

## The Fourth and the First: Abolitionist Holidays, Respectability, and Radical Interracial Reform

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For twenty-five years, said William Lloyd Garrison in 1858, abolitionists like himself had been described in Northern newspapers as “crazy lunatics and wild disorganizers—and [their] meetings represented as unworthy of countenance by sane and decent men!” He knew the reasons why. Radical abolitionists, and Garrisonians in particular, transgressed the norms of polite society in antebellum America. Their views on slavery, gender, race, and religion were marginal in the extreme. Because their audiences were frequently “promiscuous,” meaning that they included both women and men, their meetings struck many as “crazy” or “wild.” More troubling to many Northerners was the fact that Garrisonian societies were racially integrated, which opened abolitionists to the charge that they favored “amalgamation.” Such people were not the company that “sane and decent men” would keep.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite their reputation, most abolitionists represented their meetings as inimitably “sane and decent.” In fact, Garrisonians were often as concerned as their contemporaries by a perceived declension of manners and virtue. Many antebellum Americans, especially those from an emerging middle class, feared that honored social mores were being swept aside by the twin forces of industrialization and democratization. To preserve social order, middling Americans participated in a revival of interest in politeness and “respectability.” Books on manners proliferated, a cult of domesticity enshrined women as the defenders of respectability, and politicians trumpeted the importance of refinement to republican citizenship. Despite their radicalism, Garrisonians were not immune from these powerful cultural forces. In 1857, Garrison’s *Liberator* even reviewed one of the etiquette manuals flooding Northern markets. The book, titled *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual to Republican Etiquette, and Guide to Correct Personal Habits*, was praised for demonstrating that “good manners and good morals rest upon the same basis, and that justice and benevolence can no more be satisfied without the one than without the other.”<sup>22</sup>

Just as surely as “good manners” and “justice” went together, respectability and radicalism coexisted in abolitionism. Although Garrisonians overturned conventions regarding gender and race, their own practices reinforced conventions about manners. The reasons for this were partly strategic; abolitionists cast themselves as respectable to counteract the caricatures of their enemies. Their concern with respectability can also be explained by biography. Many Garrisonians came from elite families or from the middle class, making their aspirations to cultural refinement unsurprising. More important, respectability and religion were fungible normative systems in antebellum America, and the abolitionists’ roots in Protestantism bore fruit in their commitment to public morality. In the last three decades, historians have situated abolitionism within these and other contexts—middle-class culture, republicanism, and evangelical religion—demonstrating that the movement was not an excrescence on antebellum society, but a rare flowering of seeds sown throughout the early republic.<sup>3</sup>

This article shows how “respectability” pervaded abolitionist ideas and praxis by examining two holidays that many radical abolitionists celebrated every year—the Fourth of July, which by the early nineteenth century was already an important anniversary, and the First of August, an antislavery holiday commemorating British emancipation in the West Indies. On both anniversaries, Garrisonians convened to advocate immediate emancipation, a “wild” and “crazy” doctrine at the time. But their gatherings also observed long-standing social conventions about behavior. They were restrained, quiet, and polite, rather than rowdy, noisy, and rude. Garrisonians described their celebrations, which featured long speeches, light collations, and cold water instead of beer, as living tableaux of respectability.

My central argument is that Garrisonian holidays were *both* respectable and radical, despite the fact that radicalism and respectability might seem incompatible.<sup>4</sup> “Radicalism” is the advocacy of extreme change, often in the direction of equality; “respectability” is the attempt to conserve etiquette, often in deference to hierarchy. Because the two seem like polar opposites, it is easy to regard them as mutually exclusive. But such a view can polarize narratives of abolitionism in one of two ways. On the one hand, it can *partition* the movement into respectable and radical segments—reformers versus revolutionaries.<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, it can *periodize* abolitionism into respectable and radical phases.<sup>6</sup> Both narratives need to be complicated by the fact that radicalism and respectability often coexisted among the same abolitionists and persisted together over time. Their Fourth of July celebrations illustrate how radical the Garrisonians were, since their principles subverted the patriotism of Indepen-

dence Day and asserted radically different ideas about American citizenship. But on the other hand, the abolitionists' holidays were shaped throughout the antebellum period by debates about "respectability."

The terms of radicalism and respectability were contested, however, and tensions between the two impulses did emerge within the antislavery movement. In particular, the Fourth and the First became sites of contest both between and within groups of white and black abolitionists. Black holiday celebrations, as we will see, also exhibited the dual presence of radical and respectable impulses. But in addition to these impulses, black abolitionists had to balance competing imperatives, including unique traditions of festive culture, specific challenges as leaders of free black communities, and the desire to secure independence from white reformers. As a result, blacks and whites often did not observe holidays in the same way, or even in the same place. But their separation emerged from shared contests about respectability.

The themes of this essay might also be useful in broader histories of American reform and respectability.<sup>7</sup> Antislavery historians are not the only ones whose partitions and periodizations of social movements can polarize radicalism and respectability. For example, in Nathan Hatch's deservedly influential study of evangelicals and democratization in the Second Great Awakening, "the allure of respectability" is a "centripetal" force that tugged religious insurgents away from their peripheral radicalism toward the center of "respectable culture." According to Hatch, "dissenting paths have often, in America, doubled back toward . . . decorum."<sup>8</sup> But instead of seeing decorum as a doubling *back* from dissent, I suggest that American dissent and decorum were often locked in a complex "doubling," with neither completely displacing the other. Thinking about dissent and decorum as antitheses encourages us to homogenize social movements as either radical or conservative, instead of seeking to understand the ongoing struggles of reformers to define their aims and allies.

My final aim is to encourage different ways of thinking about the concept of "respectability," which is most often used by scholars as a predicate for persons. People are usually the kinds of things that are respectable or not, because of either their class, their appearance, their wealth, or their behavior. In this essay, however, I examine how *sounds* were often characterized by Americans according to their respectability. In the abolitionists' discourse about their holidays, "respectability" not only divided "high" people from "low," but it also distinguished "speech" from "noise."<sup>9</sup> We can also see respectability as partly defined by *space*, since to abolitionists, as we will see, some holiday sites were better than others.

## Redeeming the Fourth

Respectability was contested on the Fourth of July from its inception. In the decades after Independence, many American intellectuals imagined that an ideal republic would be governed by a genteel aristocracy of men. But many worried about whether American citizens were refined enough to sustain this republic. Anxious debates about refinement were shaped both by classical republicanism, which envisioned a polis founded on virtue, and by eighteenth-century moral philosophy, which imagined this vision to be literally visible. According to historian David Waldstreicher, proof of virtue was sought through “contemporary understandings of the moral sentiments, in which vision and physiognomy played a central role. Faces reflected character.” These ideas made the Fourth of July a perfect opportunity to measure the nation’s progress toward refinement. As Americans attended orations and parades, says Waldstreicher, “it was national virtue itself that was being searched for in the faces and the general deportment of participants.”<sup>10</sup>

Not all observers were pleased with what they saw. Especially once July Fourth became a holiday from work, upper-class Americans increasingly observed the Fourth differently from urban workers, inscribing the holiday with lines of class division. On the one hand, elites gave public addresses, attended private dinners, organized parades to display their power, and made grandiloquent toasts to themselves. Their representations of the Fourth, as Waldstreicher puts it, “portrayed the order and decorum worthy of virtuous republicans,” laying constant “stress on behavior and appearance.” Working-class laborers were less likely to spend the day so loftily. Most preferred to drink copious amounts of alcohol, which fueled drunken processions and risky experiments with primitive fireworks. As the nineteenth century began, the Fourth of July thus meant the uneasy coexistence of refinement and recreation, the republican few and the democratic many, oration and inebriation.<sup>11</sup>

The Fourth of July epitomized at least two ideas about American democracy. Some saw the United States as a republican experiment, whose results could be measured behind the doors of meeting halls, where men in white cravats gathered to hear addresses and eat sumptuous meals. A more indeterminate idea of democracy was performed outside in the streets. July Fourth thus remained Janus-faced well into the antebellum period. Some went to orations; others engaged in “bacchanalian” leisure. The former tried to police the respectability of the latter. An 1844 Philadelphia newspaper, for instance, urged its readers not to turn the Fourth into a “saturnalia of passion,” but to regard it as a “jubilee of reason.”<sup>12</sup> Such were the faces of the Fourth when abolitionists began calling for a jubilee of another kind.

The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS) and the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) were both Garrisonian organizations founded in the early 1830s. Both societies and their local chapters regularly organized Fourth of July gatherings. These gatherings enacted radically new ideas about citizenship, for unlike other antislavery societies that called for the colonization of free blacks, or merely the gradual amelioration and abolition of slavery, Garrisonians demanded immediate emancipation. From its origins in Boston, Garrisonianism was also an interracial movement, started by black activists in the 1820s and then amplified by white reformers in the 1830s. Garrison himself, whose name denominated this radical alliance of white and black abolitionists, steered the movement toward other radical positions as the 1830s and 1840s went on, including nonresistance, feminism, and anti-sabbatarianism. At a Garrisonian Fourth of July event, therefore, one could expect to hear some of the most radical doctrines circulating in antebellum America, and to see one of the most radical assemblages of black, white, male, and female reformers.<sup>13</sup>

A Garrisonian Fourth of July tried to subvert the very idea that the day deserved celebration. What good was a holiday designed to commemorate the Declaration of Independence, when its principles were daily trampled underfoot? Garrison raised the question in his first public speech as an abolitionist, delivered on July 4, 1829, at Park Street Church in Boston. "Every Fourth of July, our Declaration of Independence is produced, with a sublime indignation, to set forth the tyranny of the mother country," he said. "But what a pitiful detail of grievances does this document present, in comparison with the wrongs which our slaves endure! . . . I am ashamed of my country." These were radical sentiments on a day consecrated for the love of country. Garrisonians roasted the republic that others were toasting. Indeed, in 1854, Garrison even burned a copy of the Constitution at a Fourth of July picnic.<sup>14</sup>

But setting things on fire was exceptional on antislavery holidays. If the Fourth of July bore two faces, one respectable and one rowdy, Garrisonians usually wore the former aspect. In fact, Garrison's disapproval of the Fourth, which he dubbed the "mockery of mockeries," was directed at its licentiousness as well as its hypocrisy. Writing about the approaching Fourth in 1832, he lamented that "by many, the day will be spent in rioting and intemperate drinking. . . . The waste of money, and health, and morals, will be immense." This was the long-standing complaint of those who viewed the Fourth as an occasion for republican displays of virtue. Garrisonians condemned the Fourth not only for its political conservatism and hypocritical patriotism, but also for its familiar threats to public order.<sup>15</sup>

One way of seeing this double view of the holiday is to *listen*, for ideas about “noise” were often at the center of Garrisonian writings on the Fourth. This was not coincidental, since certain sounds—like the firing of cannons and the ringing of bells—were responsible in the early republic for marking Independence Day on the national calendar. As historian Len Travers puts it, “noise politicized the very air.”<sup>16</sup> With remarkable frequency, abolitionists deployed these sounds as set pieces in their critiques of the Fourth. First and foremost, the noisiness of the Fourth was further proof of its hypocrisy. Penitent silence was called for on the country’s birthday, not what Garrison called “the noisy breath of heartless patriotism.” The July 4, 1835, edition of the *Liberator* noted with regret that Americans were meeting yet again “to rend the heavens with the roar of cannon and with universal shoutings”—shoutings about supposedly self-evident truths that apparently did not apply to black Americans. Garrisonians routinely took the most familiar marker of Independence Day—its noisiness—and radically redescribed it as duplicitous.<sup>17</sup>

A frequent rhetorical strategy was to contrast the holiday noises heard in the North—bells, cheers, toasts, and speeches—with the noises heard on a typical Fourth of July in the South—the groans of slaves, the crack of whips, the clanging of chains, the cries of women and children. “The *slaves* this day are weeping,” pointed out an antislavery poem on the Fourth, “Their tears bespread the ground, / While o’er their tortures sleeping, / The shout of the free goes round!” Another abolitionist noted that visitors to the United States expected to hear “the joyful acclamations of freemen.” But those who listened closely heard something else: “But hark! Did I not hear, amid that shout, discordant sounds? Methinks that southern breeze brought to my ear a sigh, a deep-toned sigh. Ah! it is the wail of Afric’s sable son.” Numerous Garrisonians heard the same contrasts with almost formulaic exactness. Aural tropes evoked a cacophony of joyful shouts and pealing bells, mixed with wails, groans, shrieks, sighs. The difference between abolitionists and other Americans, pointed out an antislavery hymn, was whether a person heard the slaves at all on the Fourth: “We to their wails will ope our ear, / Attentive hear their cries.” For most Americans, those wails fell on deaf ears, drowned out in the din of iniquity.<sup>18</sup>

How abolitionists thought about “noise” serves as one sign of how different their holidays were. At the same time, Garrisonian critiques of the Fourth’s noisiness echoed standard complaints about rowdiness. Garrison criticized the Fourth for its “noisy breath of heartless patriotism,” but on another occasion he deplored its “noisy revelry.” The unrespectable Fourth was notoriously boisterous—the explosion of firecrackers, the shouting matches between gamblers, the loud bravado of beery mobs. Such noise violated not only middle-class

understandings of decorum and restraint, but also the republican idealization of reason and virtue. When Benjamin Franklin composed his famous list of virtues in 1784, number two on his list was “silence,” second only to “temperance.” A temperate silence remained virtuous at the turn of the century, and as decibels rose on urban streets, well-to-do and middling antebellum families often spent Independence Day in the country.<sup>19</sup>

Abolitionists also preferred quiet on the Fourth. After visiting Fall River, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1836, Garrison marveled at the suburb’s silence. “Never did I see a Fourth of July observed in so orderly and appropriate a manner in any other place. Not a single banner was unfurled to the breeze—at least, I saw none—no cannon roared—quietude prevailed in the streets.” The “quietude” in Fall River contrasted with a litany of noisy rites elsewhere: “What ringing of bells, what waving of banners, what thundering of cannon, what blazing of bonfires, what long processions, what loud huzzas, what swaggering speeches, what sumptuous dinners, what alcoholic toasts, what drunken revels!” Garrisonians disliked such sounds. “In the popular rejoicings of the day, they took no pleasure,” said one. “The ringing of bells, the firing of cannon, . . . the loud hurrahs of the multitude, shocked their moral sensibility, and affected them to sadness.”<sup>20</sup>

No holiday noise was more shocking than the sounds of anti-abolitionist mobs, whose rowdiness and hypocrisy directly opposed the quietude of reform. On the Fourth of July, 1834, riots in New York City famously disrupted a meeting of the AASS in the Chatham Street Chapel.<sup>21</sup> In depicting this event, abolitionists used a palette of aural contrasts. The *Emancipator*, in an account reprinted by the *Liberator*, reported that just as “a respectable audience were seated,” the ceremonies were interrupted by a “roar” from an unsavory crowd gathered at the back of the chapel, shattering “the solemn quiet of the meeting.” At first, as the mob came closer to the chapel, “within the sound of the truths they hated,” they had been silenced and “overawed for some minutes.” But since they were unable to defeat the abolitionists’ arguments, the mob tried “to prevent their being heard. Amid much inarticulate stamping and screaming, the exclamations of ‘Treason! Treason! Hurrah for the Union’ were continuously heard, with now and then an interjection or an epithet too indelicate to be recorded.” The abolitionists sounded better. “Between the pauses of the storm,” their choir struck up a hymn, answering with its own salvo of sound, and “for a moment,” claimed the *Emancipator*, “the belchings of the pit were drowned with the sweet songs of Zion.” Especially admirable were “our colored friends,” who sat quietly through the fracas, giving “silent yet demonstrative and eloquent refutation to their clamorous defamers.”<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the riots, which continued for several days, antislavery newspapers printed reports about “clamorous defamers.” One eyewitness described “hundreds of infuriated devils . . . shouting [and] hallooing.” Abolitionist Lewis Tappan’s house was demolished by a mob, and on the Monday following the Fourth he arrived home to find it surrounded by “a tremendous noise,—mingled groans, hisses, and execrations.” These accounts deployed a common taxonomy of sounds in abolitionist writings. Noises like halloos, huzzas, and hisses were made by racist rioters, while antislavery assemblies were marked by hymns, speeches, and “eloquent” silence. No wonder abolitionists were indignant when one newspaper certified the “respectability” of the rioters. They agreed instead with the *Journal of Commerce*, a newspaper founded by Tappan and his brother, that “a few low fellows” had “commenced the disturbance, which was kept up in various ways, by shouting and clapping, &c.”<sup>23</sup>

The ambivalence of “noise” indicates how hard it is to separate the abolitionists’ radicalism from their ideas about respectability. For them, respectability was on the side of righteousness, and being right meant being radical. But the Fourth of July was doubly cursed because it was neither right nor respectable. It was a holiday that needed to be saved by silence, and Garrisonians aimed to be its saviors. Thanks to the abolitionists, Garrison wrote on July 5, 1836, “yesterday was not wholly given up to desecration.” With their gatherings, abolitionists proved that the Fourth could be “redeemed from the profligacy, the bombast, the hypocrisy, and the impiety, which have usually characterized it.” In 1839, the *Liberator* claimed that the Fourth had been “rescued” by the “friends of virtue, temperance, and emancipation.” Rescue and redemption framed the abolitionists’ reports of their Fourths.<sup>24</sup>

What were such “redeemed” holidays like? Announcements published in the *Liberator* reveal that most antislavery holidays were remarkably uniform. Speeches, songs, and readings were the centerpieces of the day. Brief processions sometimes preceded these ceremonies; light meals sometimes followed. Toasts were occasionally even made (with cold water, of course) to abolitionists and antislavery principles. But in all these respects, redeeming the Fourth meant observing respectable conventions, even if its celebrants were radical.<sup>25</sup>

Speeches were particularly characteristic of antislavery holidays. As the Fourth approached in 1836, one correspondent to the *Liberator* recommended “the propriety of celebrating the ensuing Anniversary . . . by speeches, addresses, &c.” The writer could think only of two synonyms for oratory, and most abolitionists thought of little else on Independence Day. In the weeks before July 4, the *Liberator* advertised ceremonies with the names of scheduled speakers, and some reformers could not conceive of meeting without a



speech. Cancellation was preferable. As a last resort, wrote one reader to the *Liberator* in 1837, “we entreat our friends not to neglect holding meetings because they may fail of securing such a speaker as they have invited. Let the talents of the men in their vicinity . . . be put in requisition; and if no better arrangement can be made, let some thrilling production be read. . . . Above all, let the talents of every man, who can wield a pen, or open his lips for the dumb, be called forth on that day.” The Fourth of July meant *someone* had to “open his lips.” Abolitionists shared a growing antebellum respect for what Kimberly Smith calls “the dominion of voice.”<sup>26</sup>

But if some abolitionist lips were opened on the Fourth of July, most reformers had to keep their mouths shut. Respectable speeches had to be complemented by quiet listeners. Thus, reports of assemblies included rote compliments on the decorum, order, and attentiveness of the crowds. “It was striking,” said the MASS of its 1850 festivities, “to see the rapt attention of the immense auditory.” In 1842, Garrison “addressed a large, respectable, and most attentive assembly, for the space of two hours.”<sup>27</sup> Antislavery listeners had the discernment to know which sounds were appropriate on the Fourth and which were not. Abolitionist Parker Pillsbury was accordingly disappointed by one New Hampshire church’s Independence Day services, when in the middle of an antislavery address, “nearly all the people, ministers and all left . . . at the sound of martial music which struck their ear as it was heralding in the streets a liberty procession in honor of the declaration of man’s inalienable birthright to freedom.”<sup>28</sup> The Fourth of July was a contest for ears, and by imagining themselves as ideal audiences, Garrisonians also foreshadowed what John Kasson calls the late-nineteenth-century “disciplining of spectatorship.” Most abolitionist holidays were ceremonies in which voices dominated and spectators were disciplined.<sup>29</sup>

But important alternatives to this pattern existed. Abolitionists could have refused to celebrate the Fourth at all, and some did. Many antislavery Quakers chose to ignore the day because of its perceived immorality. More significant, many black abolitionists did not celebrate the Fourth of July. Black communities in the North usually preferred to observe other days, such as July 5 (New York state emancipation) or March 5 (the anniversary of Crispus Attucks’s death) or July 14 (abolition of the slave trade). Many black abolitionists believed the Fourth to be irredeemable, giving an unmistakable answer to Frederick Douglass’s question, “What to the slave is the Fourth of July?”<sup>30</sup> But African Americans also abstained from celebrating the Fourth because the day was fraught with danger. They were even more likely than whites to suffer violence and vituperation in the streets, for rioters often targeted African

American neighborhoods, and newspapers viciously caricatured free blacks who ventured into public with marches or assemblies. With drunken racists roaming the streets, often armed with fireworks, the Fourth was a day better spent indoors.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that white abolitionists did not also boycott the Fourth shows how serious they were about “rescuing” the holiday. They wanted not merely to criticize Independence Day, but also to exemplify its proper celebration. Within their ceremonies, however, they professed the most radical doctrines. In fact, radical dissent continued to jostle together with respectable decorum well into the 1840s and 1850s, when the glorious Fourth of July was eclipsed on anti-slavery calendars by the even more glorious First of August.

### **The First of August, “Fourth of Julyism,” and Interracial Reform**

Despite their efforts to rescue Independence Day, white abolitionists remained discouraged by its degeneration. The *Liberator* argued in 1842 that “of all the days in the year, [the] Fourth of July is the most unpropitious for assembling the people together. . . . It is a day consecrated to rant, noise, revelry, hypocrisy, and dissipation; and although it has been, to some extent, redeemed from utter prostitution . . . still it is unquestionably the most demoralizing and impious . . . of all the days in the year.” Beginning in the mid-1830s, abolitionists also celebrated a new holiday, even as they continued to meet on the Fourth. On August 1, 1834, an act of Parliament freed all slaves in the British West Indies into a four-year system of apprenticeship. On August 1, 1838, apprenticeship itself was abolished. Surely, said the *Liberator*, this date “deserves to be celebrated more than the fourth of July.”<sup>32</sup>

In antislavery discourses about the First of August, “noise” was again central. Abolitionists called attention to the fact that its celebration was not marred with the sounds of wails or whips. The First was a holiday that did not need redemption from dissonance. One antislavery paper observed, “How different the First of August from the Fourth of July. On the anniversary of our Independence, the crack of the whip, the groan of the bondman, the yell of tortured humanity, mingling with the roar of cannon, the shouts of congregated thousands of freemen, the hosannas to American liberty . . . go up to heaven in one diabolical discord.” Presumably, no such discord attended British emancipation.<sup>33</sup>

But the fact that the First “sounded” better than the Fourth did not excuse noise. As Samuel J. May exhorted his listeners in a speech on the new holiday, “Let us celebrate this day, not by the pomp and circumstance of military pa-

rades—not by glittering shows and deafening noises—by the clattering drum—the discordant trumpet—the clangor of arms, or the booming cannon. No! oh no! . . . The event we this day commemorate stirs within us emotions too deep for utterance in noisy exultation. On the 4th of July let the shouts of the people, if they may, fill the air.” But on the First of August, what filled the air was the “still, small voice” of the Lord. Apparently this needed to be stressed. On at least one First of August, some Concord abolitionists got carried away and tried to have some church bells rung. Their attempts prompted a surprised letter to the *Liberator*, to the effect that such noises were unheard of. “Though none of the great and mighty things which make a noise in the world could be done for our celebration,” said the writer from Concord, “yet there came from that gathering a still small voice, which will be felt in coming time.”<sup>34</sup>

The formats of ceremonies on the Fourth and the First were virtually identical. Programs in August continued to feature “the voice of eloquence and song.”<sup>35</sup> And the “dominion of voice” still entailed disciplined spectators. Abolitionists’ reports of the First of August stressed the “unfaltering interest” of their large audiences. “The audience and the oration were worthy of the occasion,” reported the *Liberator* after August 1, 1834. A decade later, in 1845, the newspaper said that antislavery audiences on the First of August were an “array of virtue, loveliness, moral heroism, and true piety.” Even when such audiences were small, as Garrison put it, “they were of the right stamp.”<sup>36</sup>

In the 1840s and 1850s Garrisonian holidays also began to stamp certain spaces as more respectable than others. Many moved their celebrations from sites within major cities like Boston and New York to more secluded locations in suburbs and pastoral areas. The reasons for this exodus were complex. The New York City riot of 1834 was one of many acts of crowd violence against abolitionists in the 1830s, which made a retreat to the countryside safer. But the move also allowed escape from the urban rowdiness of the Fourth. Just as upper-class Northerners in the early republic had left the city for Independence Day, white abolitionists began to retire to the country for reflection and relaxation. Starting in the 1840s, Garrisonians in Massachusetts held their picnics in rustic “groves” located in Framingham, Dedham, Abington, Lynn, and other towns surrounding Boston.<sup>37</sup>

Abolitionists rhapsodized at length about their groves. In his 1836 essay *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson popularized idealized views of the country, writing of the woods that “within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith.” Abolitionists surely liked the idea that the groves—which they often

referred to as “God’s first temples”—were dressed for a “perennial festival” ruled by “decorum and sanctity.” The woods were rich with symbolism. One Garrisonian wrote from Dedham that a grove used for the First of August “was composed of thickly set, tall and straight pines, illustrative of the erect position of true abolition, and of the nearness in spirit of true abolitionists.” To others, the groves seemed “as if made for the purpose” of abolitionist holidays, “formed by the hand of Nature for such a meeting.” Groves were also described as perfect sound stages. Wendell Phillips invoked “the dominion of voice” as he recommended a spot for the First of August: “The space for sober meeting [is] clear, yet shaded by a goodly circle of pines . . . the speaker’s desk furnished by nature with a fine back ground and sounding-board of thick pines. . . . I really think we shall contrive to make a pleasant day of it, especially as we are promised the aid of some voices never heard before.”<sup>38</sup>

In 1851, however, Garrisonians who assembled in an Abington grove for the Fourth of July were dismayed to find that they still could not escape all “noisy revelry.” “On arriving at the Grove,” reported the *Liberator* one week later, “our ears were saluted with the sound of cannon, discharged from the opposite shore, placed there purposely to annoy us.” Apparently, a group of “Webster Whigs” had raised funds to buy gunpowder and “had employed men to load and fire all day, for the annoyance of the abolitionists.” It would take much more than cannon to “silence the voice of truth,” but the episode underlined the aural and spatial contrasts between the abolitionists’ quiet groves and the noisiness on the “opposite shore.”<sup>39</sup>

The groves were also isolating. Garrisonians were less likely to be disturbed by mobs, but for the same reason they were unlikely to address anyone but abolitionists. Most of the groves in Massachusetts were ten to fifteen miles from Boston, and special trains often had to be hired to shuttle attendees to the picnics. Often commuters then had to take a carriage from the station to the site. Some hoped that their new “mode of celebration—the attractions of the blue sky, the overarching groves, ‘God’s first temples’ . . . may attract many who have held themselves aloof from the vulgar anti-slavery lecture,” but it was unlikely that many nonabolitionists would take a special train to the picnics. Only the choir heard the sermon.<sup>40</sup>

The consequences of this inward movement can best be seen by considering the holidays of African Americans, which have received much more attention from scholars than white abolitionist celebrations have. We have already seen that many black abolitionists refrained from “redeeming” the Fourth. But black Northern communities embraced the First of August.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the First was a more integrated holiday. In 1848, a major assembly was held by

the MASS in Lynn, and “a very large proportion, much larger than is usually seen on any like occasion, of the assembly were of African descent.” Yet, as James Brewer Stewart has told us, “multiplying interracial familiarity” among abolitionists often “generated many new tensions.” Although whites welcomed black abolitionists to their ceremonies, they scrutinized the newcomers’ respectability. “Certainly,” continued the MASS’s 1848 report, “in appearance, dress, manners, and deportment, they would have been a credit to any holiday party in any part of the world. . . . They are, many of them, living examples of success in the pursuit of . . . respectability.” That important qualifier—“many of them” were respectable—suggested that not all black abolitionists were as concerned about the pursuit of respectability as white leaders hoped they would be.<sup>42</sup>

Historians have shown that abolitionists, both black and white, disagreed about the importance of “respectability.” In the early years of the movement, many white abolitionists thought nothing of saying that many free black people were unrefined. But they attributed this deficiency to the environmental effects of discrimination and slavery, rather than to essential qualities imparted by color or race. Once environmental obstacles were removed, argued the abolitionists, African Americans would “rise.” Racists would see that respectability was not determined by race. Black leaders like Samuel Cornish, James Forten, and Robert Purvis endorsed this strategy and focused their efforts on the “uplift,” “elevation,” and “moral improvement” of black communities, hoping that propriety would vanquish prejudice. But the violence of the 1830s disabused many of this hope. Often, mobs directed their greatest fury at “respectable” black abolitionists, who were charged with preening and putting on airs. Almost as soon as the movement adopted “respectability” as a tactic, its effectiveness was thrown into doubt.<sup>43</sup>

Not all abolitionists responded to this doubt in the same way. Well into the 1840s and 1850s, many white abolitionists continued to argue that free blacks ought to make themselves “living examples” of respectability, as evidenced by the 1848 First of August celebration in Lynn. Just as the Fourth of July had always been a laboratory for testing the virtue of its participants, many whites pointed to black celebrations of the First of August as proof that African Americans were respectable. In 1844, one writer to the *Liberator* commented that “there has never been a better conducted celebration by any class of people, on any occasion, in this place, than the one got up and executed by the colored people of this town.” Even as late as 1860, the AASS’s annual report cited a New York journalist who believed that a celebration organized by black leaders in Massachusetts demonstrated “their capacity to conduct themselves with

propriety [and] to manage public assemblies with success.”<sup>44</sup>

Among black abolitionists, however, there was sharp disagreement about whether respectability was the real goal to which activists should aspire. These disagreements were often manifested on holidays. As historians Patrick Rael and Mitch Kachun have shown, black celebrations were often complicated by class differences between elite leaders and their black working-class constituents. On the one hand, many black elites agreed with white reformers about the need for respectability. But on the other hand, black leaders needed to attract African Americans to antislavery events, both in order to display numerical strength and to validate their claims to leadership. That required tolerance for popular festive traditions that were rooted in black working culture and the collective memory of holidays from slavery like “Pinkster” and Negro Election Day. Black celebrations of the First of August were shaped by two competing imperatives: the desire by elites to display their respectability, and the practical need to accommodate popular traditions.<sup>45</sup>

A third imperative—the push for independent black activism—also became more important in the 1840s and 1850s. In the 1830s, interracial cooperation had been a hallmark of Garrisonianism. Because black abolitionists, especially in Boston, laid the groundwork for Garrison’s movement, they initially welcomed his support and built interracial networks of reform. But these networks became increasingly strained in the following decades. The reasons for strain were many, but they hinged on the issue of prejudice. Some black abolitionists were disillusioned by the persistence of bigotry among white activists. Simultaneously, differences of opinion emerged about the movement’s priorities. Black abolitionists stressed that the defeat of prejudice was the goal on which all antislavery aims depended, including abolition itself, and favored direct confrontations with Northern racism.<sup>46</sup>

Calls for more black independence and leadership in the antislavery movement, combined with the popular festive rituals of black communities, meant that African American holidays often followed their own course. Patrick Rael has convincingly argued that black leaders had an “overriding” desire to create a “unified racial front,” which meant they increasingly put aside their own class aspirations in order to nourish the popular traditions of African American communities in the North. For example, many black First of August ceremonies featured emancipation dances and martial parades, neither of which were present at white events. As historian Shane White and others have shown, black processions were particularly contentious rituals that made both black and white leaders uncomfortable. Nonetheless, parades were often the focal point of the First of August for black communities, and leaders gradually ac-

cepted them. Some black leaders even began to allow moderate drinking at their celebrations, another taboo at white Garrisonian holidays. Even the aural soundscape of black celebrations often differed from what one heard at “respectable” white assemblies. Bells were rung, and guns were fired.<sup>47</sup>

In short, the growing assertiveness of black abolitionists evinced an impatience with white strictures concerning respectability, as well as increased division among black activists. In 1840, the often elitist black editors of the *Colored American* disapproved of a First of August parade in Newark that featured a drum and fife band: “We deprecate processions of our people, and hope the time has already come when our people will cease celebrating events, interesting to us, by public processions. We should not now refer to this, were it not to enter our protest, and utter disapproval of public processions, certainly one of the most direct means to degrade our people.”<sup>48</sup> But this criticism of degradation and noise could no longer be taken for granted in black abolitionist circles. A year before, in the same newspaper, black New Yorker Peter Paul Simons subverted the antithesis between noise and respectability by lamenting the movement’s focus on “moral improvement.” In 1839, he recalled an earlier era of antislavery harmony that was now disturbed by constant calls for elevation. “Hark to the trumpet sound from the pulpit. Again it’s thundered from the press, now it’s the topic of our common arguments. What is this discording tone? MORAL ELEVATION. OUR MORAL ELEVATION.” If some viewed discordant noises as unrespectable, Simons said “elevation” itself was the “discording tone.”<sup>49</sup>

The First of August was thus a site of contest along multiple axes of ideology and practice. Throughout the antebellum decades, white Garrisonians continued to stress their respectability and the “redemption” of holidays. Black abolitionists, though divided over the importance of respectability, began to unite in calls for their own independence. More and more on the First of August, black leaders saw the need to embrace popular traditions, even if this meant departing from the forms that had been nurtured within the radical abolitionist movement. As a result, antislavery holidays like the First brought into focus debates about reform priorities.

These debates persisted up to the Civil War and beyond, and they took place between whites and blacks as well as within each group. But it is difficult to prove that either radicalism or respectability displaced the other. Indeed, even among black abolitionists who favored more radical strategies, a residual commitment to respectability remained. Take Frederick Douglass, for example. Douglass is one of the most notable examples of black abolitionists whose declarations of independence from white reformers placed them at odds with

many Garrisonians in the late 1840s. Douglass is an equally good example of the shift from the politics of respectability to the more confrontational strategies of the 1850s. Yet throughout his career Douglass was of two minds about antislavery holidays.<sup>50</sup>

As late as 1849, Douglass's Rochester newspaper, the *North Star*—a legendary symbol of black independence from white antislavery organizations—sounded much like the *Liberator* in anticipating the First. "Celebrations in the west have long been made too much of an occasion of mirth and pleasure without doing any material good," Douglass argued. "This should not be the case. All our grand gatherings for purposes like that for which we shall assemble . . . on the 1st of August, should have some substantial evidence of our interest, as a people, in the various means adopted for our elevation." The *North Star* reported of another First "that the day passed harmoniously, soberly, and pleasantly, without any of those riotous manifestations which are too apt to disgrace the rejoicing days both of the blacks and the whites." Even in 1859, despite his gladness that the First of August was now celebrated "without any very marked concern for the ordinary rules of decorum," Douglass regretted that there were some "who carried this 4th of Julyism a little too far." Likewise, on August 4, 1857, years after securing his independence from white abolitionists, he echoed the white Garrisonians' continued belief in respectable holidays. "I like these annual celebrations," he said. "If these occasions are conducted wisely, decorously, and orderly, they increase our respectability in the eyes of the world, and silence the slanders of prejudice. If they are otherwise conducted they cover us with shame and confusion."<sup>51</sup>

Such comments reveal how difficult it is to predict the presence or absence of "respectability" in abolitionist discourse by reference to general narratives of retreat from white moderation. We cannot construct a neat periodization that makes "respectability" a primordial stage, away from which the movement rapidly evolved. Nor can we always divide abolitionists into two abolitionisms—"respectable" white abolitionists versus radical black activists.<sup>52</sup> Rather, antislavery holidays show that respectability was an unstable locus of contestation. In fact, it was the persistent coexistence of respectability and radicalism—even within the minds of abolitionists such as Douglass—that made those contests manifest.

One result of these contests was a recognizable trend toward separate white and black celebrations of the First. Abolitionists often boasted that this was a holiday celebrated "without invidious distinction of sex or color," and their holidays certainly were not exclusivist. But holiday celebrations were often voluntarily segregated. In many years the *Liberator* carried advertisements for



“special” celebrations by “our colored friends.” Although the announcements included reminders that “they hope to see many of their white friends,” the following weeks often brought regrets from white friends that “it was not in our power to be present.” While praising a black celebration in 1840, the *Liberator* assured its readers that “there was no exclusiveness in the celebration.” But “owing to the insufficiency of the building to accommodate all who would gladly have been present, but few, save the colored citizens, attended.”<sup>53</sup>

In the 1840s, some white Garrisonians became concerned about this trend. They responded with reprimands. “If, on the 1st of August next year,” the *Liberator* suggested in 1840, “the men of color should engage the Marlboro’ [Chapel in Boston], and invite the white abolitionists to unite with them in the commemoration, I am sure the effect would be most happy. Men of color ought to take the lead on every such occasion.” This invitation was made, of course, on the terms of whites; a chapel service was suggested, not a dance or a procession. Such polite suggestions to “men of color” soon became pointed reproach. “It is quite natural that those who are so closely identified by complexion and descent with the ransomed bondsmen of the British Isles . . . should wish to signify, by a distinct and separate exhibition, their appreciation of liberty,” began the *Liberator* in 1844. “But [we] think the time has fully come for them to cease acting in an isolated and exclusive form, especially on such a gladsome festival.” If some whites disliked isolation on the First, it was clear whom they blamed.<sup>54</sup>

Some black abolitionists in Boston implicitly blamed the separation on the withdrawal of whites to the groves. In contrast, African Americans held many of their ceremonies in the heart of Boston, marching through major thoroughfares. Even when some of these processions also ended in groves, they were usually within easy reach of the city. An African American parade in Providence, for example, “marched through some of the principal streets” and ended in a grove “in the northwest part of the city,” at a dubiously pastoral location “in the rear of our State Prison.”<sup>55</sup> The groves, with their connotations as spaces of respectability, represented the distance that was growing between white and black abolitionist communities. For when white abolitionists retired from the noise and violence of the city, they were often leaving African American allies behind.

This withdrawal did not go unnoticed by free blacks. One wrote the *Liberator* after August 1, 1845, perhaps with a dash of mordancy: “Notwithstanding the many inducements to repair to the country, and celebrate the day in the groves, ‘God’s first temples,’ there were those who felt that some demonstration should be made in Boston; that its citizens . . . might be reminded

of the auspicious event. . . . Accordingly, they organized themselves to facilitate a celebration of what may be appropriately termed the *home department*.” The group marched in a procession with a banner that read, “Give us our rights, we ask nothing more,” and the day ended with a keynote address by Jehiel C. Beman, a black Bostonian whose independent views had alienated him from many white Garrisonians. In the 1840s, many similar celebrations of the First of August were held in Boston, either with parades through central avenues like State Street, or with processions centered around churches like the Belknap Street Baptist Church or Tremont Temple near the Boston Common. While men like Beman organized demonstrations in unmistakably urban spaces, white abolitionists were in the woods.<sup>56</sup>

It should be stressed again that neither processions nor picnics were always segregated. White and black leaders made appearances at each other’s meetings. Nor, as Mitch Kachun has recently shown, did groves exclusively belong to white abolitionists on the First of August.<sup>57</sup> But racial distinctions were stark enough to be noticeable, and the lived experiences of white and black activists remained different in complex ways. Take two perspectives, for instance, on the First of August in 1842. On that day, a group of mainly white abolitionists convened in a grove in Dedham. A correspondent to the *Liberator* wrote afterward that “providence seemed to smile on the occasion. . . . Even *the birds of the air*, first charmed to the spot by the music . . . joined in pleasant rivalry with the instruments; and when the *address* began, mistaking the voice of the orator for music, (if indeed it were a mistake,) *continued* there, uttering their little boisterous praises to the close.” The birds seemed to chirp amen to the dominion of voice: “The music of the . . . singers and speakers, may therefore be considered as applauded to the *skies* by praises *higher* than human voices.”<sup>58</sup>

On the very same day, a bloody race riot erupted in Philadelphia. During a black temperance procession celebrating the First, white mobs assaulted African American marchers, moving on to ravage the city’s black neighborhoods. Robert Purvis, an African American abolitionist present on the day, wrote about the riot to his friend Henry Clarke Wright, a white Garrisonian, three weeks later. “The measure of our sufferings is full,” he said. “I feel that my life and those tendrils of my heart, dearer than life to me, would find no change in death, but a *glorious* riddance of a life. . . . I am sick—miserably sick—every thing around me is as dark as the grave. Here & there the bright countenance of a true friend is to be seen, *save that*—nothing redeeming, nothing hopeful, despair black as the pall of Death hangs over us.” There was something redeeming about respectable holidays for many white abolitionists, but “noth-

ing redeeming” for Purvis. These two memories of the same First of August—one suffused with the sunshine of groves, the other draped in the darkness of graves—show the potential distance between respectable picnics and processions through the vortex of a violent mob.<sup>59</sup>

### The Doubling of Dissent and Decorum

The riots and anti-abolitionist violence of the 1830s had different effects on black and white abolitionists. For both groups, as James Brewer Stewart and other historians have shown, riots underlined the need to fight white racism rather than concentrate solely on the “moral elevation” and respectability of black Northerners. Yet this realization did not mean the abandonment of respectability altogether. In the case of white Garrisonians, in particular, a continued respect for respectability was still apparent on antislavery holidays through the 1850s. Tensions between radical and respectable impulses were equally clear, however, and they became clearer as white abolitionists removed themselves to country groves. This movement to more respectable spaces, safe from the attacks and disorder of mobs, was also a movement to more remote spaces. The resulting distance compromised the propagandistic uses of holidays, since abolitionists were often the only attendees, and it also meant leaving some black abolitionists to the “home department” in cities like Boston and Philadelphia, where the measure of their sufferings, as Robert Purvis put it, was often filled to the brim by the physical and psychological violence of racism.

Yet even as a bright line seems to appear between radical and respectable reform—with respectability on the side of white abolitionists in groves, and radicalism on the side of black abolitionists in the streets—complexity blurs the line. Robert Purvis, despite his harrowing experience in 1842, remained a staunch ally of white Garrisonians. Few reformers were more in favor of respectability. Indeed, the procession he described was also a temperance parade, revealing that the confrontational politics of processions could be used in the service of respectable agendas.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, few black leaders adopted a more confrontational politics than Frederick Douglass. Yet even Douglass, on the eve of the Civil War, could warn that too much rowdy “4th of Julyism” on black holidays might cover his people with “shame and confusion.” Antislavery holidays thus complicate seemingly clear lines between respectability and radicalism. The best we can do is to hear how the complex sounds of dissent and decorum interacted in contrapuntal ways, and to discern the precise motives, shifting alliances, and pragmatic considerations that shaped antislavery holidays.

## Notes

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1. William E. Cain, ed., *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight against Slavery: Selections from "The Liberator"* (Boston: Bedford, 1995), 152. On the Garrisonians' perceived violations of social order, see Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 30–46, 114–23; Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825–1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 134–35.
2. *Liberator*, June 19, 1857. On respectability in antebellum America, see John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 207–447; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle Class Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Kasson mentions the book reviewed by the *Liberator* on p. 50.
3. See Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
4. Because of the Garrisonians' radicalism, I will feature them here. The interplay of respectability and radicalism was most revealing in their case, because their adherence to both was so uncompromising.
5. See James Brewer Stewart, "Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Reforming and Radical Abolitionism, 1831–1837," *Civil War History* 17.4 (1971): 293–309; Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850* (New York: Pantheon, 1969).
6. See Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "Confrontation and Abolition in the 1850s," *Journal of American History* 58.4 (March 1972): 923–37; Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 14–15; James Brewer Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790–1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18.2 (spring 1998): 181–217.
7. For a partial list of recent studies on "respectability," see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 185–229; Virginia Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).
8. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 202.
9. On aural history, see Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003); Peter Bailey, "Breaking the Sound Barrier," in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Dell Upton, "The City as Material Culture," in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology*, ed. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary C. Beaudry (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 1992), 51–74.
10. David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 119, 73. See also Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Susan G. Davis,

- Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
11. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 71, 73.
  12. Quoted in Davis, *Parades and Power*, 43.
  13. See Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 86–151.
  14. See Garrison to the Boston *Courier*, July 9, 1829, in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971–1981), 1:86. Hereafter, this work is abbreviated *Letters*. On the 1854 incident, see Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 443–445.
  15. Garrison to Ebenezer Dole, June 29, 1832, *Letters*, 1:155. See also “The Fourth of July,” *Liberator*, August 20, 1836.
  16. See Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 43.
  17. *Liberator*, June 4, 1831; July 4, 1835.
  18. *Liberator*, August 13, 1836; July 21, 1832; July 20, 1838. See also Edward D. Barber, *An Oration, delivered before the Addison County Anti-Slavery Society, on the Fourth of July, 1836* (Middlebury, Vt.: Knapp and Jewett, 1836), 3–4; *Liberator*, July 4, 1835; July 18, 1835; July 19, 1839; July 7, 1832; August 13, 1836; July 21, 1837.
  19. Garrison to George W. Benson, July 8, 1842, *Letters*, 3:94; Benjamin Franklin, “Selection from *The Autobiography*” in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, ed. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:97. On retreat from the city, which began in the 1790s, see Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 118, 135, 153–54.
  20. Garrison to Isaac Knapp, July 5, 1836, *Letters*, 2:140; *Liberator*, July 9, 1847.
  21. See Linda K. Kerber, “Abolitionists and Amalgamators: The New York City Race Riots of 1834,” *New York History* 48.1 (1967): 28–39.
  22. Quotes in this paragraph and the preceding one are reprinted from the *Emancipator* in the *Liberator*, July 12, 1834.
  23. *Liberator*, July 19, 1834; Lewis Tappan to Weld, July 10, 1834, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844*, ed. Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, 2 vols. (New York: DaCapo Press, 1970), 1:153–56; *Liberator*, July 12, 1834.
  24. Garrison to Isaac Knapp, July 5, 1836, *Letters*, 2:139; *Liberator*, June 28, 1834; July 12, 1839. See also *Liberator*, June 14, 1837; July 8, 1842; July 2, 1847; *Seventeenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Andrews & Prentiss, 1849), 61; *Nineteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Prentiss & Sawyer, 1851), 62.
  25. See *Liberator*, July 6, 1833; July 12, 1834; July 9, 1836; *Philanthropist*, July 24, 1838, or almost any edition of the *Liberator* published around July 4.
  26. *Liberator*, June 11, 1836; June 23, 1837; Kimberly K. Smith, *The Dominion of Voice: Riot, Reason, and Romance in Antebellum Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999). For a typical list of advertisements for speeches, see *Liberator*, June 28, 1834. For evidence that speech-less ceremonies might be called off, see *Liberator*, July 6, 1838 (“In many places, meetings were not held on the 4th of July, on account of the difficulty of procuring speakers”). For requests for speakers, see *Liberator*, June 25, 1836 (“If popular orators cannot be had, no time can be more suitable for making a maiden speech”); and June 28, 1834.
  27. *Nineteenth Annual Report*, 62; Garrison to George W. Benson, July 8, 1842, *Letters*, 3:94. See also Garrison to Isaac Knapp, July 5, 1836, *Letters*, 2:140; *Liberator*, July 6, 1833; July 7, 1837; July 28, 1837; *Twenty-First Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Prentiss & Sawyer, 1853), 61.
  28. Parker Pillsbury, *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles* (Boston: Cupples, Upham, & Co., 1884), 175.
  29. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 215–56. The ideal audience also linked virtue with physiognomic “countenances,” just like early republicans on the Fourth of July. See *Philanthropist*, July 24, 1838; *Liberator*, July 12, 1839; Garrison to Charles Sumner, August 23, 1845, *Letters*, 3:319.
  30. Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One*, ed. John W. Blassingame, 5 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979–1992), 2:359–88. See Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808–1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003), 16–53; Shane White, “It Was a Proud Day’: African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834,” *Journal of American History*

- 81.1 (June 1994), 13–50; Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Free Antebellum Communities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1–24; Geneviève Fabre, "African-American Commemorative Celebrations in the Nineteenth Century," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72–91; Benjamin Quarles, "Antebellum Free Blacks and the 'Spirit of '76,'" *Journal of Negro History* 61.3 (July 1976), 229–42; Leonard I. Sweet, "The Fourth of July and Black Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion Within the Context of the Black Experience," *Journal of Negro History* 61.3 (July 1976), 256–75; William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808–1863," *Journal of Negro History* 67.4 (winter 1982), 302–17.
31. See White, "It Was a Proud Day," 35–39; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 336–48; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 171–83; Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 72–74; Sweet, "The Fourth of July," 262.
32. *Liberator*, July 8, 1842; August 20, 1841.
33. *Nantucket Telegraph*, reprinted by *Liberator*, August 4, 1843. See also *Liberator*, August 5, 1842; *Sixteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Andrews & Prentiss, 1848), 49; *Thirteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Andrews, Prentiss & Studley, 1845).
34. Samuel J. May, "The First of August," in *The Anti-Slavery Picknick: A Collection of Speeches, Poems, Dialogues and Songs, Intended for Use in Schools and Anti-Slavery Meetings*, comp. John A. Collins (Boston: H. W. Williams, 1842), 53. For the disgruntled letter on bell ringing, see *Liberator*, August 23, 1844. In 1842, Wendell Phillips reported that bells were rung in Lynn, Massachusetts, for the First of August, but in a letter he noted that this was "quite a new thing in Anti Slavery." He also imagined the bells as speakers: "goodly Anti Slavery lecturers they were, [since there were] few circles but must needs ask why the noise was & few where some one would not be found to tell, though heeded for the first time, the kind of day that was dawning." The bells served, rather than subverted, voice's dominion. See Phillips to Richard D. Webb, August 12, 1842, in Anti-Slavery Collection, Boston Public Library.
35. *Fourteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Scarlet & Laing, 1846), 54. The text reads "eloquence [*sic*] and song," but I have corrected the error. See also *Liberator*, July 6, 1838, or any edition around August 1.
36. *Liberator*, August 9, 1834; August 1, 1845; Garrison to Henry W. Williams, August 2, 1843, *Letters*, 3:189. See also *Liberator*, August 6, 1841; August 7, 1846.
37. The countryside around Boston had long been linked to gentility. See Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
38. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1836), 12; *Liberator*, August 5, 1842 ("composed of . . ." and "as if made for the purpose . . ."); *Thirteenth Annual Report* ("formed by the hand of Nature"); *Liberator*, July 28, 1848. See also *Liberator*, August 14, 1846; July 21, 1843; August 4, 1843; August 8, 1845; Garrison to George W. Benson, July 8, 1842, *Letters*, 3:94.
39. *Liberator*, July 11, 1851.
40. *Liberator*, July 21, 1843. Mileage estimates taken from *Historical Atlas of Massachusetts*, ed. Richard W. Wilkie and Jack Tager (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991).
41. See Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 54–96.
42. *Seventeenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society . . .* (Boston: Andrews & Prentiss, 1849), 61; Stewart, "Emergence of Racial Modernity," 192. See also Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 59–60.
43. See Stewart, "Emergence of Racial Modernity," 186–204; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. chaps. 6–7; Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 157–208; C. Peter Ripley, ed., *Witness for Freedom: African American Voices on Race, Slavery, and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 49–56; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830–1861* (1974; reprint, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 124–43.

44. *Liberator*, August 9, 1844; *Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), 77. See also *Liberator*, August 14, 1840; August 10, 1838; August 7, 1846; August 6, 1847; Garrison to Oliver Johnson, August 14, 1838, *Letters*, 2:378.
45. See Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 54–81; Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 64–65, 71–73.
46. On growing strains between white and black abolitionists, see Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, “Ends, Means, and Attitudes: Black-White Conflict in the Antislavery Movement,” *Civil War History* 18.2 (1972): 117–28; Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31–33; Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 60–61.
47. See Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 72–81 (quoted on 79 and 81); Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 71–72; White, “It Was a Proud Day,” 31–49; Gravely, “Dialectic of Double Consciousness,” 304–5; Fabre, “African-American Commemorative Celebrations,” 85; Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), chap. 4.
48. *Colored American*, August 15, 1840. See also Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 64.
49. Ripley, *Witness for Freedom*, 153. The speech was published in the *Colored American*, June 1, 1839. See also Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 157–59.
50. See John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).
51. *North Star*, June 29, 1849; August 4, 1848; Douglass quoted in Gravely, “The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness,” 305; Frederick Douglass, “West India Emancipation,” in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 4 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1950–1955), 2:433, 434, 438.
52. For the notion of “two abolitionisms”—one white and one black—see Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 3–16.
53. *Liberator*, August 4, 1843; July 26, 1844; August 7, 1840; August 14, 1840. Separatism is also noted in Gravely, “Dialectic of Double Consciousness,” 304.
54. *Liberator*, August 14, 1840; August 9, 1844.
55. *Liberator*, August 7, 1846.
56. *Liberator*, August 8, 1845. Beman often argued that white abolitionists could not celebrate the First of August like black abolitionists could. See Gravely, “Dialectic of Double Consciousness,” 304; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 124; Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 60. For more on Beman, see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999), 50. On the Belknap Street Church and Tremont Temple as centers of August 1 festivities, see the *Liberator*, August 14, 1840; August 9, 1844, August 1, 1845, August 6, 1847; Roy E. Finkenbine, “Boston’s Black Churches: Institutional Centers of the Antislavery Movement,” in *Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston*, ed. Donald M. Jacobs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 176.
57. See Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 65–67. Although Kachun argues that groves became the usual site for African American celebrations, my research suggests that this may have varied regionally. Kachun’s discussion of the groves also suggests that black abolitionists often adopted these spaces for different reasons, because they were conducive to festivities such as dances and militia exercises. Moreover, black abolitionists did not always view processions and picnics as mutually exclusive, since they frequently organized marches that proceeded first through cities and then went on to groves. See, for example, *Colored American*, August 11, 1838; September 25, 1841.
58. *Liberator*, August 5, 1842.
59. Ripley, *Witness for Freedom*, 62.
60. On Purvis, see Julie Winch, *A Gentlemen of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 351–57. After the riot in Philadelphia, Purvis moved to the country.