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A Tale of Two Freedmen: Comparing Black Self-Determination in Atlanta and Salvador

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ABSTRACT

After emancipation, African-Americans in Atlanta, Georgia, sought self-determination through formal political means, whereas Afro-Brazilians in Salvador da Bahia pursued self-determination through cultural expression. To determine why, I have synthesized secondary sources into an original comparative narrative based in the different experiences of slavery, the different emancipation processes, and the different post-emancipation socio-political situations of each region. These contrasting histories led Afro-Brazilians in Bahia to organize much in the ways they had under slavery, whereas African Americans in Georgia were drawn into formal politics through opportunities presented under Radical Reconstruction. Unfortunately, white supremacy was quickly restored in Georgia under Redemption, leaving African Americans in a disempowered position similar to that of Afro-Brazilians.

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PREFACE

Many historical comparisons have been made over the years between Brazil and the United States with regards to the relationship between former master and former slave. However, no one thus far has focused on the forces that shaped African-descended self-determination in the post-emancipation period. Carl Degler's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1971 book *Neither Black Nor White* seeks to explain the difference in contemporary race relations in the two countries via "the demographic and economic circumstances in the two countries, that is, the differences in their respective historical experiences", but he fails to look specifically at black self-determination.[1] Brazilianist Thomas E. Skidmore's article "Toward a Comparative Analysis of Race Relations," published in the *Journal of Latin American Studies* in 1972, lays out specific contrastable categories like demography, fertility, sectionalism, and the role of free blacks to explain differing race relations. However, he suggests these as "potentially useful in future comparative research" and claims that the task ahead "will be to decide *how* these factors have fitted together."[2] My research does this, gleaning historical information from secondary sources and piecing it together like one would a jigsaw puzzle in order to answer a question that has never before been asked: Why did Afro-Bahians pursue self-determination through cultural expression while African Americans in Georgia sought self-determination through formal political means?

These inquiries led me to create fictional characters based entirely in fact that would act as guides through post-emancipation Atlanta and Salvador: a former slave

[1] Carl Degler, *Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) 88.

[2] Thomas E. Skidmore, "Toward a Comparative Analysis of Race Relations Since Abolition in Brazil and the United States," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 4:1 (May, 1972) 24.

named Henry in Georgia and an Afro-Bahian named Felipe. Both of these men spent most of their lives working as black slaves under a white master, and both achieved an unprecedented degree of autonomy in their lives as freedmen before it was snatched away, yet they followed very different paths toward self-determination. To determine why, I have synthesized secondary sources into an original comparative narrative based in the different experiences of slavery, the different emancipation processes, and the different post-emancipation socio-political situations of each region. These contrasting histories led Afro-Brazilians in Bahia to organize much in the same ways they had under slavery, whereas African Americans in Georgia were drawn into the formal political realm through opportunities presented under Radical Reconstruction. Unfortunately, white supremacy was quickly restored in Georgia under Redemption, leaving African Americans like Henry in a disempowered position similar to that of Felipe. It is my hope that the stories of these two men provide a useful framework with which to compare the different experiences of emancipation in the United States and Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

The year is 1865. The setting: Georgia, devastated by the American Civil War and desperate to replace the enslaved laborers forcibly liberated by the invading army. The protagonist of our story: Henry, an African-American slave born to field hands on a cotton plantation who encounters freedom for the first time. Now let us travel 4,423 miles southeast as the crow flies and 23 years ahead in time to Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. It is 1888, the year that Imperial Princess Isabel, acting as regent for her father, Emperor Dom Pedro II, abolishes slavery in Brazil. An African man named Felipe, enslaved on a Bahian sugar plantation, is now a free man. Henry and Felipe have spent their lives toiling under a hot sun in African-descended communities under the explicit coercion of a white master—but no longer. Now both must struggle to define their newfound freedom: How will they fit into the new labor system? To whom can they turn for help and leadership? Against which societal forces must they fight to protect their freedom? The worlds into which these two emancipated slaves step on their first day of freedom are full of questions that they must answer and challenges that they have yet to face. This is the story of the former slaves' respective historical experiences in Georgia and Bahia during the first decades after emancipation.

LIFE UNDER SLAVERY

Before we can leap into the tale of Henry and Felipe's transitions to life as free men, we must first understand how they lived as slaves. Brazil and the United States hold the disreputable titles of the two largest slave societies of modern time, colonized by Europeans who brought millions of captive Africans to the shores of the Americas to toil in an agricultural system of forced labor.[3] Slavery was the principal labor system used in both countries for centuries, but the commonly drawn comparisons largely end there. The subtleties of Henry and Felipe's lives under slavery paint contrasting pictures of blackness and freedom.

Henry was born on a cotton plantation outside Atlanta, Georgia, to enslaved parents who could not trace their ancestry back to any specific African tribe. Because the American slave trade ended in 1808 but the forced labor system continued to flourish without further importation, "virtually all of the slaves in the United States were natives, raised from birth in the system."[4] Nowhere else in the modern world was a sizeable slave population sustained by reproduction alone, so this detachment from an African identity was unique to blacks in the United States. Henry's family did not practice an African-based religion, they spoke English rather than Yoruba, and they had assimilated Anglo-American ideals of freedom rather than Nagô understandings of natural balance.

Felipe, on the other hand, was brought to Salvador in 1850 on a slave ship from what is now known as the Republic of Benin and is purchased by a free Afro-Brazilian who puts him to work as an escravo de ganho. Many manumitted blacks in the city owned a slave as a source of income: Felipe is lent them to his master's neighbors to do

[3] Degler 2.

[4] Degler 54.

odd jobs, rented out to provide manual labor and transport services, or forced to peddle items on the street. This and the large number of free blacks in Salvador prior to emancipation meant that dark skin was not an immediate signifier of legal status in Bahia. Because the slave trade only ended in 1851, both a widespread connection to the African continent and a sense of tribal identity were kept alive, further intensifying the fragmentation of the urban Afro-Brazilian population. White slave-owners in Bahia also encouraged this ethnic differentiation in order to avoid rebellion, pitting Felipe against men from other tribes. Salvador's white minority was terrified of the potential force of the black majority, especially after the Malê Revolt of 1835 when 600 slaves and free blacks rose up against the government, so these ethnic rivalries became vital means of social control. All this left black Bahians largely without cohesion, whereas Henry and his fellow slaves were fell under a shared identity as African American slaves forced to toil under a doctrine of exclusive white supremacy.

In the United States, slavery was defended on racial grounds, uniting blacks under the "brand of Negro oppression."[5] Carl Degler asserts that "the historical and deep virulence of North American racism has welded Negroes into an effective social force," pushing African Americans together in the supposedly inferior black identity that had been imposed upon them.[6] And because there was no intermediate position between black and white, white policies propelled African Americans into an alliance that brought together blacks of all skin tones.[7] Because whites represented the vast majority of

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[5] Edmund L. Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982) 69.

[6] Degler 275.

[7] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Perennial, 1989) 215.

Georgia's population, Henry was able to join together with other blacks in their minority status, whereas Felipe was part of the racial majority in Salvador and had less of a need to band together with other Afro-Brazilians.

Another key distinction between the two men is their understanding of freedom in their respective national contexts. Runaways were a fairly common occurrence in Georgia due to its proximity to Florida, which did not join the union until 1845, so Henry's master encouraged him to marry a fellow slave. Of course there was the hope that this union would produce future generations of slaves, but a married man was much less likely to run away than a single man because of the ties he developed to his wife and children. This reliance on the family unit never existed in Bahia, where it was more cost effective to import males only, work them to death, and then replace them with new imports. This created a drastic imbalance between the sexes in the enslaved population across all of Brazil: all economic sectors, from mining gold to sugarcane, in all parts of the country, north, south, urban, and rural, depended on enslaved African males. Because Felipe is surrounded simultaneously by the institutions of slavery and thousands of free blacks, freedom does not have the same idealized gleam to it that it does in the United States, where slavery only dominates society south of the Mason-Dixon line. The African American experience of freedom and equality in the northern states is so different from Henry's situation on a Georgia cotton plantation that freedom takes on a romanticized, rosy tint that it never holds for Felipe.

THE SEARCH FOR LIVELIHOOD

After years of life as enslaved field hands working in gangs under the watchful eye of an overseer, how Henry and Felipe will earn a living in the new free labor economy is the first issue they must resolve. Their lives and the lives of their families depend on it. No longer forced to remain on the cotton plantation as a slave laborer, Henry looks elsewhere for help in acquiring a job. Because there were only 3500 free blacks living in the entire state of Georgia prior to emancipation, as of 1865 there is no established free black community into which Henry can insert himself or from which he can seek aid.[8] He turns instead to the Freedmen's Bureau, a federal government agency initiated by President Abraham Lincoln and made operational in 1865. Having cut a swath of destruction across Georgia as General William Sherman marched to the sea, federal forces and Lincoln's Republican Party are in need of a way to justify the aftermath of the bloody war they had waged against the slave-owning South. By setting up jobs and supervising labor contracts for the recently freed slaves, the Freedmen's Bureau is an ideal tool in the creation of a new social order to replace slavery. The Bureau's main responsibility is to make a free labor system functional in the South, and its flawed efforts strengthen Henry's quest for economic autonomy. With the help of the Freedmen's Bureau, formerly enslaved tradesmen go into business for themselves while agricultural laborers like Henry continue to work in the fields—but under conditions distinct from those they had known before: "Freedmen wished to take control of the conditions under which they labored, free themselves from subordination to white authority, and carve out the greatest measure of economic autonomy."[9]

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[8] Drago 1982: 37.

[9] Foner 1989: 103.

This is all possible because the Georgia economy remains dependent on cotton, and cotton production remains dependent on field hands. Mechanical cotton pickers will not be available for another 90 years and in 1865 the state's total agricultural wealth is one-fifth what it had been when the Civil War broke out, so white plantation owners are desperate to get the black workforce back in the fields.[10] This, combined with the fact that westward migration and the removal of black women and children from the fields has reduced the labor force to 60% what it was under slavery, gives Henry remarkable leverage in his negotiations with the planter class. For the first time, Georgia planters have to negotiate with their workers: "To attract laborers, many planters in 1866 and 1867 found it necessary to raise wages, promise additional pay for harvest work, and offer land free of charge for garden plots."[11] For the first time in his life Henry agitates for fair wages, decent working conditions, and the chance to own land, and "pressed for laborers, planters found themselves faced with the necessity of conceding some changes in the old method of working them or lose potential employees."[12] Landowners are not pleased with this erosion of their economic power: complains one Georgia planter, "Why is it that the planter with all the land and all the capital is dependent upon an independent Negro, who has neither the land nor the money?"[13] Sharecropping makes Henry "too independent; he becomes a partner, and has a right to be consulted."[14] Planters,

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[10] James C. Giesen, "Cotton," 26 May 2004, *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 28 Mar. 2009 <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2087>.

[11] Foner 1989: 139.

[12] Drago 1982: 124.

[13] Drago 1982: 122.

[14] Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1983) 45.

determined to preserve the old forms of domination, find it surprisingly difficult to establish their authority over field hands like Henry thanks to "the freedmen's desire to carve out the greatest possible independence for themselves and their families.[15] Land becomes the battleground upon which the fight over autonomy plays out, and with a lawyer from the Freedmen's Bureau, Henry is able to bring his landowner to court over an unjust crop lien. While Henry's hopes of substantive justice go unmet, his demands and those of other freedmen "set in motion a train of events that fundamentally transformed the plantation labor system."[16]

Desiring independence in the daily organization of labor, North American blacks subdivide the workforce into squads that receive shares of the crop, as opposed to the overseer and gang-labor system of old. A rise in cotton prices in the 1870s and pressure from the Freedmen's Bureau lead to an increase in share size for black field hands, giving birth to sharecropping and ensuring that the planter class no longer exercises their old power. With the aid of an agent from the Freedmen's Bureau, Henry signs a contract with landowners, making his family responsible for cultivating a specific piece of land. Sharecropping provides him with an escape from gang labor and day-to-day white supervision, as he considers himself the landowner's partner and insists on farming his own way far from the eyes of former management. It also represents the first chance for Henry to reap the fruits of his own labor and offers the possibility that someday he can amass enough money to buy the land he and his family till. While this dream does not solidify into reality (the 1880 Georgia census reveals that only 1% of the state's black

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[15] Foner 1989: 136.

[16] Foner 1989: 172.

farmers own less than 2% of available land[17]), sharecropping nevertheless affords Henry's family "more control over their own time, labor and family arrangements, and more hope of economic advancement than many other kinds of labor organization." [18] And even though the statistics on black land ownership may seem grim, Eric Foner asserts that "To no laboring class has capital—land—ever made such concessions as have been made to the colored people of the South."[19]

The quest for livelihood upon which Felipe embarks in Salvador da Bahia in 1888 is quite distinct from Henry's struggle for economic autonomy in 1865 Georgia. Luckily, Felipe has a vast network of free blacks at his disposal who can help him as he searches for a way to make a living: as of 1872, only 11.5% of the city's population is enslaved, while 55.7% of Salvadorans are free Afro-Brazilians.[20] Freedom has been an attainable concept for Afro-Brazilians for the past fifty years as the abolition process gains steam after the criminalization of the slave trade in 1831. Rather than continue to care for their old, crippled, or ill slaves, many planters freed them so that they would no longer be obligated to care for them. As one contemporary observer noted, "in Bahia 'it is not uncommon to give a slave his freedom when he is too old or too infirm to work; that is, to turn him out of doors to beg or starve.'"[21] On top of the avoidance of the responsibilities of slave ownership, the British put the nail in the coffin of Brazilian slavery with

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[17] C. Vann Woodward, *The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1971) 273.

[18] Foner 1983: 45.

[19] Foner 1983: 45.

[20] Rachel Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University, 2000) 10-12.

[21] Degler 71.

diplomatic pressure and commercial harassment against illegal traders. Ultimately it was a "desire on the part of Brazilians to put a stop to British hectoring and to have their country take its place among those nations that refused to participate in a business no longer considered civilized" that led to the end of the slave trade in 1851.[22]

After the trade was effectively banned, Brazilian plantation owners, who were completely dependent upon importation, were no longer able to maintain their slave populations. "Once the trade was closed, slavery could survive as a going labor system only so long as it could replenish itself," but child mortality, maintenance costs, and an imbalance between the sexes meant that the reduced foreign supply of slaves was not easily made up.[23] In Brazil it had always been more economical to import mostly male laborers and work them to death than to breed slaves and invest in their care, but once penalties against importation were enforced, this method of plantation labor was no longer feasible. As inflation raised slave prices during the 1850s and droughts in the Northeast forced planters to trade their slaves to the more prosperous coffee plantations in the South, voluntary manumissions became more frequent. Favorite slaves were freed on special occasions such as birthdays and funerals, but they were still required to either work for their former owners for two to three years or pay their owner their current value. As of 1871, with the passage of the Free Womb Law, the children of slave mothers were freed either when they turned eight years old (and their owners received indemnification from the state), or at age twenty-one (without compensation). The Sexagenarian Law of 1885 mandated that every slave over age sixty must serve for either three more years or until they turned sixty-five, whichever came first, and that year also marked the end of

[22] Degler 92.

[23] Degler 75.

the interprovincial slave trade. Finally, in 1888 Imperial Princess Isabel signed the Lei Aúrea and freed all of the Brazilians who remained enslaved.[24]

Unfortunately, the gradual nature of the abolition process in Brazil also ensures that Felipe's cousin Lucas, enslaved on a sugar plantation outside Salvador, will remain highly dependent on his former master, even in freedom. The fifty-seven year period between the ban on the slave trade and the passage of the Lei Aúrea was sufficient to bind the rural proletariat to the dominant structures of dependency. The leisurely pace of reform "guaranteed a smooth transition and the employment modes permitted the planters to retain their traditional control" over the former slaves.[25] Sugar remains the leading industry in northeastern Brazil, monopolizing land and leaving rural freedpeople like Lucas with few other options for employment. "The existing free rural population was generally the milieu into which the former slaves would at least initially move," as Lucas becomes an impoverished laborer in the new Brazilian free labor agricultural economy.[26] The new economic system actually undermines, endangers, and even destroys his position in production because the free laborer has very little advantage over the slave. By the 1870s the most important forms of free labor are sharecropping and wage earning, but few of the recently freed slaves have the education necessary for salaried jobs or the seed money required for sharecropping.

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[24] Robert Brent Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Atheneum, 1972).

[25] Peter L. Eisenberg, "Abolishing Slavery: The Process on Pernambuco's Sugar Plantations," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 53:4 (Nov. 1972): 592.

[26] Rebecca J. Scott, "Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Postemancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective," Rebecca J. Scott, Seymour Drescher, Hebe Maria Mattos De Castro, George Reid Andrews, Robert M. Levine, Eds., *The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University, 1988) 6.

Forced by a lack of options to remain on the plantation, Afro-Bahian field hands have no leverage in negotiations with the planter class, thanks to technological innovations and the threat of labor substitution. Sugar cane cultivation in nineteenth century Brazil has been revitalized by the introduction of three-roller mills, enclosed furnaces, steam engines, vacuum pans, and bagasse power generation, curtailing the need for workers in the milling process.[27] Undermining the leverage of former slaves still further is the large population of free blacks that still lives on the plantations: "While there was indeed some discussion of encouraging the immigration of indentured workers, the planters turned to the local source of labor and had already begun to recruit on a significant scale even by mid-century."[28] Any financial gains Bahian freedpeople are able to make after emancipation are wiped out by the chronic drought in the interior that brings desperate workers into the coastal sugar zone. This drives down wages as inflation raises the cost of living, so by 1902 real wages are less than they had been in the 1850s.[29]

Neither economic woes nor the gradual drain of slave labor slows Brazilian sugar production, and the Bahian planter class, no longer obligated to provide food and shelter for agricultural workers, actually benefits from abolition. Since white planters "owned virtually all the land in the cane-growing region, they were able to deny access to this land to former slaves except on their terms."[30] Reinstated into production under conditions very similar to those under slavery, the freedpeople " were just as far from

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[27] J.H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography From Its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge University, 1989).

[28] Galloway 160.

[29] Eisenberg 590.

[30] Galloway 160.

being entirely free, with security, prestige, and dignity, as they had been in the recent past."[31] Upon emancipation former slaves like Lucas relinquish explicit coercion and protection for implicit coercion and no protection, and "the majority continued at their hoes, in a style of life not different from the one they had had before abolition."[32] "Abolition had been the result more of a desire to free Brazil from the problems of slavery than of a wish to emancipate the slaves," and now that the problems of slavery have been effectively resolved, those in power can focus on maintaining the benefits of the old system.[33] Abolition for rural Afro-Brazilians like Lucas is nothing more than an "atrocious irony" as they trade one master for another in a continued clientelistic relationship.[34]

If Afro-Brazilians are to forge their own destiny, they must transition into the new juridical-political system "from a caste position that grant(s) them economic, social, and political autonomy."[35] Unfortunately, the abolition of slavery in Brazil is "not accompanied by complementary measures to benefit the liberated."[36] Unlike Henry in Georgia, Lucas and Felipe do not profit from the aid of a government agency or a charitable abolitionist organization. No institution steps forward in 1888 to prepare the former slaves for the new order of life and work because, unlike in the United States,

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[31] Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1969) 23.

[32] Viotti da Costa 170.

[33] Emilia Viotti da Costa, "Master's and Slaves: From Slave Labor to Free Labor," *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill, 2001) 170.

[34] Fernandes 1; Scott 1.

[35] Degler 264.

[36] Toplin 58.

there is no one of power in Brazilian society with "a stake in making the ideal of a racial democracy work." [37] Thanks to the rigidly stable Roman Catholic Church, the paternalistic Portuguese Imperial court, and white economic control, hierarchy and traditional class distinctions define the ideal Brazilian society. The established agricultural and commercial interests that have dominated Bahia since the early days of Portuguese rule deny popular interest groups any real role in government, which severely limits opportunities for Afro-Brazilian self-determination. Since the exclusive patronage system only benefits recognized members of the dominant group, there is little room for Felipe and Lucas to advocate for themselves and make demands on the government. It is simply not in the interests of the Bahian elite to open the doors to the halls of power and welcome the former slaves with open arms. The black worker's position in the labor system and his integration into society are no longer matters of social concern as the dominant classes leave the disempowered former slaves to their own devices.[38]

Having inherited a rigidly structured, centuries-old socioeconomic system based on forced labor, Catholicism, and the monarchy, freedpeople must contend with exclusive forces that are deeply entrenched in Brazilian society. "The master-slave relationship was well-established as the 'structural matrix' or basic paradigm of social organization. This paradigm was visible in patterns of deference, structures of paternalism/patronage, and especially in hierarchies of race and color" in which blacks occupy the bottom rung.[39] "Nothing set(s) forth more succinctly and sharply the paternalistic class relationship of the traditional Brazilian society of the nineteenth century than the ritual acted out twice a

[37] Degler 286.

[38] Viotti da Costa 170.

[39] Harding 11.

day on the sugar plantations" when the slaves would ask for their master's blessing every morning and every evening.[40]

Fortunately for Felipe, as an Afro-Brazilian living in Salvador da Bahia his urban environment offers the chance of much more autonomy and self-determination than the sugar plantation on which his cousin Lucas toils. "Bahia was a black province, and Salvador is a black city," where mulattoes and blacks make up 67.2% of the urban population.[41] It is this city where "the slaves had the greatest freedom of movement and the strongest likelihood of meeting with slaves from their own nation who spoke their African language."[42] Because the Brazilian slave trade continued until 1851, kinship and friendship ties among the recently imported slaves became informal webs of support that maintained the link between Africa and Salvador's black community.[43] By creating "a parallel African world in which people could speak their native tongue, worship their own deities, and otherwise preserve such elements of culture as games crafts, and cuisine," blacks in Bahia build valuable contact networks that benefit recently freed slaves who are struggling to establish themselves in the new social order.[44]

After emancipation, Afro-Brazilians remain largely in the same occupations that they held under slavery: men work in skilled trades and manual labor, while women are

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[40] Degler 253.

[41] Harding 12.

[42] Degler 55.

[43] Degler 60.

[44] Kim Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1998) 143.

domestic servants or street vendors.[45] As a wage-earning escravo de ganho slave responsible for his own housing, food, and clothing, Felipe already had a decent measure of autonomy in his daily life. However, immediately after abolition Felipe makes very little progress in securing professional employment, choosing instead "to work toward the improvement of conditions within (his) traditional occupations."[46] Mainly engaged as an artisan in construction work, he would meet with other escravos de ganho at public plazas, fountains, docks, street corners, and transit hubs to collectively organize in work crews called cantos. After emancipation Felipe continues to do construction work with his canto, sustaining personal connections that naturally give rise to cultural interaction and exchange. Escravos de ganho had always been an important source of materials and information in the Afro-Bahian community, creating networks of friendship, ethnicity, and proximity that led to crucial community building among the black population. Under freedom, the street gains new meaning as an instrument of solidarity and community as members of the canto have more freedom to look out for one another and help each other with tasks. After emancipation Felipe finds employment through his canto and works much as he always has, but for the first time in his life he keeps every centavo he earns.

Soon after emancipation, both Henry in Georgia and Felipe in Bahia have found gainful employment: Henry and his family cultivate cotton on a patch of land owned by their former master just outside Atlanta, and Felipe works with a canto on the docks of Salvador. The routes that these two men follow to find their place in the free labor system come from opposite directions but lead to a measure of autonomy new to each. Henry, with no free black community to turn to for aid, receives assistance from the United

[45] Butler 135.

[46] Butler 140.

States government in his negotiations with white planters, whereas Felipe, denied institutional support from the Catholic Church or the Imperial government, relies on the vast ethnic interpersonal networks established by the city's vast free black population. Having found a way to make a living as free laborers, the next challenge facing Henry and Felipe is finding someone to whom they can turn for guidance as they muddle through the new social order.

THE QUEST FOR LEADERSHIP

With the help of the federal government and the free Afro-Bahian network, respectively, Henry and Felipe have successfully found a way to integrate themselves into the free labor system, but it is within the halls of religion that they seek out trusted guides to pilot them through life after slavery. The American Civil War has shattered the foundations of Georgia society in a revolutionary upheaval of the social fabric of the South, like a massive earthquake that left widening fault lines in its wake.[47] It is on this treacherous ground that former slaves like Henry take their first steps as free people: General Sherman has reduced Atlanta to a smoldering pile of ashes and rubble, and the only African American organization capable of bolstering Henry's efforts at self-determination is the church. Felipe, emancipated into a world much like the one that enslaved him where hierarchy and paternalism determine the lay of the land, turns once again to his Afro-Brazilian connections in his quest for autonomy.

Even during slavery, Henry and other blacks were developing their own churches as "the first social institution fully controlled by black men in America…. The church served as an 'Ecclesiastical Court House'" at the center of African American social life: it does the marrying and the burying, educates children, imparts morality, and offers mutual aid.[48] Having secretly taught himself to read from a Bible hidden in the slave quarters, Henry was a natural choice to lead his fellow field hands in worship, and upon emancipation he becomes well known as a respected preacher.

On the other side of the Equator, Felipe rises from the ranks of initiates to lead a candomblé terreiro, or house of worship, even though he does not inherit the position

[47] Foner 1989: 128; Foner 1983: 11.

[48] Foner 1989: 92.

hereditarily. At the end of the nineteenth century there are ten candomblé terreiros in Salvador, each with its own rituals based on the traditions of a certain nação, or tribal African ethnic group, with which it identifies. Utterly essential to life in Afro-Brazilian communities, candomblé has been instrumental in addressing the physical, social-political, ecological, and spiritual imbalances of Afro-Brazilian life ever since the first days of slavery. Leaders are more than mere priests or healers—they are guides for their people who serve the physical, psychic, and spiritual needs of their congregations.[49]

Both Henry's church and Felipe's terreiro politicize their members as they establish their independence from the dominant forces that dictate black life in the United States and Brazil. Semi-autonomous even under slavery, black churches provide preachers with a degree of self-determination that grows stronger after emancipation: "In freedom the blacks moved toward a complete religious autonomy without which there would have been no black political movement."[50] The unchallenged social and political leader of the black community, "ministers were among the most respected individuals, esteemed for their speaking ability, organizational talents, and good judgment on matters both public and private." [51] As a leader, politician, and orator, it is only natural that Henry's responsibilities as preacher would extend into the world of formal political action. "As one of the few available positions of power and prestige, the ministry inevitably attracted those with leadership potential," so "preachers came to play a central role in black politics during Reconstruction."[52]

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[49] Butler.

[50] Drago 1982: 16.

[51] Foner 1989: 92.

[52] Foner 1989: 93.

Beyond caring for and advising worshippers, "the (black) churches gave financial support to political campaigns, registered voters, and hosted political rallies. The church also produced most of Georgia's black political leaders during Reconstruction."[53] Of the 69 African Americans who serve at the 1867 constitutional convention or in the Georgia state legislature between 1867 and 1872, 24 are preachers.[54] As "the only black political institution capable of providing the organization and leadership necessary to mobilize black voters," the black church becomes the focal point of black political life during Reconstruction.[55] As a momentous effect of emancipation, independent black Christianity inspires a newfound political commitment in Henry and offers him and other former slaves the opportunity to organize in defense of their autonomy.

The most politically active black ministers preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose uniquely black religious content and missionary work after the war attract black worshippers across Georgia. Founded as a reaction against discrimination and grounded in a long tradition of protest, the A.M.E. Church makes little distinction between religion and formal politics—the United States Declaration of Independence, with its focus on equality, is an important part of the theology—and because it is a national, northern-based based organization, it is less susceptible to pressures from white Georgians. Religion directly influences the way in which church

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[53] Foner 1989: 22.

[54] Edmund L. Drago, "Black Legislators During Reconstruction," 9 Sept. 2005, *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 25 Oct. 2008 <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-635>.

[55] Drago 1982: 20.

members express aspirations for justice and autonomy, to the point where "every A.M.E. preacher in Georgia was said to be actively engaged in Republican organizing."[56]

Henry and other black preachers of all denominations work to get out the urban black vote by delivering political speeches, organizing clubs, and distributing campaign documents. "Recognition of their equal rights as citizens quickly emerged as the animating impulse of Reconstruction black politics. In the spring and summer of 1865, blacks organized a seemingly unending series of mass meetings, parades, and petitions demanding civil equality and the suffrage as indispensable corollaries of emancipation."[57] While serving as a voting registrar Henry talks with black voters about the United States' unique history of rights where the ordinary citizen plays a growing part in government. Because the United States has been a politically republican society since the colonial period, few can count on an inherited, established, fixed social status, as documented by Alexis de Tocqueville in the early nineteenth century. Inspired by his travels through the recently independent nation, he observed that democracies like that of the United States "will endure poverty, servitude, barbarism, but they will not endure aristocracy."[58] This is largely because "the English political ideology that the American colonists brought with them was distilled from a long history of conflict between Crown and people."[59] After rejecting kingly rule, individual freedom and the equality of all (white men) become central concerns of citizenship in the United States. Henry invokes this republican heritage—especially the Declaration of Independence—in an attempt to find his voice as

[56] Foner 1989: 282.

[57] Foner 1989: 106.

[58] Degler 254.

[59] Degler 260.

a political organizer, insisting that America live up to its professed ideals. It is this fecund atmosphere of mobilization that makes possible a vast expansion of black political leadership in post-emancipation Georgia.

This historic political environment informed by a struggle for independence simply does not exist in Bahia, but that is not to say that candomblé does not have repercussions for Afro-Brazilian self-determination. Felipe's terreiro brings together Afro-Bahians from all walks of life to perform sacred rituals relating individual and divine energies, mediate disputes, and build the infrastructure of a new Afro-Brazilian identity. Because Salvador's white minority (recorded as 32.8% of the city's total population in 1872) has always been terrified of the black majority uniting against them, they historically encouraged ethnic differentiation as a means of social control: "The public authorities were well aware, apparently, of the dangers inherent in permitting slaves of the same nation from Africa to be together. Hence they sometimes encouraged rivalries among the African nations."[60] Masters intentionally bought slaves from different nações in order to avoid rebellion, dividing Bahia "into subgroups of ethnic Nagôs, middle-class Brazilian mulattoes, Angolan candomblé practitioners, and so on."[61] Because skin color has never been the sole basis of ethnic identity in Brazil, nor was it a clear identifier of the inferior status of the enslaved, it cannot be used as a uniting force for self-determination. Legal status and tribal identity have always been more important than blackness, and because people of African descent have been strictly differentiated into slave and free, dark and light, African- and Brazilian-born, it is difficult to come together in the fight for autonomy.

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[60] Harding 12; Degler 55.

[61] Butler 131.

While it may be impossible to label Salvador's black population with a single racial term, candomblé has become a generative force in an alternative orientation based on a collective African-inspired identity. Because it was originally founded by a woman of the Ewe tribe, Felipe's terreiro identified as such for decades, but now that their pai de santo is of the Nagô tribe, the terreiro welcomes members of multiple ethnicities. It is a vital bridge over ethnic and color lines that lays the foundation for an integrated Afro-Bahian society and maintains the connection between Brazil and the African continent. Gradual integration into a candomblé terreiro eases tribal differences and incorporates blacks in a broader ethnic construct that becomes the organizing principle of group identity. "These redefined collective identities gave Afro-Brazilians new strength and political potential. Afro-Brazilians came to recognize ethnicity as a malleable concept that could be used as a strategy of social and political advancement just as it had been used traditionally as a tool of oppression."[62] As candomblé recreates Afro-Bahians' social identity to their advantage, it simultaneously redefines the nação, which becomes the basis for pan-African identity and solidarity. The nação as an adopted, assumed identity within candomblé emphasizes cultural practices and beliefs, allowing autonomous cultural ethnicity to prevail as a unifying survival mechanism in a highly discriminatory society. "The development of empowering ethnic identities became a critical avenue to power for a people systematically denied that power by the societies in which they lived."[63] Candomblé represents an embrace of African-ness and blackness that "offered an alternative model for the meaning of Brazilian community, polity, and humanity."[64]

[62] Butler 48.

[63] Butler 48.

[64] Harding 157.

Through his participation in candomblé, Felipe takes pride in his African heritage and unites in common self-interest with other Afro-Bahian worshippers.

Back in Georgia, Henry's politicization moves into the public sphere with the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The United States is the only nation among those that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century to, "within a few years of emancipation, clothe its former slaves with citizenship rights equal to those of whites."[65] Having finally ratified legislation so that African American males can cast their ballots, the Republican scalawags and carpetbaggers move quickly to harness and exploit their new political base. By 1868, Henry and almost every black voter in the state is part of a Union League, auxiliary organizations that the Republican Party created in order to recruit Southern votes. Held in a room with a Bible and a copy of the Declaration of Independence on prominent display, Union League meetings open with a prayer, followed by members' pledges to uphold the Republican Party and equal rights. Since their main function is political education, Henry and his fellow members read Republican newspapers out loud to one another, debate divisive issues, and prepare for party rallies. "In Union Leagues, Republican gatherings, and impromptu local meetings, ordinary blacks in 1867 and 1868 staked their claim to equal citizenship in the American republic."[66]

In a successful manifestation of their calls for equality, Henry and more than 40 other black teachers and ministers create the Georgia Equal Rights and Educational Association in 1866 to educate freedmen about voting and to secure equal rights for every citizen. At its peak the organization counts on 2000 members in 50 Georgia counties and

[65] Foner 1989: 279.

[66] Foner 1989: 288.

provides the fledgling preacher-politicians with much-needed experience, boosting their self-confidence and preparing them to participate in the state Constitutional Convention a year later. Of the 170 delegates present at the Georgia Constitutional Convention, 37 are black. Sixteen of those delegates are preachers like Henry, and nine of those preachers are part of the A.M.E. Church. Henry and the other black convention delegates strive to write a Constitution that will explicitly guarantee formal political and civil rights equal to those of whites, granting the former slaves universal manhood suffrage and a real measure of political power during Reconstruction. Henry lacks the skills, the experience, and the self-confidence to effectively represent his constituents and stand up to the white power structure present at the convention—"yet while generally remaining silent, black delegates proved perfectly capable of judging political and constitutional questions and promoting the interests of their constituents. On issues of civil rights and access to education, blacks… formed a unified bloc."[67] After his success at the 1867 convention, Henry successfully runs for the state legislature and takes his seat in 1868.

However, 1868 is the year that changes everything in Georgia politics: Henry's seat in the legislature is barely warm when 28 of the 32 the black representatives are forcibly expelled, giving rise to a wave of Ku Klux Klan violence and anti-black legislation. This institutionalized repression consolidates the black legislators' subordinated racial identity into a potential base for resistance, creating an unprecedented racial awareness in Henry and a growing disillusionment with the existing power structures. The expulsion propels African Americans into a political alliance that brings together blacks of all skin tones in a shared identity.[68] After the expulsion, "the black

[67] Foner 1989: 319.

[68] Foner 1989: 215.

political elite became more militant, self-sufficient, and black-oriented. Black politicians began to challenge the hegemony of Georgia whites."[69] Thereafter "most black politicians were consciously aware of their blackness, publicly committed to their race's well-being, and able to influence large numbers of freedmen."[70] After 1868, black representatives unite under "the brand of Negro oppression" in the struggle for equality, but are quick to stress "their disavowal of aspirations for what they called 'social equality.'" [71] They focus instead on the fight for " 'public equality,' by which they apparently meant civil and political rights."[72]

Henry becomes so politically assertive that shortly after the expulsion, he and the most prominent black politicians in Georgia create the Civil and Political Rights Association to lobby Congress for redress of black grievances. In a landmark victory, the group successfully pressures carpetbagger Governor Rufus Bullock to veto blatantly anti-black legislation, a feat made easier by Bullock's egalitarian, "one man, one vote" tendencies. Governor Bullock signs the Congressional Reorganization Act of 1869, successfully reseating the black legislators who had been expelled and earning much-needed support for the Republican Party from the state's black population. "These unlettered men (of the Civil and Political Rights Association) went to work to do their business of retribution and recovery of their privileges in an extraordinarily practical way…. The colored leaders, deserted in this valued matter by their white allies, for the

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[69] Drago 1982: 51.

[70] Drago 1982: 68.

[71] Drago 1982: 69; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University,1966) 28.

[72] Woodward 1966: 28.

first and only time in the protracted play of Reconstruction, self-reliantly took the bit in their own mouths and organized for a race victory."[73]

There are no race-based activist organizations in Salvador and civil rights do not become a key issue in Bahian politics until the twentieth century, even though nearly two-thirds of the city's population is black. Unlike in the United States, where blackness exists in a dichotomy with whiteness, "blackness" is a tricky term for Afro-Brazilians. Because the majority of dark-skinned Salvadorans had already been freed prior to 1888, skin color does not immediately signify an inferior enslaved status, creating disunity among the city's African-descended population. The hierarchy born of color gradations in skin tone and the link to tribal African ethnicities further deny Afro-Bahians a sense of united self-interest from which they can demand autonomy. Most blacks in the United States were born into slavery, while in Brazil the distinctions between African-born and Brazilian-born as well as between tribes like Jêje and Nagô split up the black population.[74] Ultimately, this combination of factors that play into Afro-Brazilian identity "left the blacks without cohesion or leaders" and negates a "basis for political consensus that was a necessary precondition for the creation of a mass interest group." [75] Not even the "so-called African survivals" like language, religion, or food that are so ubiquitous in Bahia are not uniform enough to join black Salvadorans in a shared pan-African identity.[76] The closest Felipe comes to a pan-African organization is his own terreiro,

[73] Drago 1982: 56.

[74] Degler 54.

[75] Degler 275; Butler 131.

[76] Degler 61.

thanks to the camaraderie it inspires among worshippers from various tribal ethnic groups.

1868 marks the year of black politicization in Georgia, with the expulsion of the African American legislators as well as the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. From the year in which Henry becomes eligible to participate in Atlanta politics until the early 1890s, "black Atlantans were prominent participants in local politics."[77] This high level of participation is largely due to the precarious position of the Republican Party in Georgia: in the words of one carpetbagger, " "Republican leaders are not situated in the South as they are in the North.'"[78] These politicians, many of them native Northerners, represent the new order that has destroyed the traditional Southern way of life, and while Republicans dominate Georgia government during Reconstruction, they exist in a time and place that is largely hostile to their radical ideals. They are a minority among Southerners, and the stakes are high: if they lose their political positions, not only will they lose power, but they will lose their livelihood as well. Therefore the Georgia Republicans know that if they do not inform their black constituents of their rights as voters and invite them to participate in the formal political process, they will lose political dominance and their only source of income. Because of this desperate dependence on black support, Henry actively exercises the franchise and takes part in electoral politics until the 1890s. Between 1868 and 1890, the proportion of black registered voters in the Atlanta ranges from 10% to 39%.[79] Throughout Reconstruction,

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[77] Eugene J. Watts, "Black Political Progress in Atlanta: 1868-1895," *The Journal of Negro History*, 59:3 (Jul. 1974): 268.

[78] Foner 1989: 348.

[79] Watts 268.

freedmen make up a large majority of Republican voters, and "when not deterred by violence, blacks eagerly attended political gatherings, and voted in extraordinary numbers."[80] Newspapers often allege that attempts to attract large crowds to integrated political rallies are geared especially at black voters, who are courted directly by white candidates.

However, "With black votes taken for granted and political independence all but impossible, black politicos had little choice other than to act as 'field hands' for the Republican Party."[81] African American voters are frequently coerced, defrauded, and intimidated, but they continue to participate in the electoral process until the early 1890s. In the words of a Northern abolitionist, "'Any powerful body of voters may be cajoled today and intimidated tomorrow and hated always, but it can never be left out of sight.' As a voter the Negro was both hated and cajoled, both intimidated and courted, but he could never be ignored so long as he voted."[82] Not surprisingly, Atlanta's black voters only decide electoral outcomes when the white vote is divided, and most Atlantans actively oppose black representation in city government.

"The only time Afro-Americans gained seats in city government came in 1870, when the Radicals controlled the city legislature and reinstated the old system of ward elections for the City Council."[83] It will be the last time that African Americans gain an elective Atlanta municipal office until 1953. The two former slaves elected to the City Council in December of1870 are George Graham and William Finch from Atlanta's

[80] Foner 1989: 291.

[81] Foner 1989: 545.

[82] Woodward 1966: 54.

[83] Watts 273.

Third and Fourth Wards, respectively. Because the 1868 expulsion of black representatives from the state legislature results in military rule for Georgia once more, African Americans stand a chance of winning direct representation in government for the first time. The Congressional Reorganization Act of 1869 authorizes Governor Bullock not only to reseat the expelled legislators, but also "to purge the white members who were regarded as being disloyal to the Reconstruction program. They were to be replaced by the candidates who had received the next highest number of votes in the 1868 election. This maneuver enabled the Radicals to gain control of the legislature," and the new legislators pass an act giving Atlanta Republicans the chance to elect city councilmen from mostly black wards.[84]

The struggle to lay the foundation for the rights and privileges that accompany first-class citizenship marks the post-Reconstruction era for Henry. White Republicans, with their "patronizing pose and self-flattering paternalism", dominate the party organization and the political rewards that it bestows upon the faithful, while Henry occupies a minor patronage post as a land office clerk.[85] Desperate for official recognition of their legitimate status in the political system, Henry and other blacks tire of "having their political influence end at the ballot box and demanded direct representation."[86] "It did not take long for black leaders to become dissatisfied with the role of junior partners

[84] Clarence A. Bacote, "William Finch, Negro Councilman and Political Activities in Atlanta During Early Reconstruction," *The Journal of Negro History*, 40:4 (Oct., 1955): 343.

[85] Woodward 1966: 51.

[86] Watts 272.

in the Republican coalition," leading them to demand a more important role in Atlanta politics than "stepping stones to office."[87]

What Henry does not know is that his role as a "stepping stone" is better than nothing. As a black man in Brazil, Felipe is seen as an enemy of whites, even years after emancipation. Because of the vivid history of aggressive slave insurrections and rebellions, even proponents of abolition view Afro-Brazilians as bestial and dehumanized. Those who once considered themselves the protectors of the freedpeople justified the campaign against slavery by claiming that blacks, deprived of reason, were utterly ignorant of their inferiority and did not possess the mental tools to rationally defend their human rights. Assuming that the former slaves have no notion of morality and are too dim-witted to be responsible with their newly acquired liberty and become respectful citizens, white Brazilians predict that blacks will instead exhibit purely antisocial behavior. Because of this freedom is "useless in black hands," and Afro-Bahians are expected to turn to crime, begging, and vagrancy. Those in power pass legislation to force freedmen to work, to punish delinquency, and to augment the police in order to guarantee the security of individuals and property.[88] The complete lack of intellectual communication between the elite white abolitionists and the Afro-Brazilian community continues into freedom, thanks in large part to the drastically different worlds in which the two populations exist.[89]

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[87] Foner 1989: 352.

[88] Robert Brent Toplin, "From Slavery to Fettered Freedom: Attitudes toward the Negro in Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 7:1 (Summer 1970): 3-12.

[89] Célia M. Marinho de Azevedo, "Irmão ou inimigo: o escravos no imaginário abolicionista dos EUA e do Brasil," *Revista USP*, *Dossiê Povo Negro—300 Anos* (São Paulo: USP, 1989) 96-109.

The Brazilian abolitionists were raised in the heart of the slave-owning establishment, and so they had no empathy or admiration for blacks like Felipe. The common wisdom was that Africa was a land of vice that had exported those vices to Brazil via captive black vectors. They thought of the slaves as victims who were ultimately bad societal elements.[90] Nevertheless, it was by virtue of the enslaved blacks' contributions to the economy that the Brazilian abolitionists were able to build a new societal class out of the wealth that came from the expansion of foreign trade and light industrialization in the 1870s. Unlike their parents, this burgeoning class of professionals, businessmen, storeowners, and lenders were not dependent on slavery and thought that continued reliance on the system could only lead Brazil to ruin. Their brand of abolitionism was secular and scientific, grounded in the intellectual conviction that slavery could only ruin the harmonious Brazilian society and hold the country back from progress and modernity. But for all their opinions on the subject of slavery, the majority of abolitionists maintained their social distance from the slaves that they had helped to liberate.[91] What this means for Felipe is that there are no whites who are willing to sustain the Afro-Brazilian struggle for self-determination, whereas the national Republican Party has no choice but to do so.

The highly visible "professional" black politicians holding minor Republican Party positions and patronage jobs in the 1880s offer another chance for blacks to have direct representation in the Atlanta municipal government. "Their major goals seemed to have been political, rather than social or economic, and they concentrated on eliminating

[90] Azevedo.
[91] Azevedo.

restrictions on and expanding the domain of black political participation."[92] Their original weapon of choice in the fight for representation is the self-appointed citizens' nominating committee, with a focus on gaining representation on the committees and then pressing for black candidates on the tickets. In 1886 Henry and other black Atlantans threaten to desert each political party unless black men are put on the committees, and both parties give in, seating a total of four black men. However, African American requests for the inclusion of black candidates on the ticket are not even considered. This further politicizes black voters, so that "by 1887, many Afro-Americans were adopting a more militant stance in municipal politics, insisting on their own representation in city offices. The critical role played by black Atlantans in preceding elections and especially (on nominating committees), appeared to re-awaken their aspirations for black office-holders."[93] Frustrations and aspirations inspire Henry and two other black men to announce their candidacies for city office in 1887, in addition to a straight black ticket, but all of the black candidates are trounced at the polls, earning three to four percent of the votes across the city.

This disastrous defeat nearly destroys the dream of black representation in municipal government, but blacks continue to organize on nominating committees in an attempt to exert their influence on behalf of their community. The Negro Press Association of Georgia meets in Atlanta in 1892 and advises blacks to refuse to support any party or ticket that fails to put up black candidates for public office, and several prominent Atlantans make public statements demanding direct representation. "Smith Easley, a well-known black politician warned: 'The time has come when we are going to

[92] Watts 269.

[93] Watts 277.

solidify… we are going to align ourselves with no party in which we are not allowed representation;'"[94] "Reverend E.R. Carter wrote on black political aspirations: 'All he asks is a citizen's privilege, the rights of a tax-payer and free access to the public positions of the city;'"[95] "Jake McKinley, a wealthy and influential black citizen, reemphasized: 'What we want is representation.'"[96] Unfortunately, the more militant blacks become, the more white reaction grows and hardens, to the point that a white primary is instituted in 1892 and a stringent registration law enacted that allows only taxpayers to vote. Because it is a one-party system all major decisions are made in the primary, so black Atlantans are effectively stripped of all political influence. By 1900, nine hundred blacks are registered to vote in the city, but it is obvious that they play no role in municipal politics.[97]

Between 1868 and the turn of the century, Henry is incontestably active in the Atlanta political arena. Pulled into politics via participation in the black church as the local black minister, he forms ward clubs, participates in conventions, sits on nominating committees, and speaks out in the press demanding representation in city government.

> *"(Black faces) began to appear in wholly unprecedented and unexpected places—in the jury box and on the judge's bench, in council chamber and legislative hall, at the polls and the market place…. For a time old and new rubbed shoulders—and so did black and white—in a manner that differed significantly from Jim Crow of the future or slavery of the past."*[98]

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[94] Watts 279.

[95] Watts 283.

[96] Watts 280.

[97] Watts.

[98] Woodward 1966: 26.

However, when black politicians threaten the reigning system of "perpetual second-class citizenship by striving for direct representation, the hope for significant political progress in Atlanta faded into memory."[99]

Instead of agitating for representation in government, the most visible activism on the part of Afro-Bahians for the first fifty years after emancipation is directed toward the protection of cultural freedom. Barred from politics by a long history of patronage and rigid social hierarchies of legal status and skin color, Felipe turns instead to candomblé, brotherhood associations, and Carnival clubs to express his autonomy. Kim Butler argues that even though this is outside the formal political realm of the electoral process, it nonetheless can have important political repercussions for black Brazilians: "The simple act of manifesting African-based cultural forms was a political act of self-determination in that it counteracted the restrictive ideologies of the dominant culture." Candomblé, banned in Bahia until 1976, offers Felipe a visceral way to assert himself in the face of repressive government policies. Hidden from slave-owners and police forces under the guise of Catholicism, Felipe employs syncretism as a subterfuge against police raids by aligning each of the ôrixás, or deities, with a Catholic saint and worshipping at an altar designed in the Catholic style. Felipe's objective in this ploy is to safeguard his terreiro's rituals and keep alive the lived reality of his homeland in Benin: the chants, dances, drums, songs, animal sacrifices, and offertory meals. Performed to welcome the presence of the ôrixás among mortals, candomblé offers Felipe the empowering chance to witness or take part in a direct link to the sacred through possession and connects Afro-Bahian

[99] Watts 268.

worshippers to the holy despite the societal forces that hold them down.[100] When the opportunities of abolition fell short of Afro-Bahians' expectations, "they staked out social spaces to be conquered through collective activism. By so doing, they forced Brazilian society to open its doors to a population of African descent no longer willing to accept the terms of its exclusion."[101]

Having lost his place in state and municipal politics, Henry and other former slaves successfully break down the doors of Georgia society in order to construct the state's first system of free public education. The first schools in Georgia to open after the war had operated clandestinely during slavery, and "the primary impetus and sustaining force (behind the education movement) came from the state's African Americans."[102] Determined to create the state's first public schools for blacks, former slaves band together immediately after emancipation "in a grassroots movement to build, fund, and staff schools" and "to establish free and universal public education."[103] Henry pays monthly tuition fees for each of his children, raises funds for teacher's room and board, contributes money to buy a lot for a schoolhouse, and donates material and labor to build it.[104] At first, "education was something blacks provided for themselves, received as charity, or wrung from a reluctant state that relegated them to separate and unequal

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[100] Edison Carneiro, "Como se desenrole uma festa de candomblé," *Candomblés da Bahia* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2002) 59-62.

[101] Butler 133.

[102] Ronald E. Butchart, "Freedmen's Education During Reconstruction," 3 Sept. 2002, *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 30 Mar. 2009 < http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-634>.

[103] David Tyack and Robert Lowe, "The Constitutional Moment: Reconstruction and Black Education in the South," *American Journal of Education*, 94:2 (Feb. 1986): 236.

[104] Butchart.

schools."[105] Diverse motives fuel the movement: churchgoers want to read the Bible; sharecroppers like Henry know that whites cheat freedmen who can not read contracts or complete accounts; eligible voters recognize the bond between literacy, knowledge, citizenship, and power.[106]

The forces behind the educational crusade are just as diverse: the federal government (represented by the military and the Freedmen's Bureau), Northern religious and philanthropic groups, and black community organizers work to provide education despite an utter lack of support from the state or local government. In the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, "There came into the South during and after the Civil War, a host of helpers."[107] With the support of the army, the Freedmen's Bureau rents buildings for schoolrooms, provides books and transportation for teachers, coordinates school administration through state superintendents, and offers logistical support, while voluntary associations provide the teachers and funds.[108]

Teachers are more than classroom instructors: they also serve as community leaders, resolve contract disputes, work in the church, and petition the government on their students' behalf, drawing them into the political process. Education had been at the top of the state Republican agenda since the Civil War, with a public school system the most important plank in the party's platform. The core Radical ideology under Reconstruction is "the idea of a powerful national state guaranteeing blacks equal

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[105] Tyack and Lowe 239-240.

[106] Tyack and Lowe; Foner 1989.

[107] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Cultural Missions of Atlanta University," *Phylon (1940-1956)*, 3:2 (2nd Qtr., 1942): 105.

[108] Butchart.

standing in the polity and equal opportunity in a free labor economy," and education is a useful tool for achieving this goal.[109] With its inherent potential to plant genuine republicanism in the former slaves and equip them to take full advantage of their citizenship and economic self-reliance, education is the foundation upon which all efforts to help the freedmen rest.

The establishment of schools is the only activity of Freedmen's Bureau intended to leave permanent institutions, but even so, this is judged to be too impermanent and fragile a base for a lasting education system. Northern teachers see their job as temporary relief work, whereas the Freedmen's Bureau pins its hopes of sustainability on local school systems. As the demand for education among Georgia's blacks grows with their desire for autonomy, "there came the conviction that such school systems could only be supported and made permanent by normal schools which would furnish teachers."[110] A growing number of black college graduates in need of employment demand a position in black schools, and while white teachers do not want to lose their jobs, blacks can easily be paid lower salaries. Henry circulates petitions arguing that many white teachers are not qualified and do not attend sufficiently to black students in the hopes that the new class of black college graduates will be granted teaching positions instead. At first, in 1878, only blacks who were born and educated in the South are eligible to teach black students, and in 1887, whites are banned from teaching in black schools. While Henry sees this as a victory, white political leaders continually experiment with different ways to cheat black communities out of meager school funds. "One was to increase the number of pupils enrolled in black schools while paying black and white teachers about the same salaries.

[109] Foner 1989: 237.

[110] Du Bois 106.

Another was to pay teachers according to certificates they held and to assign lower certificates to blacks."[111] The only state whose education provision was merely perfunctory, Georgia makes it especially easy to cheat black schools out of the necessary resources.

In Salvador, there is little effort made to help the freedmen, who learn to help themselves without support from other sectors of Bahia's monarchical, hierarchical, patriarchal, unequal society.[112] Willingly or otherwise, Brazilians of all skin tones have been stuck under the thumb of the Roman Catholic Church for centuries. When only priests are permitted to read the Bible and they choose to translate from Latin into Portuguese only the passages that serve elite interests, that not only makes it difficult to use the Bible to justify one's human rights, it also utterly stifles black leadership. Sadly but not surprisingly, there are no political or religious texts in nineteenth century Brazil that can be used to start a constructive conversation between the former slaves and white society. A legacy of the American abolitionist movement, intellectual communication between the races occurs on a slightly broader scale in the United States.

Despite all odds, the education movement in Georgia continues its uphill climb, thanks in part to the popular universal belief that "democracy bolstered by intelligence was the final answer to all social problems."[113] Having worked in the Freedmen's Bureau or in Northern aid organizations, "the new superintendents of education viewed schooling as the foundation of a new, egalitarian social order."[114] Georgia Supreme Court Justice

[111] Tyack and Lowe 251.

[112] Azevedo.

[113] Du Bois 105.

[114] Foner 1989: 365-366.

Joe Brown argues that it is wrong to deprive blacks of educational opportunities since they are citizens and it is the responsibility of the state to make them good citizens.[115] It is thought that, without an education, it will be difficult for blacks to take their places as useful citizens and they will turn instead to idleness and crime.

The first concrete attempt to establish and maintain a public school system in Atlanta comes in 1870, when Governor Bullock signs a bill granting a $100,000 bond for public schools. "Negroes of Atlanta were especially elated and began to feel that they were about to see the fulfillment of their dreams," but no action is actually taken on behalf of public schools for blacks.[116] Opponents of the bond argue that black children already had a free education available to them from the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern missionaries, and when the Democrats overthrow the Reconstruction government in 1871, the educational crusade stalls. In February of 1872 a second attempt is made when the Atlanta Board of Education takes charge of two schools formerly operated by Northern missionaries, motivating Henry to lead petition campaigns and strategic voting on behalf of the education movement. Along with other black Republicans, Henry pressures the City Council to create two grammar schools for black students in old rented buildings, and in exchange for black votes in the 1888 election, black leaders gain four seats on the Board of Education, a seat on the City Council, and a new school building.[117]. "Republicans had established, for the first time in Southern history, the principle of state responsibility for public education."[118]

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[115] Bacote.

[116] Bacote 357.

[117] Watts.

[118] Foner 1989: 366.

The best-known legacy of the Georgia educational crusade, however, is Atlanta University, established in 1867 "to provide social leadership for a seriously disadvantaged group."[119] Founder Edmund Asa Ware's goal is to make the black man the social equal of others in an environment of academic freedom: white teachers and black students eat together in the campus dining room, and the university asserts its right to decide whom and what it should teach. The administration refuses to cave in to government pressure, even after the state refuses to finance it, and $8000 in federal funds and Northerners' donations more than make up for the withdrawal of state aid. The university "firmly established the idea in the minds of the nation of the possibility and feasibility of giving the highest training to Negroes" and the hope was that by empowering a new generation of black voters, the school would receive increasing amounts of state aid.[120] Sadly, "diminishing educational opportunities for blacks accompanied the loss of political rights and influence" suffered by Atlanta blacks during the last few decades of the nineteenth century.[121] With the rise of the Democrats to power in 1871, Henry's children are forced to attend disastrously under-funded schools, but the educational progress of the Reconstruction years prepares them for the new wave of repression. For, "as Du Bois wrote, 'Had it not been for the Negro school and college, the Negro would to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery.'"[122]

Had it not been for Salvador's intricate interpersonal Afro-Brazilian networks, Felipe too might have fallen back into the degradations of slavery. Not only do the cantos

[119] Du Bois 106.

[120] Du Bois 106.

[121] Tyack and Lowe 236.

[122] Tyack and Lowe 249.

with which he works provide valuable solidarity and community, but they also lead to the creation of religious and occupational mutual aid associations called irmandades. These served as support networks and insurance funds, and "in the 1850s, every Bahian—free and slave—belonged to at least one irmandade."[123] These organizations link Felipe to his more established African-descended neighbors in an attempt to create a space for black participation within the Brazilian polity. "Significantly, the lay brotherhoods provided a physical and cultural-communal space relatively independent of outside control…. The brotherhoods were spaces recognized by the dominant society in which blacks could exercise a certain autonomy over their affairs."[124] Led by affluent Salvadorans, the Catholic irmandades use special occasions as rites of legitimization of their subaltern authority and demonstrate Afro-Brazilians' capacity for leadership and organization to the rest of society. Religious festivals are "the members' opportunity to parade the glory and prestige of their brotherhood, thus reflecting positively on their own status. Brotherhoods competed to outdo one another with the splendor of their festivals."[125] The festas also demonstrate the financial contributions of brotherhood leaders, who are some of the most well to do black business and tradespeople in Salvador, freed long before the signing of the Lei Aúrea. The Catholic lay brotherhood known as Bom Jesus dos Martírios counts on many of the most prestigious light-skinned Bahian elites as honorary members, lending the group added prestige and public recognition and demonstrating a symbolic political alliance with more acceptable social elements.

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[123] Harding 122.

[124] Harding 122.

[125] Butler 153.

Of course, not all of the irmandades in Salvador are religious. "Afro-Brazilians participated actively in the trade associations that proliferated at the turn of the century" and that offer important social security and retirement benefits to their members.[126] Since many occupations in post-abolition Brazil are defined by skin color, these trade associations become race-based collectives that offer pensions for their members in the event of retirement, disability, or death. Like many other working-class black men, Felipe joins several organizations in order to ensure that his family will be taken care of in the future. One of the brotherhoods that Felipe is a part of is the Sociedade Protectora dos Desvalidos, founded in order to care for black men who were no longer able to hold a job. Felipe makes financial contributions for eighteen years of his working life, and in return receives disability and funeral benefits as well as pensions for his widow and children. Members of the Sociedade Protectora dominate the leadership of other trade associations and the organization creates a special membership category called "socios protectores" that is open to non-blacks who are highly influential in Bahian society. These socios are chosen for their ability to aid society, and because so many of them are politicians, the Sociedade Protectora enjoys a tax-exempt status and an annual government subsidy. Comments from meeting minutes reveal the group's sensitivity to being included in the ranks of "civilized people":

> *"The Sociedade was an association of black men who had great personal and race pride. In the final analysis, it was that pride which proved great enough for them to set aside their serious personal differences for the good name of their race and their Sociedade. Although race is rarely mentioned in their discussions, the Protectora was adamant that only dark-skinned blacks (prêtos) be admitted. They also conducted their business dealings with other blacks, whenever possible."*[127]

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[126] Butler 138.

[127] Butler 162.

The Sociedade Protectora is a valuable economic resource for Felipe as well, who like most Sociedade members is an artisan in the construction trade. The organization owns substantial residential and commercial assets that are in constant need of repair, and it contracts out almost entirely to members, who in turn subcontract out to one another.

Beyond providing economic opportunities for their members, Salvador's brotherhoods crack open a space in the Bahian polity for black organized autonomy, linking elite and humble Afro-Brazilians in a shared religious, occupational, or racial identity. By making overtures to well-known community members and holding festivals in the streets of the city, the irmandades publicly legitimize their leadership as well as their role in Salvadoran society. So while Henry toils to give his children an education and struggles to advocate for his people within Atlanta's unstable political landscape, Felipe finds a measure of self-determination within an Afro-Bahian framework that is strictly outside the realm of formal politics. Unfortunately, Atlanta electoral politics and Salvadoran public life do not remain conducive to Henry and Felipe's efforts towards self-determination for long.

REPRESSION

Even during Radical Reconstruction, whites continue to live by the old dogma of their own supremacy and naturalized black inferiority that had guided life in antebellum Georgia, and "virtually from the moment the Civil War ended, the search began for legal means of subordinating a volatile black population."[128] Legal means are put into place to limit Henry's freedom of movement, and the state militia is utterly ineffective at suppressing the Ku Klux Klan violence that erupts in 1868. The KKK, stimulated by the egalitarian leanings of the governing Republican Party, decimates party organizations and Union Leagues by 1869 and is firmly entrenched in the Georgia political scene by 1870. "It aimed to reverse the interlocking changes sweeping over the South during Reconstruction: to destroy the Republican party's infrastructure, undermine the Reconstruction state, reestablish control of the black labor force, and restore racial subordination in every aspect of Southern life."[129] Armed local groups acting on their own initiative threaten Henry on a daily basis and interfere with polls, making it nearly impossible for Henry to vote. Unfortunately blacks have no voice whatsoever in the police force and judicial system, so instead of dispensing justice and protecting black suffrage, "the courts of Presidential Reconstruction appeared more interested in disciplining the black population."[130] In 1868, "eleven Georgia counties with black majorities recorded no votes at all for the Republican ticket," and soon thereafter party leaders tell Henry to abandon all political activities except for voting Republican.[131]

[128] Foner 1989: 198.

[129] Foner 1989: 426.

[130] Foner 1989: 205.

[131] Foner 1989: 343.

Just as white Georgians strike out against black self-determination via the very same political channels by which the former slaves seek empowerment, as in the days of Brazilian slavery, "government officials sought to suppress African customs such as dances, languages, and religious rites."[132] Even the first Republican Penal Code of 1890, a law designed to remove racial discrimination, punishes the public practice of capoeira with a jail sentence of up to 6 months.[133] This legal victory is a defeat in daily life for black Salvadorans, who live in the cradle of capoeira. In the post-abolition period, the socioeconomic mobility of Felipe's children relies on their ability to obtain a lighter-skinned sexual partner, so that future generations are not subjected to the virulent racism that plagues the lives of particularly dark-skinned Bahians like Felipe. "Sex has been used as a safety valve in Brazil. The lowest on the skin color ranking scale could always improve the lot of their children (and thereby partly improve their own lot) by having lighter colored children."[134] Because Brazilians recognize finer shadings of skin color, sex is widely employed as a tool in the racialized system of social control. Even after the 1891 military coup that deposes Portuguese Emperor Dom Pedro II, the superficial sway that the decentralized national government holds over the republic sustains the dominant racist ideologies of local elites, restricting economic, social, and political opportunities for Afro-Brazilians.

The racist ideologies that drive the actions of white Georgia politicians after the war lead to the most thorough attempt to undo Reconstruction in the South when the

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[132] Degler 54.

[133] Sérgio Salomão Shecaira, "Racism in Brazil: A Historical Perspective," 2007, *Cairn*, 2 Apr. 2009 <www.cairn.info/load_pdf.php?ID_ARTICLE=RIDP_073_0141>.

[134] Patrick L. Cooney, "Brazil: Where Class is More Important than Race? Are They Crazy?" The *Vernon Johns Society*, 2 Apr. 2009 <http://www.vernonjohns.org/plcooney/brazil.html>; Degler.

Democrats gain control of the state legislature in 1870 and Governor Bullock resigns a year later. However, it is not until 1877 that the nail in the coffin of Reconstruction is firmly pounded in. The infamous Compromise of 1877, where federal troops are removed from the former Confederate States in return for Rutherford B. Hayes' election to the White House, represents the failure of the national government to protect black rights and leaves Henry's fate in the hands of local whites. "As a period when Republicans controlled the Southern polity, blacks enjoyed extensive political power, and the federal government accepted responsibility for protecting the fundamental rights of black citizens, Reconstruction came to an irrevocable end with the inauguration of Hayes."[135] C. Vann Woodward characterizes the 1877 withdrawal of troops as "the acquiescence of the rest of the country in the South's demand that the whole problem be left to the disposition of the dominant Southern white people."[136] As Northern radicals begin to lose interest in the freedmen's cause, the federal government abandons the idea of intervention to protect black rights and is rendered impotent on all matters relating to Southern blacks. Expressing his frustration with the failures of Reconstruction, A.M.E. bishop and state legislator Henry M. Turner says, "But for all, what have we got in Georgia, simply the right to vote and sit in the General Assembly…. Not a single law has ever been passed by the Georgia Legislature or by any city municipality in the whole State, that was intended, or even contemplated the bettering of the colored man's situation."[137] Unfortunately, "the

[135] Foner 1989: 587.

[136] Woodward 1966: 6.

[137] Drago 1982: 63-64.

acquiescence of Northern liberalism in the Compromise of 1877 defined the beginning, but not the ultimate extent, of the liberal retreat on the race issue."[138]

The Compromise of 1877 leaves Henry and his family in the hands of the conservative Democratic Redeemers, who renege on their pledge to protect the black man's Constitutional rights. It is "the end of a period of social, economic, and political revolution in the South" that marks a change in outlook, a change in institutions, and most noticeably, a change in leadership.[139] While it is not a return to the old ways or a restoration of planter dominance, the Redeemers who establish "Home Rule" in Georgia nonetheless follow the postbellum trend toward white supremacy that has been part of state politics since the expulsion of 1868. Disenfranchisement of the black vote is the name of the game, justifiable under the guise of keeping freedmen's votes from being manipulated or stolen. A poll tax, stringent residency and registration requirements, and a literacy test narrow the number of eligible black voters; time limits, candidates without clearly marked party identification, and quickly changing polling locations make it difficult for Henry to cast his ballot correctly; stuffed ballot boxes, manipulated counts, and repeat votes alter the final election results; the general ticket and white primary system effectively ensure that Henry cannot be elected to public office again. With all their electoral bases covered, the Redeemer government strips Henry of any and all political influence.[140]

Despite the progressive narrowing of political opportunities, Henry remains a Republican voter after 1877. Attempting to maintain what little power they still hold, the

[138] Woodward 1966: 70.

[139] Woodward 1971: 110.

[140] Foner 1989; Woodward 1971.

Republican Party plays a desperate balancing act between keeping alive the memory of black power in the minds of their white constituents and appealing to the former slaves with their egalitarian platform. As C. Vann Woodward notes, "An implicit part of the Black-Belt policy toward the Negro as voter was the planter-patrician's paternalism," as the Republican Party uses "the more-or-less intimidated and submissive Negro voters" to their advantage in an attempt to win elections.[141] Scapegoating blacks becomes a way to reconcile North and South, conservative and radical in the preservation of white power. The Republicans become an active part of the seamless web of oppression in which Henry finds himself during Redemption, where "interwoven economic, political, and social strands all reinforced one another."[142] As their radical idealism grows weaker and the restraints formerly imposed by the federal government are removed, fear, hatred, and fanaticism rise to dominance. At the same time, economic, political, and social frustrations lead to a climax of societal tensions and make the South into the perfect cultural seedbed for aggression against blacks. "The evidence of race conflict and violence, brutality and exploitation (in this period)… is overwhelming."[143] Henry and his friends and family suffer the terror of mob wars, lynchings, and generally destructive treatment at the hands of white supremacists, while the Georgia press focuses solely on black criminality. The violence follows freedpeople into the fields, where they are "assaulted and murdered for attempting to leave plantations, disputing contract settlements, not laboring in the manner desired by their employers, attempting to buy or

[141] Woodward 1971: 79.

[142] Foner 1989: 598.

[143] Woodward 1966: 43.

rent land, and resisting whippings."[144] The pervasive abuse suffered by Henry during Redemption is an extreme manifestation of white determination to squelch any and all forms of black autonomy, bringing a bloody end to the political opportunities of Reconstruction. This revolutionary period in Georgia's history does not end "because propertyless blacks succumbed to economic coercion, but because a politically tenacious black community, abandoned by the nation, fell victim to violence and fraud."[145]

The common populist wisdom of the day is that Atlanta must eradicate its "race problem" in order to become the modern leader of the New South, and it is a similar drive that motivates government repression of blacks in Bahia. As Salvador modernizes and replaces escravo de ganho transport services with streetcar lines, the municipal bureaucracy begins strictly regulating street vendors and issues fines to quell any sort of public disorder. "The lives and livelihoods of all were affected by the increased regulation of trade, but especially those of African descent who played such a prominent role in the informal market."[146] Illegal until 1876, candomblé terreiros must exist clandestinely and are in constant danger of being raided by brutal policemen. They occupy distinct physical spaces in Brazil as priests and priestesses "negotiated a sustainable relationship to the oppressive structures of power."[147] Either hidden away in private homes or located on isolated hills that allow a view of approaching police forces, terreiros were places of social gathering, refuges for escaped slaves, sites of resistance to police harassment, and infirmaries of magico-pharmocopoeic healing. Afro-Bahian elites

[144] Foner 1989: 121.

[145] Foner 1989: 279.

[146] Butler 138.

[147] Butler 105.

who were related to candomblé participants lent their occupational and personal prestige to maintain informal networks of support for the terreiros, and influential priests and priestesses held leadership roles in many of Salvador's lay brotherhoods. All of these personal contacts and connections come to naught, however, when Felipe's terreiro is raided and the ritual objects and African icons are confiscated.

With the support of the government, the legal system, and the police, white elites are determined to stamp out anything and everything African, especially in public spaces. Convinced that the streets are theirs to use as they see fit, white Bahians are determined to remove all activities that give Salvador the appearance of an African market.[148]

> *"The public streets and plazas of Salvador became the battleground of the culture wars of the post-abolition era. In the 1890s Salvador's white elites took steps to rid the city of what they perceived to be excessive displays of African culture, such as the rodas de capoeira facing the prestigious medical school and the cathedral, the boisterous samba parties accompanying what they felt should be solemn Catholic festivals, and the seemingly ubiquitous batuques. This is best illustrated in the history of Bahia's Carnival during that time."*[149]

However, because most black domestic and service workers live near or in their places of work, there are no racially defined enclaves in the city, meaning that public space belongs to all.

1895 marks the year that Felipe first publicly takes action to express his new African identity in a self-described "African club" at Carnival. Complete with African themes preserving and honoring their own heritage and history, the Embaixada Africana debuts at Carnival with King Babá-Anin and Ajahy, waited upon by the Court of Oxalá and parading to the music of the agôgô, atabaque drums, and other African instruments. The Embaixada wants to propagate an image of Africa that is comparable to that of

[148] Butler.

[149] Butler 171-172.

Europe and repeatedly asserts their own African ethnicity: "the untiring Africans living here," "the distinguished African community of Bahia."[150] In 1896, another club called Pandegos da África springs up, adding to the African voices clamoring for space among the themes and issues of Brazil. Within a few years there are dozens of African clubs in Salvador, all underlining the fact that Africa and Africans are undeniably part of Brazilian culture. In 1905, however, all African clubs are banned from Carnival after repeated complaints from the white population of the city. In 1902 an angry reader writes a letter to the editor of the *Jornal de Notícias* demanding the police stop the degrading, tasteful, disrespectful African parades playing instruments used in candomblé ceremonies, wearing immoral costumes, and making an "infernal racket." In banning the African Carnival clubs, Bahia's white elite successfully uses the law as a weapon to delineate the boundaries of acceptable Brazilian culture and who the acceptable participants are.[151]

"Despite such opposition, Africans ultimately succeeded in making Salvador the city most closely associated with African-based culture in the twentieth century."[152] Black Bahians like Felipe are incredibly successful in redefining the identity of Brazilians of African descent, fighting marginalization through cultural confrontation rather than a struggle for political power. And even though the dominant racist ideology limits the Afro-Brazilian experience of freedom to solely the juridical sense, it also leads to the

[150] Butler 179.

[151] Butler 181.

[152] Butler 161.

development of an empowering collective African identity. Ultimately, "the final act of abolition is one of the defining landmarks of Brazilian history."[153]

Unfortunately the visible effects of Reconstruction do not last for long in Georgia. The Redeemers not only bring an end to the budding political opportunities created under Reconstruction, they also quash black hopes and dreams, paving the way for Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" of 1895.

> *"The historical stage was set for the entrance of this remarkable man. It was a time when the hope born of Reconstruction had all but died for the Negro, when disenfranchisement blocked his political advance and the caste system closed the door to integration in the white world, when the North had abandoned him to the South and the South was yielding to the clamor of her extremists. The defiant spirit of the old Negro leaders of emancipation and Reconstruction appeared increasingly quixotic under these circumstances."*[154]

In a speech given before a black and white audience at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition, Washington renounces active political aspirations and education for blacks and instead stresses economic self-help through a humble, menial role in society. He shies away from fighting the prejudices that plague his time, preferring to align himself with the dominant doctrines that govern Georgia society. To whites "He gave assurances that the Negro was more interested in industrial education and economic opportunities than in political rights and privileges…. To his own race he preached a gospel of conservatism, patience, and material progress."[155] The "Atlanta Compromise"

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[153] Toplin 1970; David Bushnell, "A Note of Introduction," Rebecca J. Scott, Seymour Drescher, Hebe Maria Mattos De Castro, George Reid Andrews, Robert M. Levine, Eds., *The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988) v.

[154] Woodward 1971: 356-57.

[155] Woodward 1971: 358-359.

tolls the death knell of Henry's struggle for self-determination, and it will be another fifty years before lasting progress is made in the fight for civil rights.

EPILOGUE

The year: 1895. The setting: Georgia, where Democrats stalk the halls of power and Klansmen lurk outside polling places in largely black districts. A quick change of scenery brings us to Bahia, where the halls of power remain firmly shut against Afro-Brazilians and life continues much as it has for centuries. Let us briefly trace the trajectory of Henry and Felipe to these seemingly dissimilar surroundings.

As our story opens we see Henry, born and acculturated on a cotton plantation outside Atlanta, Georgia, and Felipe, dragged from the Republic of Benin to Salvador da Bahia in chains. Because of this intimate personal tie to his tribal identity as an ethnic Nagô, Felipe has trouble communicating with his fellow slaves, many of whom are from the Ewe or Jêje tribes. Henry grows up picking cotton by hand with his family, and shortly before abolition he marries and has children of his own. Felipe, on the other hand, earns money for his master through his construction work, while his cousin Lucas works long hours chopping and milling sugarcane. With the advent of abolition, the rural Georgian workforce is diminished, granting Henry a measure of leverage that he uses against his former master to gain a share of land to crop; in Bahia, Felipe continues to work through his canto as always, while his cousin Lucas is trapped in a coercive relationship with his former master thanks to the threat of mechanization and labor substitution. Neither Felipe nor Lucas have an easy time finding a wife due to the imbalance between the sexes created by Portuguese patterns of slave importation, whereas Henry is actually encouraged by his master to create a family in the hopes that it would dissuade him from running away. The free northern half of the United States poses a visible goal of empowered difference for Henry that does not exist for Felipe, caught in a system where slavery is utterly ubiquitous. Luckily, manumitted blacks are everywhere

in pre-emancipation Salvador, so Felipe has a vast network right in front of his nose to assist him in the transition to freedom. Henry, too, has a safety net to support him as he adjusts to a free labor economy: because the Republican Party and northern abolitionists need a way to justify the bloody war that they waged on the South, they create the Freedmen's Bureau and aid organizations to help the new class of freedpeople.

This republican-egalitarian socio-political system in which Henry exists is very different from the monarchical, hierarchical system still dominant in Brazil long after the colonial period. After a gradual process of abolition meant to resolve the problems of slavery rather than manifest egalitarian societal tendencies that drags out over 57 years, the Brazilian abolitionist movement ends with the extinction of slavery.[156] Even those who were proponents of liberating Felipe tend to see him as a bestial idiot, not the victimized brother envisioned by American abolitionist propaganda. This may be because African-descended people outnumber those of European ancestry in Salvador, posing more of a threat to the white hegemony, whereas in Georgia blacks unite in their inferior, minority status.

To whom can Felipe and Henry turn within their own communities for organizational empowerment in their new lives as freedmen? Henry, as one of the few literate blacks on his plantation, rises to lead his local black church and is gradually sucked deeper and deeper into state politics, eventually getting elected to the Georgia legislature because the Republican Party is desperate for black support. No Bahian politicians need Afro-Brazilian support because the exclusive patronage system strictly prohibits the involvement of popular interest groups in government. The closest thing Felipe has to a political life is his participation in the brotherhood Socio Protectores dos

[156] Toplin 1970.

Desvalidos, whose public festivals act as rites of legitimization for the irmandade's leadership. Felipe is also chosen to lead his candomblé terreiro as pai de santo in its struggle to redefine the nação as an empowering source of pan-African identity.

Denied the opportunity to seek out political autonomy, Felipe and his fellow Afro-Bahians must defend what self-determination they already have: vibrant manifestations of African culture. The Brazilian project of "progress toward modernity" as embodied by the repressive local government and police forces targets candomblé, street vendors, capoeira, and Carnival clubs in an attempt to negate African survivals in Salvador, while the racist Redemption government and KKK attack black aspirations for political enfranchisement, government representation, and education. With Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise," the "time of social change" that had revolutionized African American "lives and aspirations in ways unmeasurable by statistics and in realms far beyond the reach of the law" had come to an end.[157]

The stories of Henry and Felipe end on a similar note despite the 4,423 miles that separate them, as Brazil and the United States give birth to national identities at the expense of black dignity. But while the tide of change rises and recedes over Georgia, it leaves behind an altered landscape.[158] The opportunities born out of Reconstruction offer a glimpse of hope for African Americans that leads to the evolution of the civil rights movement decades later:

> *"In stabilizing their families, seizing control of their churches, greatly expanding their schools and benevolent societies, staking a claim to economic independence, and forging a distinctive political culture, blacks during Reconstruction laid the*

[157] Foner 1989: 128; 410.

[158] Foner 1989: 602.

foundation for the modern black community, whose roots lay deep in slavery, but whose structure and values reflected the consequence of emancipation." [159]

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This story of black self-determination springs from the work done by scores of researchers before me on the relation between former master and former slave in Brazil and the United States. The narrative of Henry and Felipe is a response to challenges posed by two of the great comparative historians, Carl Degler and Thomas Skidmore, who posit that the task ahead will be to decide exactly how the factors of each country's comparative historical experiences have fitted together.[160] It is my hope that Henry and Felipe's story makes clear the contours of each individual piece of the complex jigsaw puzzle that is post-emancipation African-descended self-determination.

[159] Foner 1989: 78.

[160] Degler 88; Skidmore 24.

Mere goodwill, propinquity, and the passage of time are not enough.
We have to recognize that the price of equality in pluralism,
like the price of liberty, is eternal vigilance."

—Carl Degler[161]

[161] Degler 292.

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