agreed that the Government of Sierra Leone should act as mediator in the unsettled dispute. Blyden urged the acting Governor John J. Kendall, to act swiftly on this first ever specific expression of Mumineh for peace. He claimed that if the war was settled the whole region would be opened to a specific lucrative trade. To guarantee future peace and prosperity, Blyden suggested that the area be colonized by Africans from Sierra Leone or the Western Hemisphere with men willing to engage in agriculture and of moderate training. In his next dispatch, Blyden again sought to impress the governor with the potential richness of the country and reported that most of

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 90.
Illicit trade was fertile prairie land where thousands of cattle might easily be fed and fatten and tropical vegetables could be produced in unlimited quantity. Iron ore of the greatest purity was widely distributed, and Blyden's party had seen several furnaces where large quantities of that useful metal were produced.

As a prerequisite to the development of this area, Blyden recommended first the construction of good common roads and later the development of railroads. According to Lynch, Blyden assured government leaders that, "the terrain would present no major engineering difficulties. He insisted, optimistically, that the financial outlay for the development of the area need not be great, but that it would enrich the shareholders... and develop to an extent incomprehensible, the commercial importance of Sierra Leone." 34 From Kukumah, Blyden's expedition passed in a northerly direction through the trading towns of Ganjah and Sumatra, and thence in an easterly direction into territory terrorized by an impudent war-like Muslim people: the Houbous.

Because of the disordered state of this territory, Blyden cited another reason for the pacification and development of the area by the British. Blyden reached Falaba on March 1, 1812, after an eventful journey through hitherto untraversed territory. On behalf of the Sierra Leone Government, Blyden and the King reached an understanding of the willingness for Falaba to be under the protection of the British. 35 In his official report Blyden again made a strong plea for the establishment of a vast protectorate over the hinterland of Sierra Leone by appealing to the humanitarian and commercial

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 91.
instincts of the British. First, he stressed the need of the interior for civilized contact via a route adopted by the interior accessible from Sierra Leone. No foreigner had ever traversed it. Blyden described the people, as a rule, were besotted pagans, entirely at large from the influence of Mohammedanism. Indolence has long been their habit. They lived together by the labor of their slaves and extorting heavy taxes from the poor interior traders who passed through their towns. The ordinary instincts of human nature for planned growth and improvement have not been developed by them. They existed for ages under conditions altogether incompatible with human progress. He dared the British Government, to accept the challenge of developing the area when he stated:

A great work devolves upon the Government of Sierra Leone- a work with which the commercial prosperity of the colony and the civilization of millions are connected. England stands foremost among nations of as the energetic promoter of whatever concerns the welfare of the African continent. Her colonial possessions on this coast and her commercial and moral ascendancy especially qualify her through her agents . . . to contribute largely towards rescuing tribes accessible to her influence from their present abject condition and assist them to take part in the work of the world's progress.36

This method of protecting areas of the hinterlands, culminated in the amalgamation of the hinterlands and the colonies. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, especially the capital cities of Monrovia and Freetown where the colonies and the hinterlands became protected territories of the British. The method of indirect rule instituted by the British was developed in Sierra Leone and Liberia, West Africa, and it was later expanded throughout the states that were colonized by the British, in their ongoing creation of the British Empire. The Governor of the state representing the King

36. Ibid.
or the Queen always resides in the Forts (Governor’s residence) in the capital city, and in the hinterlands, the native Kings and or Paramount Chiefs, and sub-chiefs were supervised by the District Commissioners representing the Governor. This was also developed into what is known as the Native Administration with tribal laws and bylaws.

Moreover, Blyden was afraid of being lynched in Liberia when he was falsely accused of adultery through political machination, so he fled to Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone Blyden was able to reach the hinterland of the country, and worked with the local tribes there especially the Susus, Madingoes and the Fulanies, (commonly called the Fulbies). These particular areas later expanded into the territories of present-day French Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Blyden had also worked for Britain, the United States and France in demarcating their various territories, Sierra Leone, Liberia and French Guinea, in West Africa, even before the scramble for Africa, and the Berlin West African Conference of 1884-1885, leading to the partition of Africa were initiated.

The recapture of slaves by the British naval ships along the West African coast included the Fullahs, Madingoes and Susus in the central area of the capital city of Freetown where they existed variously in Susu Town, Fullah Town, and Madingoe Town. He continued his work of teaching and disseminating his philosophy of Re-Africanization, and practicing a nationalist ideology with the indigenous people of the hinterland and the African Americans (freed blacks) in the capital city. Despite his suspension from the C.M.S. at Sierra Leone, Blyden appealed to the missionary societies to extend their operations into the interior. He wrote to Venn, “I think that a Christian missionary would be welcomed at Falaba; and it would be an important center
for the aggressive operations of the Church of Christ. I beg most earnestly to call the attention of the C.M.S. to Kambia and Falaba as important outposts and strategic points in the great warfare which is to restore the kingdom of this world to their legitimate heir."37 But this carefully phrased appeal, too, met with no response.

Paradoxically, although Blyden invited the missionaries to extend their operations into the interior, he remained highly critical of their activities on the Coast. Before he left for the interior, he had given a clear indication that his clashes with European missionaries were by no means at an end. On his return from the interior Blyden found unexpected support for his nationalist ideas from the new Governor John Pope-Hennessy, who had succeeded Kennedy in February 1872. Pope Hennessy was a highly controversial Irish Catholic who, as an Irish member of the British House of Commons, and as Governor of Labuan, had established a reputation for espousing the cause of the underprivileged. Lynch reports that, "He continued this aspect of his career in Sierra Leone: although his was an interim governorship which lasted only one year, he proved himself to be the most enthusiastic exponent of the recommendations of the 1865 Parliamentary Committee by his strong and open support for Africa aspirations."38 Meanwhile, in Freetown, Blyden began his newspaper which was meant to herald a new departure. It was the first newspaper in Sierra Leone which was designed to serve 'the race purpose'. Its very title, The Negro, hitherto used in Sierra Leone only as a term of abuse, was intended to promote racial unity and solidarity. The strong objection which

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38. Ibid.
was in fact registered against the title was anticipated and rebutted in the first issue. It has been called the *Negro* because it was intended to represent and defend the interest of the Negro through its affiliated branches whether or not they were on the African continent or elsewhere. Blyden used his stay in Sierra Leone and what seemed like favorable circumstances as an opportunity to advance the interest of his race. However, he met with limited tangible results due to his ambitious program, comprised of an independent African Church, a secular University, and the extension of Sierra Leone’s rule over its hinterland. The success or failure of Blyden’s program depended wholly for its implementation on the support and co-operation of the British Government and the C.M.S.

Despite the sympathetic gestures of such Governors as Kennedy and Pope-Hennessy, the British Government whose policy in West Africa was guided by the strictest parsimony, never sought a well-defined or self-sufficient populace, nor much less, to increase its imperial responsibilities in West Africa. No serious attempt had even been made to implement Venn’s Policy and there was little or no likelihood of such an attempt being made after Blyden’s death. Further, the support which Boyden received was confined to a small group of educated Africans, primarily successful members of the Receptive Group. Blyden’s movement had no ‘mass support’ and there was certainly never a chance of generating adequate funds for the support of an independent African Church or University.

The United Methodist Church African–American bishops in the U.S., together with the African bishops, organized themselves and were able to establish a Pan-
African Independent University in Zimbabwe South East Africa, which was chartered in 1992. Zimbabwe was the safest African state free from the revolutionary wars that were going on in Africa, prior to the breakdown of the apartheid systems in South Africa. As Lynch comments, “The ethnocentrism which Boyden inspired is significant as marking the first major revolt in West Africa against western cultural dominance, and the beginning of cultural nationalism—the most characteristic form of African assertion in the nineteenth-Century.”39 This major revolt in West Africa against western cultural dominance was transformed into the Pan-African Movement in various forms from West Africa to East Africa, Central Africa and South Africa to fight against Apartheid. This Movement’s activities led educated Africans to lead the less fortunate citizens to fight for their independence. It was anticipated that the fight for independence meant that the citizens would enhance their own self-respect and self-worth, as they developed their own definition of liberation, managed their own affairs, and created their own African personality and identity.

The Last Five Years of Edward Wilmot Blyden’s Life 1907-1912

The last five years of Edward Wilmot Blyden’s life in Sierra Leone, West Africa, constitute an essential framework in defining the rich legacy he left behind. Hollis Lynch explains that, “it was Blyden’s own effort at ‘unfolding the African’ through a study of the customs of his fathers, and also of assisting the European

political overlord of ruling in Africa, to arrive at a 'proper appreciation of conditions' was made in 1908 with the publication of his work, *African Life and Customs*, which had first appeared as a series of articles in *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. Interestingly, Blyden in his old age (See Figure 11, Blyden as an Old Man) had become increasingly estranged from the younger generation of educated West Africans due to his conservative cultural nationalism coupled with his opposition to what he considered a premature challenge to European political over-lordship. While educated Africans had no wish to lose their African heritage they found it difficult to support Blyden in his strong emphasis on the need to retain traditional culture.

According to Lynch, the younger generation of educated Africans, “Saw much in western culture which appealed to them, as exemplified, paradoxically, in the life of Blyden himself, the most westernized of West Africans.” Blyden was content, too, that Africans should submit uncomplainingly to European political rule and actually dubbed as ingratitude African agitation for greater representation, and their protests against growing discrimination in the European administration of colonies. His estrangement in the views of Blyden and the young politically conscious West Africans can be, “Illustrated in their attitude to the exclusion of African doctors from West African Medical Service after 1902 and to the South African Act of Union in 1910.” African physicians were excluded from entering the West African Medical Service

40. Ibid., 104.
41. Ibid., 241.
42. Ibid., 242.
because of the lack of confidence in their abilities and skills to provide appropriate medical care to British officers and their families. Moreover, in the colonies proper, the Colonial Office had, by the late 1890's, decided against appointing Africans to the highest medical positions; further, they were paid at a lower rate than Europeans, the most junior of whom was regarded as their senior. Africans had naturally protested against this and other blatant discriminations in the Colonial service, but Blyden felt that there was no justification for their protest.

Figure 10. Blyden as an Old Man, circa 1910

The South African Union Act had given independence to South Africa under minority rule but had failed on many important issues to protect the interests of the indigenous Africans. West Africans voiced their protests about the Act in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* as reported by Lynch: “The South African Union Act has sent a shock throughout the whole British Empire. It has raised a solid doubt in the minds of the 360 millions of British subjects who are not of European descent, concerning the
ultimate intentions of 60 million of British subjects, who are of European descent."\textsuperscript{43}

This discrimination against Africans everywhere on their Continent prompted the\textit{ News} to call for the formation of a British West African Civil Rights Defense Association for the purpose of seeing that Africans secure 'fair play'; and for the "Conversion of Fourah Bay College into a West African University which would train up sons of Africa . . . to become the rulers and governors of the west African nations and of the Commonwealth of West Africa . . . embracing all British West African territories."\textsuperscript{44}

On the other hand, a 'Marxist' correspondent of a newspaper called on the British West African Colonies to adopt his program for obtaining 'freedom' in three stages:

\begin{quote}
The first was to be one of 'moral intellectual and Industrial preparation. The second would see a 'rigorous boycott of foreign goods and a bloody war.' What was needed, he urged, was propaganda and suffering at the beginning, heroism and valor in the middle, wisdom and constructive genius at the end. He exhorted; "Awake Sierra Leone and West Africa! Awake and take your place among the nations of the world." But to Blyden in his old age the expression of the above nationalists sentiments merely showed the short-sightedness and 'ingratitude' of one of the Africans in Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

It was not that Blyden had abandoned political independence for Africans, but rather his experience of a life-time of agitation for African assertion in cultural and educational matters without any enthusiastic response convinced him that African assertion in the political sphere was premature. It did not matter to Blyden that Africans were

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\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
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discriminated against on their Continent. Lynch explained that, "European political over-lordship was temporary, and that discrimination was merely part of the price Africans had to pay to have their Continent brought unto the world stage. However, Blyden’s philosophic optimism appears naïve even with regard to developments then taking place in South Africa." 46

Moreover, Blyden’s political alienation from the majority of educated West Africans resulted in comparative physical seclusion during the last five years of his life. During these years he was needy, and in poor health, yet he would not tolerate having his views challenged by, “The young ‘hot headed’ young Africans of Sierra Leone, who were thus forced to shun him. And he had outlived his former close associates in Sierra Leone.” 47 The death of Grant and Quaker in the 1880’s was followed by that of T. J. Sawyer in 1894, Moses Blyle in 1896, J. C. May in 1902 and Sir Samuel Lewis in 1903. Researchers have indicated that:

The death of the last two Blyden [associates] was felt particularly keenly as he regarded them as outstanding ‘African Personalities’ who had died at the height of their powers. As principal of Wesleyan Boys High School from 1874, May had educated African boys from all English speaking West Africa and had implanted in them a love of race and respect for their own culture; and it was not surprising that among his students were future Gold coast and West African nationalists, J. E. Casley Hayford and T. Hutton Mills. 48

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

In an obituary on Lewis, Blyden stated that, "friendship of thirty years standing and community of views made us constant companions, and we freely associated in all social and domestic matters."

Nevertheless, already needy and lonely, in 1909 Blyden suffered the added misfortune of having to undergo an operation for an aneurysm in the knee at the Royal Southern Hospital, Liverpool, where he was confined for fifteen weeks. Hollis R. Lynch explains that:

after the operation he found himself more penurious than ever. He wrote to his old friend, Sir Reginald Antrobus, a former Under Secretary at the Colonial Office (1898-1909) thus: I am now in feeble health and living from hand to mouth. The Sierra Leoneans among whom I have either to received sympathy and help, are now indifferent because I cannot encourage them in their misguided course.

In a letter he complained that the natives now avoided him as the Liberians did, because he was pointing out a way of life and prosperity for them. His expenses of fifteen weeks in the hospital had left him in debts, and the Liberians, men whom he taught and in other way assisted, seem to have no thought of restoring his pension. According to Blyden, "History repeats itself; the people kill the prophets: Cicero, Demosthenes, Socrates, must go if the unprincipled demagogues so will."

Sir Reginald Antrobus, a former colonial officer, successfully interceded at the Colonial Office on Blyden's behalf and he recommended a small pension for the Negro

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 243.

Patriot, at the same time pointing out that Blyden was not likely to live much longer. Accordingly the Colonial Secretary instructed the Governors of Sierra Leone, Lagos and Gold Coast to secure the passage of pension of Twenty Five Pounds (£25.00) for Blyden in each of the legislatures. According to Hollis Lynch, Blyden only received his pension for two years before his death on February 7, 1912.52

Before Blyden reached the age of 80 years, his attempt to foster unity among Africans bore some fruit. He was indeed a community builder. This success became evident at his funeral service. Lynch comments that “even at his funeral service Muslims and Christians, traditionally antagonistic attended in large numbers. Perhaps it was the Muslims who did him greater honor: Muslim men bore his coffin from his residence at Rawdon Street, Freetown, to the grave yard at the Race Course; while in the procession school children marched from all Muslim Schools in the city.”53

Blyden’s Memorial services were held in his honor throughout English speaking West Africa, and soon committees were set up to decide on a suitable memorial for him.

His funeral service proved that he indeed was a Christian; his race philosophies had created the opportunity for him to expand his teachings on the Re-Africanization of Africans and the African Diaspora. His political activities revealed his ability to work with all religious faiths including the African traditionalists. From the 1870s Blyden had pursued the idea of nurturing among West Africans the consciousness of belonging to one community. He had sought to do so by emphasizing the need for Africans to:

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 245.
Unite in order to improve the lot of the Negro race, by fostering cultural ethnocentrism, and by seeking to bring about communication and co-operation between Christians and Muslims. . . . if in the concept of a United West Africa, and if in the means of achieving it he showed creative imagination Blyden disappointed West Africans in failing to be a practical leader.”

By the 1880’s Blyden had established an intellectual ascendancy in West Africa, and many were prepared to follow him, but he did not provide firm and sustained leadership, or clear directives for providing sustainable countries. Many of them thought his ideas were sophisticated but contradicted his actions. Thus, although a staunch advocate of the retention of traditional culture he was himself probably the most Westernized African and never seemed to have adopted African ideas. Further, although he had been long harshly critical of the operations of Christianity in Africa, and as he grew older seemed to show a distinct partiality toward Islam, but he himself never became a Muslim.

Moreover, there existed a connection between the segregation, disfranchisement, and racism that Africans and others in the Diaspora faced. Edward Wilmot Blyden and W.E.B. Du Bois also realized this problem. This problem of segregation, disfranchisement, and racism became the driving force behind a series of Pan-African Conferences that were held in the early 20th century that attempted to address racism, discrimination, and imperialism. The Pan-African Conference was called to discuss the problems and challenges that faced people of African descent across the globe. In particular, the delegates sought to address the violence that went along with European

54. Ibid.
imperialism. Edward Blyden did not attend the Pan-African Conference which was held in London in 1900.

Lynch comments that, “Blyden’s Pan-Negro Ideology was undoubtedly the most important progenitor of the term Pan-Africanism, which gained currency after the first Pan-African Conference held in July 1900.” Yet it is interesting to note that, [Blyden] he did not attend that conference, and perhaps deliberately boycotted it. Although there seems to be no recorded statement of his attitude to the conference, it is reasonable to assume that he was opposed to it on the grounds that a meeting of Negroes in a ‘foreign capital’ could serve no useful purpose: if they really wanted to help Africa and the Negro race, they could best do this by employing their talents in Liberia or even one of the African colonial territories. In addition, Blyden either knew or suspected that the conference would be dominated by such mulattoes as Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and Bishop Alexander Walters, and, of course, his hatred of mulattoes had remained unabated. Thus there were probably two important differences between Blyden’s Pan-Negro ideas and those of the Pan-African movement in its pre-African phase with Du Bois as its guiding spirit.

If they (Blyden and Du Bois) were both radically committed, Blyden was even of a more exclusive nature in that he wanted only ‘Pure Negros’ to participate; secondly, he never quite reconciled himself with Negroes living permanently in the New World, and insisted that any major efforts to improve the lot of the Negro race must be made on the African continent.

There had been a rebellion in Sierra Leone (1896-1898) that the British had put down in a very violent manner. At the time, Sierra Leone was a British Colony. After the abolition of slavery, Sierra Leone had been promoted as a place where former slaves

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.
could settle. The British had imposed heavy taxes, and the peoples of the hinterland who were not well educated on this tax law saw it as oppression by the white colonizers. They saw no reason for them to pay such monies to the colonial rulers especially on their own private property. The new settlers, that is, African-Americans (freed blacks), the British Blacks, and the Recaptives had envisioned free lands that were promised but which they did not receive in the United States or Britain. This sparked an uprising and the British response had been quite brutal. The British used a scorched earth policy, and raided villages, burning them to the ground to quell the uprising. This occurred because the natives had organized themselves into the Poro Society and other secret societies with assistance by the Bundo Society. They came out in full force and as it had happened in Kenya; the oppressed populace slaughtered any person in European style dresses. The war was called the Hut Tax War. The British even accused the freed blacks of inciting the natives. The leader of the rebellion, Chief Bai Bureh, was captured by the British and was exiled to one of the Islands. This type of guerilla war was not uncommon, as the strategy or similar strategies had been employed to capture slaves who were then sold to the slave buyers.

Edward Blyden was not to be forgotten in the roles he played as a negotiator in the boundary disputes between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. These three West African States were colonized by the British, United States of America and France respectively. Lynch comments that, “a conflict subsequently ensued between the Liberian revenue collectors and British and Creole (freed blacks in Sierra Leone) traders which led to property damage and impounding of the British schooner, “Elizabeth.”
The ship was impounded by the Liberian authorities."57 The colonial governor of Sierra Leone reacted by demanding that a British warship be sent to Monrovia to demand compensation for the damages. The British demanded the sum of three thousand, three hundred and seventy pounds as indemnity to the traders. The government of Liberia wanted to protect its own borders from the French in the North and East while also trying to prevent the British in Sierra Leone from occupying the whole of the western region of the country. Liberia, however, did gain some additional territory between 1882 and 1911.

At the same time the British government in Freetown, eager to extend its Sierra Leone boundary in the Gallinas, decided to use the compensation issues as a pretext to fulfill other demands, Britain offered Liberia a compromise in return for the financial claims against the Liberian Government. The British were willing to renounce all financial claims if Liberia consented to fix its western boundary at the Mano River rather than at the Mafta River. Consequently, the Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Arthur Edward Havelock, arrived in Monrovia in 1882 with a flotilla of gunboats insisting that Liberia accept the new boundary line at the Mano River or immediately pay all outstanding claims. The President of Liberia, Anthony William Gardiner, whose government was neither strong enough nor wealthy enough to challenge the British, "Delegated Edward Wilmot Blyden, Secretary of State, to negotiate with Havelock. The British proposal to adopt the Mano River as the boundary line was accepted on November 11, 1885. Britain renounced all monetary claims against Liberia, and a large

piece of territory north of the Mano River was given to the British."\textsuperscript{58} Blyden at least proved to be an effective politician and statesman.

The Blyden-Havelock treaty initiated the demarcation of boundaries in the whole region. Furthermore, without any European exploration of the interior it was not possible to allow physical demarcation of the boundary. Lynch indicated that the Blyden-Havelock Treaty called for the demarcation of the Sierra Leone-Liberia Border which resulted in the division of the Vai people. The Treaty of 1885 established only a boundary line between the two countries along the Gallinas while further north in Kissi Land the question remained unsettled."\textsuperscript{59} This unsettled question remains so to this day. It must be noted, however, that these regions are regions where the production of gold and diamonds had caused boundary and tribal disputes, leading to the revolutionary rebel wars that were started in Liberia in 1988 and expanded to Sierra Leone from 1992 to 2001.

Blyden's fatalistic acceptance of European imperialism and his denunciation of political aspirations of the younger generation of Africans served to discredit him as an effective West African leader. Nonetheless, by his outstanding literary and scholastic achievements, by his attempt to foster African assertion, independence and cultural affairs (which he saw as pre-requisite to political independence), and by his striving for unity, "He left West Africans a rich legacy as an educator, community builder, politician, statesman, Pan-Africanist, and missionary during the years he lived, and for

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 250.
this they have always honored his name."60 This honoring of his name has endured in Liberia over the decades and my probably continue in the future. His legacy has been immortalized in various ways, including statues and memorials. The statute below (Figure 11) shows a bust of Blyden which has been commemorated as a tribute to his work and activism.

Figure 11. The Sculptured Bust of Blyden

60. Ibid.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations resulting from the purpose of this research, which is to investigate the productiveness of the legacy of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden, 1821-1912. Through an historical analysis, this study has tried to assess the relevancy of Blyden's many roles and responsibilities. The study examined the life of Edward Blyden as an educator, a Pan-Africanist, a politician, a linguist and writer, a missionary, and an activist for the re-Africanization of freed Blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia. The research demonstrated that the variety of roles and responsibilities impacted the potency of his legacy.

Blyden and his overarching mission to re-Africanize freed Blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia exemplifies Du Bois' notion of double-consciousness which he has put succinctly thus: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this way of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

The freed blacks found themselves confronted with being American and black but also being African and American. Hence, the intent of this study was to understand Blyden's work with freed blacks in their emigration thrust, to analyze the data collected and to describe the significance of the historical data regarding Blyden’s roles and responsibilities in building the legacy that remained after him; to explore the extent to which his roles and responsibilities promoted the potency of his legacy for freed Africans, and future Africans, throughout the African Continent and the African Diaspora.

The three research questions that gave direction to this study of Edward Wilmot Blyden and the potency of the legacy he left in his support of freed blacks seeking liberation outside the boundaries of the United States were: 1) Given that Edward Wilmot Blyden was not an African by birth and was himself an emigrant to Africa, what was the level of his productiveness as an educator in the re-Africanization of freed blacks who emigrated to Sierra Leone and Liberia? 2) More importantly, what legacy did he leave as a Pan-Africanist politician and missionary for the freed blacks who emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone? 3) In what ways did Blyden prepare African-Americans emigrating to Africa for re-Africanization? The study has provided answers to these questions. However, the answers are broadly reiterated in this chapter while a few relevant recommendations are also offered to guide future studies of the adventures and heroism of Edward Wilmot Blyden.
Education/Re-Africanization

Blyden’s early experiences related to his drive to fulfill his own educational desires, led to his commitment to the education of freed Africans emigrating to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Blyden recognized very early that if freed blacks were to engage their new geographic and cultural life, and to successfully live with the indigenous people, there was the need to understand their new surroundings outside of their American experiences. Re-Africanization required that the freed black emigrants have the educational training experiences that helped them to adjust to a new life experience:

- A sense of a freed self, that is, who are they outside of being slaves;
- An understanding of African culture—that is, traditions and rites—as African rather than a syncritization of Africaness and the western notion of culture;
- A resurrection of their way of life;
- A change in one’s approach to freedom rather than slavery with its threats or realities of harshness;
- A resurgence of the spiritual;
- An opportunity to participate in religious activities; and
- An understanding of governance and politics needed to embrace both their American experience and their entry into an African culture.

Blyden’s work as a teacher and principal of the schools and his work as a missionary aided in the fulfillment of his task: the re-Africanization of freed African-American and British black slaves. Blyden served as a teacher focusing on such areas as: (1) culture;
(2) self-worth and self-identity; (3) Christianity, race, and freedom; (4) opportunities for economic and political equality.

Blyden must be considered a very astute politician, for this ability was put to good use in his appointments as Liberia’s first Ambassador abroad to the Court of St. James by President Payne in 1877, as Liberia’s Secretary of State 1864-1866, and Minister of Truth in September of 1886. However, Blyden and W.E.B. Du Bois did not initially agree on the term ‘Pan-Africanism.’ Blyden preferred the term Pan-Negroism. However, he gradually seemed accepting of the former and left for future generations the legacy of Pan-African philosophy for oppressed American Negroes to emigrate to an independent Negro Republic on their own ‘fatherland-motherland,’ which motivated the Back-to-Africa Movement as demonstrated in the efforts of Marcus Garvey.

Other efforts specifically related to the Pan-African Movement were the organization of political parties by African leaders to organize themselves into congressional conferences for the Liberation of the African Continent from European powers. This move led to the Pan-African conference which was held in London in 1900 with W. E. B. Du Bois as chairman of the conference. After this conference there was the creation of ‘Ethiopianism’ which Ethiopians adopted for their political struggles, including other North Eastern African States. The French-speaking African countries adopted the term Negritude as a form of Anglo-French African unity to join the liberation. This was continued by Nelson Mandela of South Africa in the adoption of socialism and communism to join in the struggle for South African independence.
Also, the method of Pan-Africanism was used to create the Organization of African Unity to continue the fight for equal opportunity for the oppressed African.

From these great efforts, Western educated elites like Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyata, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and many others were determined to prove that Africans had the ability to govern themselves, a message which Blyden preached in his thrust for the liberation of blacks on the African Continent and throughout the African Diaspora.

Blyden engaged in several activities which assisted freed blacks in preparation for their move to Sierra Leone and Liberia. He taught art, culture and African traditional rites and customs in preparation for the emigrants to move to Sierra Leone and Liberia. These lessons were very important for Blyden’s notion of the African identity, self-worth, liberation, and equal opportunity for the emigrants to develop the capacity to govern themselves. It was Blyden who advocated for the reform of the Liberian Constitution, and the substitution of the word ‘Negro’ for ‘Colored’ to put Liberia on a proper racial basis and make it an essentially African state, a political reality which occurred in 1907 under Arthur Barclay’s presidency.

William Blyden was also a linguist and a writer as seen in his texts: Christianity, Islam and the Negro and African Life and Customs. His text Christianity Islam and the Negro Race, published in 1887, set the stage for future arrangements in which Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race may be accommodated within Blyden’s political ideology. The text, African Life and Customs, published in 1908, was the first inspirational effort to analyze Africa as a whole from a psychological perspective.
The productiveness of Blyden’s legacy can be seen in the following events, activities, or vision that bore the imprint of Blyden’s legacy:

- Organizing of African Unity.
- Pan-Negroism, Pan-Africanism, and African-Nationalism.
- African personality.
- Race and School.
- Culture.
- Love of Africa.

Thus, Blyden in his many roles as an educator, a politician, missionary, activist, and community builder has proved to be a lasting force in African political struggles. Through his vision and enormous sacrifice, Blyden has left behind a legacy which peoples of African descent can always use a source of inspiration in their continuous struggles against oppression and domination and for liberation and social justice.
Recommendations for Further Studies

The researcher recommends the following for further studies:

- Further research to clarify and define the potency of his legacy continuously, so that Blyden's rich legacy might not be lost. Given that during the years he lived there were no electronic means of collecting data and saving them during the years of 1834 to 1912, the effectiveness of communication and political strategies should be further explored.

- There should be studies to investigate how the following documents, *The History of Liberia* and *The History of Sierra Leone*, which have been found missing, might be recovered and re-published.

- That the border dispute treaties variously negotiated between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea be properly re-documented and preserved.

- That a course in the study of the works of Edward Wilmot Blyden as the originator of Pan-Africanism be constructed and added to the curricula of American or African-American Studies, as well as History courses on the movements of freed slaves back to Africa.
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