

**“Africa’s Glory and America’s Hope”: Columbia’s Involvement in the African
Colonization Movement**

In the early 19th century, the colonization movement took hold as a popular solution to America’s race-based “problem.” Supporters of colonization encouraged freed black Americans to leave their home country and establish a colony in Africa. This effort, Craig Wilder explains, was “a compromise between the moral problem of slavery and the political and social rejection in a multiracial society.”¹ Trustees, presidents, faculty, and students of the major colonial colleges participated in this enthusiasm for colonization, believing, “it would be right and agreeable to God’s design.” By the 1830’s, colonizationists were active on three-fifths of approximately sixty colleges in the free states.² Evidence suggests Columbia and its affiliates significantly promoted African colonization. Prominent Columbians provided financial support to colonization organizations, supplemented the education of free blacks in preparation for emigration, and promoted the movement as a solution to, “unconquerable prejudice by whites.”³ However, their actions also contributed to the racist feelings against freedmen recognized today as practiced by the colonization movement.

Since the colonial period, many Americans supported sending former slaves back to their African “homeland.”⁴ However, a national organization to raise support for colonization did not appear until late 1816. Various distinguished congressmen, senators, and clergymen met in

¹ Craig Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities*, (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 248.

² *Ibid.*, 262.

³ Henry Clay, “On Abolition,” (Speech: US Senate, Washington DC, March 2, 1839).

⁴ In 1713, the Society of Friends developed a plan to restore the American Negro to Africa. According to Henry Sherwood, “it is the earliest documented plan to deport Negroes back to Africa.” Sherwood, Henry N, “Early Negro Deportation Projects,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 2. (March 1916), p 494.

Washington to approve the constitution of the newly created American Colonization Society (ACS). The founders hoped the society's formation would, "ameliorate the condition of the free People of Colour now in the United States by providing a Colonial Retreat, either on this continent or that of Africa."⁵ Five years later, in 1821, colonizationists Eli Ayres and Richard Stockton founded the new colony, Liberia, with federal support. President James Monroe's financial backing of the project generated immense praise from the members of the ACS. Their vision now seemed within reach. After the creation of the American Colonization Society, the founders brainstormed about how to garner nationwide support. They created "auxiliary societies," intended to work under the ACS, also known as the "parent society" and promote the colonization cause. On October 29, 1817, Jacob Radcliffe (Columbia Trustee 1808), the mayor of New York, formed the New York Auxiliary Colonization Society to serve citizens of the state.⁶ Its founding members included Henry Rutgers (CC 1766, Trustee), John B. Beck (CC 1813), and John B. Roymen (CC 1795), and Alexander McLeod (CC 1818).⁷

However, the New York Auxiliary Colonization Society was short lived. A plan organized by the society's president Loring Dewey called for the emigration of black New Yorkers to Haiti.⁸ Starting in September 1824 and continuing for the next year, more than 6,000 African Americans boarded the, "Dewitt Clinton," (named for the Columbia graduate, CC 1764) and sailed to their new home. However, the plan failed miserably. An ACS report declared five years later that the immigrants were, "generally, unpleasantly situated, and very much dissatisfied."⁹ The call among New Yorkers for a more nationalized colonization movement led

⁵ Henry N. Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *The Journal of Negro History*, 2. (July 1917), 222.

⁶ *New York Spectator*, October 31, 1817, 3.

⁷ Eli Seifman, *A History of the New York State Colonization Society*, (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1965), 50.

⁸ *The US Gazette*, Philadelphia, September 24, 1824.

⁹ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5 (April, 1829), 61.

to the restructuring of the auxiliary societies.¹⁰ The creation of the New York State Colonization Society (NYSCS) in April 1829 served as a response to these pleas. Under the leadership of John Savage (CC 1823) and Luther Bradish (Trustee, P&S, 1860), the ACS expected the NYSCS to raise money and support the cause and actions of the national branch.¹¹ However, seeing the parent branch's lack of success in raising funds, the New York State Colonization Society decided to separate from the parent society, creating an organization independent of the ACS.

Even with the assistance of other auxiliary societies, the ACS still desperately needed financial support. Robert Finley, the appointed ACS agent for New York State, attempted to reorganize the failed New York Auxiliary Colonization Society, "to co-operate in the plan of African Colonization" and to help provide the money the ACS needed to balance its books.¹² Its creation involved the election of William Alexander Duer (CC 1821, President 1829, Trustee 1830), John T. Irving (CC 1808), and John Mulligan (CC 1791) to leadership positions.¹³ Finley considered the new organization, the Colonization Society of the City of New York, of great importance to the success of the national branch. He declared, "the city of New York affords so important and promising a field of labour that it should not for a single day escape the attention of the parent body."¹⁴

The ACS intended the NYSCS and the Colonization Society of the City of New York to promote its mission to their constituents. It hoped to convince people that supporting colonization, "offers the only means of gradually ridding ourselves of a mighty evil, and of obliterating the foulest stain on national honor." They also promoted colonization as a

¹⁰ Ralph Gurley primarily instigated the move to create state societies that would help financially support the national society as well as disseminate information of colonization to potential members. *Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹ Seifman, *A History of*, 64.

¹² *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6 (January, 1830), 346.

¹³ Seifman, *A History of*, 77.

¹⁴ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7 (February 1831), 381.

humanitarian effort, stating that, “To those who emigrate, it offers an asylum in the land of their fathers, where they may stand forth in the character of men and enjoy the rights and privileges of free men.” However, by stating their mission in this way, the colonization society revealed its racism against blacks. Statements such as the one above indicated that the two races could not coexist in the United States.¹⁵

Despite the inherent racism, by the 1830’s, the colonization movement attracted tremendous support in the United States. The American Colonization Society primarily gained followers by promoting its religious and moral purposes. To many leaders of the national society, religious reasoning for supporting colonization was a key motive in the age of the Second Great Awakening. The ACS believed by establishing Liberia and supporting emigration, “the glorious spectacle will then be presented to an admiring world, of a whole nation returning from captivity, and bearing with them to their father land, the blessings of knowledge, Christianity, and freedom!”¹⁶ With an African colony, the ACS not only allowed black Americans an opportunity for true freedom away from the ingrained prejudices of whites. It would reinforce the movement to colonize, Christianize, and civilize Africans.

Several members of the Columbia College Board of Trustees used messages of religious obligation to garner support for the colonization movement. Some trustees served as reverends in the Protestant Episcopal Church. These clergymen saw churchgoers as an audience to spread word of the ACS’s mission. Jonathan Wainwright (Trustee, 1825) asserted support through religious sermon. In 1828, he delivered “A Discourse on the Occasion of Forming the African Missionary School Society,” to a congregation in Hartford, CT. He denounced abolitionists,

¹⁵ *The New York Young Men’s Colonization Society Meeting Minutes*, October 9th, 1823.

¹⁶ New York State Colonization Society, New York Address, in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7 (July 1831), 136.

saying, “It is in the language of ignorance. Emancipation at the present day, and to any extent, is an impossibility...They would be the immediate destruction of the white population.” He asserted that African colonization was the best hope not just for African Americans, but for black people as a whole. If members of the church supported the colonization movement, “we can send them back with the Gospel of Christ, and thus give them, as a reward for their extorted labors and long continued sufferings.”¹⁷ For Wainwright, the reason to support the colonization movement centered around a sense of moral obligation and religious duty. In reviewing this sermon, historian Randall Burkett writes, “This line of reasoning led Wainwright and the majority of episcopal clergy to support colonization rather than emancipation, as a national solution to the calamity of slavery.”¹⁸

Gardiner Spring (Trustee, 1830), also supported colonization through religious appeals. Spring served as a Vice President of the New York State Colonization Society. In 1852, at the 20th anniversary meeting, Spring called upon his fellow members to remember the noble, higher cause they hoped to work toward. He claimed, “the New York Colonization Society... in its Christian aspects, the great objective of this institution is to establish not simply a free republic in that dark land, but a Christian republic- a republic founded on the great principles of the bible... God has given men for Liberia, and people for her light...” Supporting colonization, for him, constituted one of the best ways to serve God. Therefore, divine obligation and intervention should serve as motivation for people to support the Colonization Society’s cause. Liberia, he

¹⁷ Jonathan Wainwright, *A Discourse on the Occasion of Forming the African Mission School Society*, August 10, 1828, (Hartford, CT: H&F) Huntington, 1828.

¹⁸ Randall Burkett, “The Reverend Harry Croswell and the Black Episcopalians in New Haven (1820-1860),” *The North Star: A Journal of African American Religious History* 7.1, (Fall 2003), 24.

believed, would allow blacks the freedom they could not have in the United States. Therefore, he argued that the colony should be, “look[ed] upon it as Africa’s glory and as America’s hope.”¹⁹

In addition to individual persuasion, the ACS appealed to government bodies to secure necessary support. The New York State and the City of New York Colonization Societies’ funding came primarily through private donations. However, many colonizationists worked to obtain political recognition to make collecting donations easier. In April 1855, at the urging of Hamilton Fish (CC 1827, Trustee 1859) and Gardiner Spring, the New York State Senate and Assembly passed an act to recognize the NYSCS’s mission to, “provide the ways and means and to manage, appropriate and apply the same, to colonize, with their own consent, people of Color of the United States.”²⁰ This recognition allowed for the incorporation of the New York State Colonization Society. Incorporation made it much attractive for people to give donations.

The ACS required auxiliary societies to additionally raise funds for the national organization. The ACS used the donations to fund emigration, build infrastructure, establish schools, and train freed blacks to perform high skilled occupations. The societies raised money by encouraging people to pay membership fees, asking for donations, or selling subscriptions to the African Repository, the publication of the ACS. Under the leadership of Columbia alumni and trustees, the New York City and the New York State Colonization Societies raised impressive levels of funds for the parent society. Courtland Van Rennsellea, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, donated, “a printing press, with all of the necessary apparatuses.” The national society used the press to print additional copies of the Liberia Herald, a magazine

¹⁹ “Twentieth Anniversary of the New York State Colonization Society,” *The African Repository*, 28 (1852), 185.

²⁰ “An Act to Incorporate the New York State Colonization Society,” *The Laws of New York, 78th Session, April 10, 1855*, 376.

whose subscriptions funded the ACS's projects.²¹ Additional Columbians who gave money to the ACS through membership fees, earning the title "Member for Life" included Gardiner Spring, Jonathan Wainwright, Hamilton Fish, Samuel Boyd (CC 1787, Trustee 1826), John Knox (Trustee 1836), Benjamin Haight (CC 1811, Trustee 1843), and William Snodgrass (CC 1830, Trustee 1830).²² The African Repository declared that members of the two societies, "have engaged in our cause with a degree of zeal and resolution which must prove productive of great results."²³

The auxiliary branches of the colonization societies also worked with other organizations to collaboratively raise funds for the movement. The NYSCS and the Colonization Society of the City of New York focused particularly on religious institutions. The society argued the money would be used to educate Africans about the truth of Christianity. According to the 1850 New York State Colonization Society report, "To bring this Agency into full operation... the Board of managers... requesting 4th of July collections... determined to furnish for some time a copy of the African Repository to every pastor of a church throughout the state."²⁴ NYSCS reports demonstrated that this strategy worked well. Tables outlined the volumes of donations provided by various church denominations and indicated, "a gratifying increase of receipts."²⁵ In this listing, the Protestant Episcopal Church, the denomination most connected to Columbia College, provided the largest amount of donations.²⁶ With funds and political support, the colonization societies had the resources to push forward their plans.

²¹ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10 (March, 1834), 218.

²² *Thirty-First Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, (Washington: C. Alexander, 1848), 52.

²³ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7 (July, 1831), 147.

²⁴ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Colonization Society of the State of New York*. (New York: Daniel, Fanshaw, Printer, 1850), 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13

However, the American Colonization Society could not convince African Americans of the “benefits” of leaving the United States. Many blacks expressed apprehension toward emigration because of a high chance of death in Africa. Increased mortality stemmed from local pathogens, inappropriate immunity, and accidents associated with emigration. To establish and guarantee the well-being and success of the colony, the ACS made its foremost mission ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the Liberian colonists. Because blacks were denied the education required to practice medicine, the ACS first sent white physicians. Dr. Richard Randall, a professor of chemistry at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, volunteered as a physician. Randall served on the Board of Managers of the American Colonization Society. As with other white physicians, Randall’s motivations came from feelings of religious and moral obligation. When asked why he chose to go to Liberia, Randall replied, “I could readily exchange the endearing intercourse of relations, the alluring pleasures of refined society, the promised success of professional exertion, for the humble duty of promoting the happiness of the poor negroes in Africa...”²⁷ He died four months after arriving in December 1828. Despite his brief time working there, pleas for others to adopt his sense of moral obligation followed his death. By continuing Randall’s legacy, the ACS declared, “when Africa shall have risen from her sufferings and degradation, his name shall be honored among those of her distinguish benefactors...”²⁸

The deaths of Dr. Randall and the three physicians who succeeded him before 1832 finally convinced the American Colonization Society it could no longer send white men to

²⁷ “Dr. Richard Randall,” in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, (June 1829), 127.

²⁸ *The Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Freed People of Color of the United States*, (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1830), 2.

maintain the health of the colonists.²⁹ The ACS believed “the intense beams of the African sun...excited by anxious and unremitted labors,” caused whites to have greater susceptibility to disease and death in Africa than whites.³⁰ In a radical shift of thinking, the ACS decided to educate blacks to replace the “vulnerable” white physicians. From August to November of 1832, the ACS developed and adopted a strategy of training promising blacks with medical skills. With approval from the Board of Managers, the ACS published an announcement for the program under the headline, “MEDICAL EDUCATION OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOUR FOR LIBERIA.”³¹ Because the College of Physicians and Surgeons and its leadership had sympathies with the American Colonization Society, they agreed to train black physicians. However, both parties stipulated that these students would only receive education on the condition that they emigrated to Liberia. Records indicate that three black students attended lectures at the College of Physicians and Surgeons with the aid of the American Colonization Society. The three physicians completed the necessary classes required for a medical license and went on to be well-respected by their patients and colleagues. However, due to the racism at the college during this time and their refusal to emigrate, none of these students formally received medical degrees.

John Brown was the first black student to attend the college of Physicians and Surgeons under the Colonization Society’s new education plan. Born in 1803 in Connecticut, Brown worked as a house servant under Nathaniel Patten. In this position, Brown cultivated a love of reading and intellectual conversation. Armed with a recommendation letter from Patten, John Brown moved to New York City in 1824. Once he arrived, Brown asked Dr. Joseph Hansen, an 1814 graduate of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, to educate him in medicine. Brown

²⁹ *Annual Reports of the American Colonization Society*, 11 (1828), 45, 12 (1829), 5, 13, (1830), v-vi.

³⁰ *The Annual Report 13*,” 4.

³¹ *The Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States*, (Washington: Dunn, 1832), 285.

expected the contracted time between him and Hanson to last for four years. However, it ended when Hansen died four years later in 1828.

After Hansen's death, Brown continued his medical studies at the College of Physicians and Surgeons under Dr. G. Van Doren.³² In a letter to the managers of the ACS, Van Doren indicates Brown's formal admittance to P&S occurred in 1829, during the presidency of Dr. John Watts. Van Doren served as Brown's advisor during his studies at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, remaining with him, "and having been acquainted with him from the time he first commenced his reading until the present."³³ College records indicate that Van Doren also served as Brown's preceptor during his medical studies. During the winter of 1828 and 1829, and academic sessions 1830-1831 and 1831-1832, Brown attended medical lectures at the College.

However, in 1831, at the start of Brown's last year, President Watts passed away. The College's Board of Trustees selected Dr. John Augustine Smith as president. The change in leadership spurred a dramatic alteration of Brown's fate at the college. Smith believed in the racial superiority of whites. Prior to assuming the presidency, Smith was a professor of physiology. During his classes, he frequently compared African and European anatomy.³⁴ In a series of lectures, Smith hypothesized, "the intellect of a race is in proportion to the obtuseness of that angle," between the top of the forehead and the nose. Measuring the angle, Smith concluded, because Africans had the smallest measurement of all races, "There is not the slightest doubt that the anatomical structure of the Negro is less favorable than ours."³⁵

³² G. Van Doren., Note, ACS Records Reel 19.

³³ G. Van Doren, Letter to the American Colonization Society, October 18 1833, ACS Records Reel 19.

³⁴ Other lectures Smith wrote relating race and intellect include *A Lecture Introductory to the Second Course of Anatomical Instruction*

³⁵ John Augustine Smith, *A Lecture on the Different Races of Men*, (New York: Greeley & McElrath Tribune , 1843), 3.

Smith believed black physicians had an inferior intellect compared to white ones. When Brown refused to emigrate upon graduation, Smith feared to certify a black, and therefore less intelligent, physician who could then practice medicine on white patients. Although Brown completed the medical school requirements, Smith denied him the opportunity to take final examinations, saying, “No diploma should be granted to a colored man, whatever might be his pretensions, unless he would sign a pledge that he would not avail himself of its benefit in any place but Liberia.”³⁶ The refusal prevented Brown from obtaining his medical degree. Despite this, many physicians and patients recognized Brown as a physician. Van Doren wrote letters attesting to his qualifications and good moral character. “I must believe,” he writes, “when we take in consideration his time offered... and general good character as worth the notion and patronage as those which he may be presented to.”³⁷ Dr. William Hickok (P&S 1825) also promoted Dr. Brown’s medical skills, writing, “Though he has had very many obstacles to contend with (from his color) he has persevered through them and acquired a very good theoretical and practical knowledge of his profession.”³⁸

Despite John Brown’s refusal to follow through with immigration, the American Colonization Society continued to fund medical education for future Liberian inhabitants. The second student to attend P&S through this arrangement with the ACS was Washington Davis. Jehudi Ashmun, a colonial agent for the ACS, discovered Davis, the son of emigrant family from Liberia, while working as a missionary. Ashmun saw Davis’s academic potential and, in 1828, brought Davis to the United States for education under Charles (C.C.) Andrews, the principal of the New York African Free School. Davis constituted a unique opportunity for the managers of

³⁶ “Eulogy on the Life and Character of Dr. John Brown,” *The Colored American*, March 28th 1840.

³⁷ G. Van Doren, “Letter to American Colonization Society.”

³⁸ William Hickok, Letter expressing approval of John Brown, No Date, ACS Records Reel 19.

the American Colonization Society. They believed he could be trained and sent back to Liberia with minimal resistance.

After four years, both Andrews and Davis believed the later could further his studies in medicine. After Andrews informed him of Davis's potential, Rev. Ralph Randolph Gurley, an agent of the American Colonization Society, requested, "that a letter be addressed to Dr. J.A. Smith inquiring whether Washington Davis could enjoy the benefit of Lectures at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and if so Mr. C.C. Andrews...obtain for him a situation in which he can most advantageously pursue his medical studies."³⁹ Within two weeks, the board heard from John Augustine Smith, who indicated that P&S would allow Davis to attend. Under this arrangement, Davis attended lectures at the College of Physicians and Surgeons for three sessions: the summer, fall and winter of 1832. However, the American Colonization Society suddenly terminated Washington Davis's affiliation with the College. They cut off all funding he needed to attend classes. C.C. Andrews and Washington Davis pled to the board to allow Davis to continue his studies at P&S. In desperation, Andrews wrote "Should an incidental suit commence against me in consequence of the delay of your payments, I shall feel it my duty to give the matter publicity."⁴⁰

Historian Russell Irvine writes that no direct evidence explains why the ACS wanted to end Davis's affiliations with the organization. However, he emphasizes that the decision to pull the funding for Davis's education coincided with the disassociation of black students from the American Colonization Society at Columbian Medical College, located in Washington D.C. The black medical students made accusations that the college did not provide them with adequate

³⁹ Minutes, Board of Managers, May 14 1832 American Colonization Society Papers Reel 290, 64.

⁴⁰ C.C. Andrews, Letter to Board of American Colonization Society, December 28 1833, ACS Records Reel 19.

training and threatened to not immigrate to Liberia without appropriate changes to the curriculum. In response, the ACS managers declared, “An item of expenditure, unprofitable to a great extent, is found in the support of the colored medical students. The measure at first is one of much promise. But Washington Davis... for whose education large sums were expended have refused to fulfill their engagements... They have chosen to remain here, in violation of obligations the most sacred.”⁴¹ Although Davis had lived in New York during the entire course of his study, the ACS incorrectly lumped him with the students from Washington.

Davis, along with Andrews, made several attempts to appeal the ACS to continue at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. In a letter to Gurley, Davis wrote, “I presume I need not tell you that it is on the drafts that I depended on money to defray my expenses... I am satisfied that the that the Board will consider... the difficulties under which I was born when without money to pay my way.”⁴² However, these pleas proved to be fruitless. Although they refused to allow Davis to continue at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the managers of the ACS demanded that Davis stay in New York to avoid the controversy at Columbian Medical School. However, Davis’s medical education ultimately was not completely ended. The ACS agreed to educate Davis for the remaining years of medical study. The Colonization Society approved a \$200 salary for Dr. Edward Ludlow, a graduate and future trustee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, to provide education to Davis.⁴³⁴⁴ While the organization paid for Ludlow’s services, the ACS no longer directly supported Davis’s education at P&S. After living in the

⁴¹ Minutes of the Board of Managers, July 24 1834, American Colonization Society Papers Reel 290, 88.

⁴² Washington Davis, Letter to Ralph Gurley, April 23 1834, ACS Records Reel 20.

⁴³ Minutes of the Board of Managers, June 26, 1834, American Colonization Society Paper Reel 290, 84.

⁴⁴ C.C. Andrews, Letter to Ralph Gurley, July 13 1832, ACS Records Reel 14.

United States for seven years, Davis returned to Liberia in 1835. Liberian census records from 1843 indicate Davis continued to practice medicine, in keeping with the ACS's goals.⁴⁵

Unlike Brown and Davis, David McDonogh's road to the College of Physicians and Surgeons was paved by his master's alliance with the African colonization movement. Born a slave, Brown was the property of John McDonogh, a wealthy merchant in Louisiana. Soon after its founding in 1816, John McDonogh became a member of the American Colonization Society. He became passionate about emancipating and sending slaves to Africa. He conjured a scheme to help the people he enslaved buy their freedom and travel to Liberia through an installment plan. He would hold their earnings from work on Saturday morning until they could purchase freedom for themselves and their children. The entire process took approximately five years. McDonogh clearly expressed his intention of sending his freed slaves to Africa through this scheme, noting, "It is your freedom in Liberia that I contract for. I would never consent to give freedom to a single individual among you to remain on the same soil as the white man."⁴⁶

Congruent with the feelings of the ACS, McDonogh felt educating his slaves served an important role in ensuring the success of the colony. John believed that David was a good choice to further his education in preparation for his departure to Liberia, stating, "David is a Boy of bright parts—and if a high, proud, brave, and aspiring disposition (tempered at the same time with much piety), can be kept down,--- will become great among his people—he is capable of acquiring every science—in short, he may become a Madison ... among his people."⁴⁷ Because Louisiana had strict laws about slaves learning to read and write, McDonogh sent David to

⁴⁵ Tom W. Shick, *Liberian Census Data, 1843* [computer file]. Madison, WI: Tom W. Shick [producer], 1973. Madison, WI: Data and Information Services Center [distributor], 1996.

⁴⁶ James T. Edwards, ed. *Some Interesting Papers of John McDonogh Chiefly Concerning the Louisiana Purchase and the Liberian Colonization* (McDonogh, MD: Boys of McDonogh School, 1898), 48.

⁴⁷ John McDonogh, Letter to Walter Lowrie, May 2, 1838, BFMC, Presbyterian Historical Society.

Lafayette College to continue his studies. David studied under Walter Lowrie, the Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Under this new relationship, McDonogh gave Lowrie the ability to emancipate David when he thought David had earned his freedom.

During his time at Lafayette, David McDonogh studied classics, theology and medicine to thoroughly prepare to emigrate. In a letter he informed Walter Lowrie, “I will go, with a glad and overflowing heart, to that once enlightened, but now benighted country, with my box of medicine in one hand and my Bible in the other.” Through his studies in anatomy, surgery, and therapeutics, McDonogh developed a passion for medicine. He told Lowrie he would sacrifice almost anything rather than give up his medical studies.⁴⁸ During his final year, McDonogh, eager to continue with medicine, expressed hesitation about his owner’s demands. David indicated to John that he was “decidedly, utterly, and radically” opposed to going to Africa.⁴⁹ He also stipulated to Lowrie, “And therefore sir, nothing that you and my father can say to the contrary, will induce me to leave this country before I complete, at least, my medical studies and receive the degree of M.D.”⁵⁰

Although John McDonough demanded that the ACS cut off David’s education funding, he ultimately left the decision to Lowrie. Lowrie decided to approve of David’s graduation in September 1844. After graduation, McDonogh grew increasingly discouraged about the prospects of continuing his medical education due to his race. He heard from Lowrie that medical schools in New York refused to admit him. David wrote to Lowrie in a rage, stating, “Permit me to say that the Refusal on the part of the medical faculties, and the worse than slavish treatment which I have suffered here, and from those, too, who are looked upon by their Kind as

⁴⁸ David McDonogh, Letter to Walter Lowrie, September 13, 1842, BFMC, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁴⁹ David McDonogh, Letter to Walter Lowrie, , April 6, 1844, BFMC, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁵⁰ David McDonogh, Letter to John McDonogh, April 5, 1844, BFMC, Presbyterian Historical Society.

saints on Earth, have given me the strongest Reasons to distrust the fidelity of the white man.”⁵¹

McDonogh was disillusioned that, despite his qualifications, a medical school would refuse to admit someone because of his race.

Eventually, McDonogh found someone to support his medical education. Dr. John Kearney Rodgers, a professor at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, expressed willingness to serve as a preceptor for David to attend classes at the college. McDonough completed a full course of study and was never challenged on his claims that he had a degree from the institution. The Lafayette catalog indicates that McDonogh graduated from P&S in 1847.⁵² However, the College of Physicians and Surgeons continued the policy of denying medical degrees to African American men. As a result no diploma currently exists in the department records.⁵³ Despite his lack of a formal degree, other physicians, white and black, treated McDonogh as a full medical colleague. Upon completion of his studies, Rodgers arranged for McDonogh to practice at the New York Ear and Eye Infirmary, where, “he did excellent work and was frequently in demand as a consultant.”⁵⁴

Despite their attempts to mold the “ideal colony,” Liberia became a great financial liability for the American, New York State, and New York City Colonization Societies. Maintaining the colony required a vast amount of resources that the American Colonization Society simply did not have. In addition, the situation in Liberia had grown more dire. The colonists, totaling 3,000 in 1846, found themselves plagued by devastation, riots, wars, and disease. Therefore, the colonization societies in the United States pushed the settlers to declare

⁵¹ David McDonogh. Letter to Walter Lowrie, November 26, 1844, BFMC, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁵² Selden J. Coffin, *Record of the Men of Lafayette* (Easton, 1879).

⁵³ Marybeth Gasman, *Uplifting a People: African American Philanthropy and Education*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 36.

⁵⁴ John A. Kinney, *The Negro in Medicine* (Tuskegee, AL: Tuskegee Institute Press, 1912), 32-33. McDonogh at some point took “Kearney” as his middle name (replacing “Kinney”) in tribute to John Kearney Rodgers

their status as an independent state. In June 1847, emigrants founded the Independent Republic of Liberia. With its creation, the colonization societies in the United States found their role shift from, “planter and protector” to “helper and supporter.” In this transition, ACS recognized the education of emigrants as a vital step. Leaders of both countries acknowledged the need for a Liberian institution of higher education to promote this social, cultural, economic, and religious advancement. Colonizationists sought to provide an institution that could teach Liberians, both native and newly arrived, Christian morals.

In an initiative first organized by its President, Gabriel Disosway (CC 1819), the New York Young Men’s Colonization Society with the Young Men’s Colonization Society of Pennsylvania, collaborated to establish a college on the proposition that, “Liberia have both important relations to the coloured population of the United States, both free and enslaved.”⁵⁵ From its founding in 1832, the New York Young Men’s Colonization Society attempted to garner land in the colony to build a school separate from the parent organization. The plan received a letter of recommendation from Columbian Rev. Alexander Proudfit (CC 1792).⁵⁶ More than a decade later, in 1850, the society obtained the land and appropriate funding to build the school. Archibald Alexander, a future professor of philosophy at Columbia College, congratulated the society for all of the work they had achieved, stating, “The establishment of Alexander High School.... Founded by the Ladies Liberia School Society of this city, are affording a higher and better education than any previously imparted in the Republic.”⁵⁷

However, the college needed blacks to educate students. As with the concerns with white physicians, the colonization societies had apprehensions about sending white professors to Africa.

⁵⁵ “College in Liberia,” in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12.8 (August 1836), 256.

⁵⁶ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 19, April, 1836. 256.

⁵⁷ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Colonization Society of New York*, 1837, 4.

Jehudi Ashmun desired to have men of a similar race educate the colonists, believing, “the Church missionary society stat[ed] that they had looked anxiously to this country for missionaries, catechists, and school masters they wished for... active men of color for this purpose...”⁵⁸ Therefore, managers sought to find blacks who had the necessary skills to teach. However, due to racial intolerance in the United States, many did not receive adequate education. Therefore, finding freedmen who met these qualifications proved difficult.

Alexander Crummell was one of the few black men with the qualifications to serve as a professor. From the beginning of his life, Crummell experienced the racial prejudice flourishing in the United States. Educated at the African Free School in New York City, Crummell continued at the Oneioda School, focusing on classics and literature. There, he decided to become a minister. Certain denominations (Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists) had black counterparts would have made his ordination easier. However, Crummell chose the Protestant Episcopalian Church, a branch that lacked black members and had open hostility to ordain black ministers. The hierarchical and authoritative structure probably attracted Crummell to the Episcopal Church. Since his early years, Crummell associated with the elite and ascending African American bourgeois community. Acquaintances of Crummell illustrated him as “cultured” or “dignified”. One friend, Samuel Cornish, described his family as, “the abode of sanctimonious pride and Pharisaical aristocracy.”⁵⁹ He explained his reasoning to join the Episcopal Church as, “stimulated by the catechizing of my pastor, Rev. Peter Williams... and

⁵⁸ “Education for Colonization: Attempts to Educate Free Blacks.” *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, (September 1828), 204.

⁵⁹ *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, Sarah Grimke, 1812-1844* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), vol. 1, 486-487.

kindled, as I well remember, by a sermon of Doctor Whittingham.”⁶⁰ He greatly admired and respected the leadership of the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church presented Crummell with obstacles to ordination. After obtaining honors at Oneida, he applied after graduation to the General Theological Seminary (GTS) in 1839, which had close ties to Columbia College.⁶¹ Crummell possessed the qualifications to gain admission to the seminary, as GTS stated, “every person producing to the faculty satisfactory evidence of his having been admitted as a candidate for Holy Orders... shall be received as a Student of the Seminary.”⁶² Once he submitted his application, Dr. William Whittingham (CC 1827), the dean of the faculty, politely replied, “You have just as much of a right to admission here as any other man. If it were left to me, you should have immediate admission to this seminary; but the matter has been taken out of my hands in De Grasse’s case; and I am sorry to say I cannot admit you.”⁶³ After consulting with Whittingham, Crummell again applied, submitting a petition to the seminary trustees. After heated debate, the trustees again decided not to admit Crummell. When Crummell attended trustees meetings, Reverend Benjamin Onderdonk (CC 1809, Trustee 1824) set upon him, “with a violence and grossness that I have never since encountered save in once instance in Africa.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Alexander Crummell, *The Shades and Lights of a Fifty Years’ Ministry, St. Luke’s Church*. (Washington DC: R.L. Pendleton Printer, 1894), 183.

⁶¹ According to The Catalog of Officers and Students, the General Theological Seminary, allowed students to attend lectures and seminars without cost and provided scholarships specifically to Columbia College students. Once CC became a university, the General Theological Seminary became a part of the University Council. From *The Columbia University Bulletin of Information 1855 and 1910* (New York: Columbia University).

⁶² Crummell, *The Shades and Lights*, 7.

⁶³ The De Grasse Case, refers to the affair of Isaiah De Grasse, who was admitted to the seminary as an African American in 1836. Shortly after, Reverend Benjamin Onderdonk argued that De Grasse, despite his almost white complexion, identified with the black population of New York. His affiliation, Onderdonk declared, would “bar the doors of the seminary against him.”

⁶⁴ Alexander Crummell, “Reply to Bishop Onderdonk,” Jay Papers, 11.

Onderdonk had a history of supporting the American Colonization Society, denouncing abolitionists, and practicing racism against blacks. Onderdonk's status as a, "high standing member," of the New York Young Men's Colonization Society meant his voice carried tremendous weight among his colleagues. Onderdonk supported fellow member Theodore Frelinghuysen's proposal to establish institutions of higher education in Liberia. He stated, "the agricultural, mechanical, and commercial interest of Liberia also needed the stimulus of the enlightened mind."⁶⁵ He publically approved plans to purchase ships, providing transportation for freedman to the African colony.⁶⁶ However, his strongest affirmation of colonization came in his response to the anti-abolitionist riots in 1834. In late 1832, William Lloyd Garrison, a white abolitionist, published *Thoughts of Colonization*. In it, he attacked the American Colonization Society on many grounds, including relating it to the rum trade, which served, "fourteen hundred barrels of liquid poison to Africa."⁶⁷ In defense of colonization, William Leete Stone (CC 1830), the president of the New York State Colonization Society, aroused animosity against Garrison. In 1834, mobs of close to 3,000 whites targeted white abolitionists, interracial couples, and black schools, businesses and churches throughout the city. In July, rumors spread that Peter Williams, the second black Episcopal reverend and a manager of the New York Anti-Slavery Society, had performed an interracial marriage. In response, the mob sacked and burned St. Phillips Church, the first black Episcopal Church in New York City and William's parish, to the ground.

Williams immediately contacted Onderdonk with news of the church's destruction. The bishop quickly replied to Williams: "Let me advise you to resign, at once, with your connexion,

⁶⁵ "Circular of the Young Men's Colonization Society of New York," *Christian Advocate and Journal* 11.3, September 9, 1836, 12.

⁶⁶ *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, July 1838. 314.

⁶⁷ William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), 55.

in every department, with the Anti-Slavery Society, and to make public your resignation.”⁶⁸

Although a strong supporter of abolitionism, Williams felt pressured to renounce his connection to the New York Anti-Slavery Society. He wrote, “I would have offered my resignation long before this... when by having the privilege of addressing the Board, I might excise a restraining influence upon measures calculated to advance our people faster than they were prepared.”⁶⁹

Onderdonk also forced him to address his “misgivings” about the Colonization Society.

Williams reluctantly states, “it extended no farther than that Society has held out the idea, that a colored man... can never enjoy the privileges of a citizen of the United States.”⁷⁰ Despite the forced nature of the resignation, the ACS used it as propaganda. They published Onderdonk’s request and William’s resignation letter in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* to garner additional support for colonization.

Onderdonk’s refusal to accept Crummell to the seminary was met with harsh criticism among the city’s abolitionists. In a letter to the editor, ‘an Episcopalian’ flatly accused Benjamin Onderdonk of, “refusal of admittance into the institution on account of his *color*.”⁷¹ In a pamphlet later published in 1849, Crummell accused Onderdonk of, “taking advantage of the mobbish violence against the colored people and abolitionists of 1834,” referring specifically to the riots led by pro-colonizationists.⁷² Although he spent much time and energy on his debate with Onderdonk, Crummell ultimately completed his theological studies. He studied at Yale with the financial assistance of John Jay II (CC 1836). When informing him of what he intended to learn, Jay replied, “It will give me pleasure to allow you six dollars a month from this date, so

⁶⁸ “Correspondence Between Bishop Onderdonk to Rev. Peter Williams,” in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10 (August 1834), 186.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷¹ “Episcopal Oppression,” *The Emancipator* (New York) October 3, 1839, 90.

⁷² Alexander Crummell, “Reply to Bishop Onderdonk,” Jay Papers, 22.

long as you reside in New Haven and continue a student in the seminary.”⁷³ After graduating from Yale, Crummell continued his studies at Cambridge. There, he became close to professors supporting abolition and attended meetings of the Anti-Slavery Society. However, their lack of interest in educating blacks in Britain, and choice to spend resources in Africa, alienated Crummell from them.

With a negative image of British abolitionism, Crummell immigrated to Liberia in 1853. Although he opposed the motivations of the American Colonization Society, Crummell looked at Liberian missionary work through a new lens. He would aid Liberia by training Africans to become ministers and, “in sending the Gospel to the very center of the fatherland.”⁷⁴ As an Episcopal minister, Crummell believed his Godly duty was to civilize and Christianize the Liberian colonists. In a sermon from 1852, Crummell declared in regard to the African colonists, “I doubt much whether, if ever, the history of missions has discovered such a wide-spread and earnest seeking for Christian knowledge.”⁷⁵

Upon his immigration, the Trustees of Donations at Liberia College appointed Crummell to two positions. In addition to his role as a professor of English and moral philosophy, Crummell served as a “philosophic apparatus” for the college.⁷⁶ He oversaw the influx of books and materials for the college’s use. To obtain resources, Liberia College relied exclusively on private donations. Crummell went on mission trips to the United States and appealed to pro-colonizationists for monetary support and supplies. With the idea of a college in Liberia brought to the public’s attention, generous pledges of support quickly followed. Reports by the New York State Colonization Society indicate that, by 1859, donations for Liberia College totaled

⁷³ John Jay, “Reply to Alexander Crummell,” June 22nd, 1840, Jay Papers.

⁷⁴ Alexander Crummell, “Letter to Arthur Cleveland Coxe,” September 30, 1852, Jay Papers.

⁷⁵ Alexander Crummell, *The Future of Africa* (New York: Schribner, 1862), 303.

⁷⁶ *Forty-Six Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, (February 1863), 37.

over \$47,000.⁷⁷ The society provided scholarships to cover tuition for three of the seven members of the first class at the college.⁷⁸ In 1864, the NYSCS also pledged to pay the salary of Professor Blyden, an instructor of Greek and Latin. Supporting their actions, the New York State Colonization Society declared, “Perhaps in no certain way can perennial blessings be assured to the race in Africa than by the adequate endowment of professorships and scholarships in this college.”⁷⁹ Archibald Alexander, a future professor of philosophy at Columbia, stated that providing the funds to hire the professor allowed Liberia College to afford, “a higher and better education than any previously imparted in the republic.”⁸⁰

Numerous affiliates of Columbia generously donated both monetary donations and supplies to the College. Anson Phelps, a manager of the American Colonization Society and President of the New York State Colonization Society, donated \$50,000 to the college with the condition that Union Theological Seminary oversee the creation of a theology department.⁸¹ John Griscom, a professor of chemistry at Columbia College, served as a manager for the New York Auxiliary Colonization Society. Before he died, he forwarded to the college, “two large boxes of books selected from his library.”⁸² Charles Chandler, another Columbian chemistry instructor, sent chemicals and chemical apparatuses. During a visit to the United States in 1862, Crummel estimated that Liberia College had garnered over 4,000 volumes through donations.⁸³

⁷⁷ *Forty-Third Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, (January, 1860), 20.

⁷⁸ *Fourth Annual Report of the Trustees of Donation*, 1854, 9.

⁷⁹ *Forty-Sixth Annual*. 38.

⁸⁰ *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Colonization Society of the City of New York*, (New York: Leavitt, Trow, & Co. Printers, 1846), 19.

⁸¹ *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (January 1854), 4.

⁸² John Griscom, *The Memoir of John Griscom* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 321.

⁸³ Thomas W. Livingston, “The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 45.3 (Summer, 1976), 255.

While it attracted praise from the American public, the colonization movement also received harsh criticism from abolitionists. Abolitionists believed colonization avoided, or contributed to was a scapegoat to avoid what Theodore Tilton called “colorphobia.”⁸⁴ Instead of believing slaves could assimilate once freed, colonizationists, abolitionists insisted, thought the only way to rid the country of racism required removing blacks entirely. Garrison indicates the nature of the argument, stating “that 'Christianity cannot do for them here, what it will do for them in Africa! Yea, that 'this is not the fault of the colored man, NOR OF THE WHITE MAN, nor of Christianity; but AN ORDINATION OF PROVIDENCE, *and no more to be changed than the LAWS OF NATURE!*'”⁸⁵ To Garrison, the inherent racism of the colonizationists was the very thing the ACS argued it eliminated for blacks through its actions.

Some of the most prominent criticisms of African colonization movement came from William Jay. Jay was the father of John Jay II, son of John Jay (CC 1764), and a member of the New York Protestant Episcopal Church. He also served as a prominent member of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. In his writings, most notably in a 1835 pamphlet, Jay exposed and criticized the contradictions within the colonizationists’ arguments. He argued that the laws and oppression by whites caused the very situation blacks found themselves in and whites now condemned. “What object are these frightful pictures [of depraved blacks] presented to us?” he asked. “Is it to urge us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant, and to reform the wicked! No, but to transport them to Africa!”⁸⁶ Thus, instead of raising the status of blacks in the eyes of whites, colonizationists provided the solution to send them away to Africa. Jay also rejected the ACS’s argument that blacks were simply not ready for white freedom. He

⁸⁴ *The Independent*, December 5, 1861.

⁸⁵ Garrison, “Thoughts on African,” 32.

⁸⁶ William Jay, *An Inquiry into the Character and Tendancy of the American Colonization, and American Anti-Slavery Societies*, (New York: Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1835), 17.

detailed denial of education to free blacks in Virginia, saying, “In Virginia, should free negroes or their children assemble at a school to learn reading and writing, any Justice of the Peace, may dismiss the school with twenty stripes on the back of each pupil.”⁸⁷ Such assertions echoed Jay’s argument that the Colonization Society incorrectly claimed that ex-slaves were simply not “ready” for white freedom in the United States. If whites believed blacks could possibly be ready for equality with whites, denying them education in the United States, but celebrating education in Liberia, would not be a logical step.

Many Columbians participated in the U.S. colonization movement of freed blacks to Africa. Cross-referencing the Columbia graduate and officers directory with colonization publications indicates that twenty graduates, twelve trustees, four professors, and two presidents expressed support for African colonization.⁸⁸ However, many more probably supported the cause without formal membership. By raising funds and promoting education, trustees, graduates, and affiliates believed they were doing a service to heighten the equality of blacks. While it claimed to be the only solution to bring about racial equality, many racist assumptions against blacks were built into the movement’s arguments. As demonstrated by the actions and arguments of both colonizationists and abolitionists, Columbia’s involvement in colonization, in hindsight, raises questions about what thoughts we have currently that someone in the future might see as morally reputable. Through this historical lens, we can hopefully make right now what future generations might view as our, “colonization society.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁸ *Catalog of the Governors, Trustees, and Officers of Columbia College: 1754—1882*. (New York: Maegowan & Slipper Printers, 1882).

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