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Black Political Leadership in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1868

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Summary of Thesis

Louisiana is a crucial state for understanding the plight of the black politician in Reconstruction. New Orleans, the state's most important city, was the South's principal port in the nineteenth century and crucial to the region's stream of supplies and trade. Louisiana was also an early and important testing ground for federal authorities. Union forces captured New Orleans and sections of northeast Louisiana in April 1862, and President Abraham Lincoln began implementing Reconstruction policies in the state as early as 1863 -- two years before the Civil War had terminated.

Louisiana was home to a relatively prosperous and unique community of 18,000 free persons of color, a group whose leaders assumed the mantel of black political leadership during the Civil War and Reconstruction. New Orleans' 10, 683 free persons of color owned over two million dollars of property and dominated certain skilled trades, such as carpentry and shoemaking. Prominent among them were the French-speaking free blacks of New Orleans, the *gens de couleur*, who began the earliest civil rights campaign of the Reconstruction era. An elite free black minority, the *gens de couleur* were instrumental in obtaining the franchise for blacks in the state and for securing constitutional guarantees of civil and political equality for all Louisiana men. *Gens de couleur* also figured prominently in the influential *New Orleans Tribune*, the nation's first black daily newspaper, a respected and widely read advocate of civil equality and justice.

The attitudes, strategies, and achievements of free persons of color in nineteenth-century Louisiana have been the source of much historical probing. By and large, these studies have focused on *gens de couleur* antebellum or Civil War activities and dwelt primarily on their unique social and economic characteristics. They have also concentrated heavily on caste divisions between the *gens de couleur* and the general black population. Unfortunately, there has been significantly less exploration of black political participation in Louisiana during Reconstruction. The only exclusive and extended study on the subject, Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction*, lacks a critical analysis of black political attitudes and strategies. Vincent fails to

underline the crucial obstacles in the way of black political advancement, misunderstands the biracial context of the black political experience, and does not recognize the eroding political stature of the *gens de couleur* within the black political community.

In *Black Political Leadership in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1868,* I seek to provide a fresh look at black political leadership in Louisiana during early Reconstruction. I concentrate primarily on the nearly insurmountable hurdles of racism, violence, and ostracism that plagued black politicians in Louisiana between 1865 and 1868. I draw on congressional testimonies and reports, memoirs, and newspaper editorials to show that racism, ostracism, and retaliation faced blacks at every turn.

Moreover, I argue that black political strength was damaged by internal divisions over the role of free blacks within the Republican party leadership, and over the status of the emancipated slaves in Louisiana society. I illustrate how the unity of the black political leadership was strained: in the face of white skepticism and resistance, and from the pressure of conflicting aspirations of the *gens de couleur* and the ex-slaves. The *gens de couleur* and the freedmen did not always share the same philosophy in regards to the amelioration of the plight of Louisiana blacks. For instance, free blacks initally demanded suffrage for themselves and not for the newly emancipated slaves, and the two groups differed over economic issues at the 1867-1868 Constitutional Convention. Though often ready to work with the ex-slaves, free blacks seem to have felt that their main role was to "elevate"and "guide" their less fortunate brethren.

I suggest that the actions of the black political leaders are best understood when one considers the climate of tremendous upheaval and uncertainty in the state, and the resentment many whites feel towards blacks as a result of these changes. Blacks faced enormous external pressure in attempting to achieve civil and political equality with whites. White southerners believed blacks to be ignorant, passive, and corruptible and built much of their disgust with Reconstruction -- labeled the "tragic era -- around these prejudices. In certain cases, such as the New Orleans Riot in 1866, white prejudices

manifested itself in violent ways designed to intimidate blacks and their allies. The Republicans, for their part, hope to entrench their party in the South with the help of black votes, but lose enthusiasm for supporting their black allies in the face of hardening white resistance to Reconstruction. Thus, despite the weakened position of many Confederate white Louisianans, the confident rhetoric of the *Tribune*, and the inauguration of Radical Reconstruction, the elements of intimidation and obstruction that would ultimately derail the emergence of black political power in Louisiana were already in motion by 1868-- and had been in place for quite some time.

Résumé: *Black Political Participation in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1868.*

La Louisiane est un endroit important pour explorer l'hypothèse de la portée des pressions sur l'action des politiciens Noirs. Parmi les États où la Reconstruction a lieu pendant la Guerre de Sucéssion aux États-Unis, il n'y a que la Louisiane au coeur de la Confédération. La ville de la Nouvelle Orléans est le centre vital d'approvisionnement de Sud et la plaque tournante de son commerce. En avril 1862 une armée d'invasion fédérale débarque en Louisiane, fait la conquête de la Nouvelle Orléans, et de plusieurs villes des secteurs sud de l'état. Donc maître des régions sud de l'état de Louisiane, le gouvernement fédéral de M. Abraham Lincoln va tester son programme de restauration pour le Sud – deux ans avant la fin de la guerre.

De plus, une remarquable communauté de 18,000 Noirs libres à la Louisiane fleurit. À la veille de la guerre civile, les Noirs libres a la Nouvelle Orléans possèdent une valeur de deux millions en propriétés, et dominent le marché de la construction et des manufactures de souliers. Certains ont même des esclaves Noirs. Une minorité francophone parmi les Noirs libres, les "gens de couleur" sont souvent éduqués, et avec un statut social relativement élevé, leur histoire unique impose un écart non seulement par rapport aux esclaves, mais par rapport à tous les individus de la Louisiane. Ils vont créer la base du leadership politique Noir en Louisiane durant la guerre et le début de la Reconstruction et vont ouvré pour obtenir le droit de vote. Ils vont aussi lutter pour protéger les droits des nouveaux emancipés ainsi qu'influencer le prestigieux "journal Noir" *New Orleans Tribune*.

Les Noirs libres de la Louisiane ont fait sujet de plusieures études. Ces rapports mit l'emphase surtout sur les activités avant-guerre ou leurs attributs sociaux et économiques. L'oeuvre la plus pertinente au sujet de la participation des Noirs à la politique de la Louisiane est celle de Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana during Reconstruction*. Vincent nous fournit un background détaillé de tous les représentants Noirs en Louisiane durant la Reconstruction. Il indique comment chaque participant a voté pendant la convention constitutionelle de 1868 et note le rôle principal joué par des Noirs comme P.B.S. Pinchback et James Ingraham. Par contre, Vincent néglige les pressions externes sur les leaders Noirs et les

relations entre politiciens Noirs. Il oublie, aussi, les exemples de la coopération biraciale de cette époque. En somme, Vincent comprend mal les pressions, les entre-jeux et les motivations des politiciens Noirs.

Dans *Black Political Leadership in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1865* je souligne les pressions externes face aux Noirs, sans négliger les divisions au sein de la communauté Noire. Pour développer et soutenir mes arguments je cite des sources fondamentales: le rapport officiel pour la convention constitutionelle de 1868, les témoignages au Congrès des États-Unis à la suite de l'émeute de Nouvelle Orlèans en 1868, le rapport de Congrès sur la Reconstruction au Sud jusqu'en 1867, et les pensées de M. Jean-Charles Houzeau, rédacteur de *New Orleans Tribune*. J'examine aussie plusieurs articles, datant de 1862 à 1868, tirés de divers journaux de la Nouvelle Orléans.

Je montre que la puissance des politiciens Noirs était endommagé par les divisions internes vis-à-vis le rôle des nouveaux emancipés dans la société Louisianaise. Quand les forces fédérales arrivent à la Nouvelle Orléans en 1862, les gens de couleur avancent la question du droit de vote des Noirs libres – et non le droit de vote pour les anciens esclaves. À la convention constitutionelle de 1867-1868 on voit qu'au sujet des droits civiques et de l'accès à l'éducation, les Noirs sont d'acord, mais sur le plan économique ils se trouvent divisés. Parfois prêt a travailler avec les nouveaux emancipés, les gens de couleur libres croient, cependant, que leur rôle est de guider et conseiller les anciens esclaves – un genre de noblesse oblige.

Pour mieux comprendre les efforts des politiciens Noirs libres en Louisiane il faut constater qu'ils sont placés en face d'un peuple qui acceptera mal les réalisations de la Reconstruction et qui multipliera les obstacles pour les neutraliser. Les Blancs du Sud estiment les Noirs ignorants, passifs, corrompus, et bâtissent à partir de ces préjugés une grande partie de leur mise en question de cette période – dite "l'ère tragique". Dans certains cas – comme dans l'émeute de la Nouvelle Orléans de 1866 – cela prit des formes violentes dont l'objectif était de terroriser les Noirs et leurs alliées. Les Républicains, pour leur part, veulent, grâçe aux Noirs, implanter leur parti dans le Sud, mais perdent de leur enthousiasme à vouloir soutenir les Noirs et de s'imposer dans un Sud rétif. Donc, les leaders Noirs ont été obligés, tous d'abord, de faire face au racisme et à la violence des sudites, ainsi qu' au manque de soutien des nordistes. Face à

ces contraintes, les Noirs essayent de protéger leurs droits civiques précaires et de montrer à tous qu'ils sont capables d'administrer leurs affaires d'une manière rationelle, digne, et efficace. Leurs propos prouvent à quel point est fragile cette première période de la Reconstruction; tous les éléments de la résistance sont en place.

Introduction

In *Black Political Leadership in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1868,* I suggest that the actions of the black political leaders in Louisiana during early Reconstruction are best understood in the context of the tremendous upheavals and dislocations occurring in the state and the resulting resentment whites felt towards blacks. For despite the weakened position of many Confederate white Louisianans and the eventual introduction of Radical Reconstruction, the elements of intimidation and obstruction that would ultimately derail the emergence of black political power in Louisiana were already in motion by 1868-- and had been in place for quite some time.

The principal object of this thesis, then, is to reveal and explain these undermining influences in the context of the political environment in Louisiana between 1865 and 1868. First and foremost, I demonstrate that blacks faced enormous external pressure in attempting to achieve civil and political equality with whites. I draw on congressional testimonies, memoirs, and newspaper editorials to show that racism, ostracism, and retaliation faced blacks at every turn. Black political leaders even faced stiff resentment and opposition from their white political allies in the Republican Party.

However, I also argue that black political strength was damaged by internal divisions over the role of free blacks within the Republican party leadership, and over the status of the emancipated slaves in Louisiana society. I illustrate how the unity of the black political leadership was strained: in the face of white skepticism and resistance, and from the pressure of conflicting aspirations of the *gens de couleur* and the ex-slaves. Though schisms in the black community have been exaggerated, it is clear that the *gens de couleur* and the freedmen did not share the same philosophy in regards to the amelioration of the plight of Louisiana blacks. I refer to proceedings of Republican party meetings and the constitutional convention of 1867-1868, in particular, to support my claims. Yet, I also highlight the importance of the *New Orleans*

Tribune as a unifying force in the black community and as a noteworthy biracial facet of Reconstruction.

Chapter One, "Reconstruction Historiography and Black Political Leadership in Louisiana," provides a historical overview of the black politician in the South during Reconstruction and shows how, in the eyes of historians, he has evolved from a debased and contemptible figure to that of a praiseworthy and pivotal participant. Chapter Two, "The Formation of Black Political Leadership: Free Blacks, *Gens de Couleur* and the *New Orleans Tribune* outlines the creation of a free black community in Louisiana and shows that despite plentiful signs of achievement and industry, free persons of color in Louisiana were treated with suspicion and contempt by resident whites. Chapter Three, "Black Political Strategies and Setbacks, 1865 to 1867," demonstrates that black politicians during Early Reconstruction tried to forge an effective, unified, and responsible leadership, but found it difficult to exert much influence in the face of a hostile white population and volatile conditions. Finally, Chapter Four, "Defeat in Triumph: The Black Delegates and Their Participation at the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868," explains the makeup, goals, strategies, and performance of the black delegates at the convention, and underscores how the majority of white southerners were repudiating the "radical" political actions of the assembly that were bringing blacks the vote, civil equality with whites, and the possibility of governing Louisiana whites.

Black Political Leadership in Louisiana During the Early Years of Reconstruction, 1865 to 1868, is my attempt to revise and update the only exclusive and extended study of black politicians in Louisiana during Reconstruction, Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction.* Vincent provides well-researched biographies and useful backgrounds of black politicians in Louisiana during Reconstruction. Unfortunately, Vincent fails to underline the crucial obstacles in the way of black political advancement, misunderstands the biracial context of the black political experience, and does not recognize the eroding political stature of the *gens de couleur* within the black political community. Several recent histories have provided us with new perspectives about the remarkable cultural and political status of free persons of color in Louisiana. For instance, Eric Foner has compiled a composite portrait of black Reconstruction leaders in the South that invites comparison with recent studies of Louisiana. I

attempt to incorporate these findings into a revised synthesis of black political leadership in Louisiana during Reconstruction.

Chapter One

Reconstruction Historiography and Black Political Leadership in Louisiana

During one hundred and twenty years of historical writings on Reconstruction the black politician in the South has evolved from an ignorant, corruptible, and secondary figure to that of an idealistic, aggressive, and pivotal participant. Prominent early Reconstruction histories emphasized black politicians' failings and facile manipulation by whites. These studies were significantly influenced by white prejudices, which included the belief that blacks were debased, infantile, and inferior to whites. Opposing viewpoints, offered by W.E.B. Du Bois and others, stressed black activism and political progress, and highlighted Reconstruction's accomplishments. Yet, these initial revisionist accounts were generally ignored. It was not until the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s that historians began to entertain a wholesale reexamination of their original assessment of black political participation during Reconstruction. What has since emerged is the story of encumbered black politicians struggling valiantly to forge a society based on principles of equality and justice in the face of southern white resistance, tenuous federal support, internal cultural divisions, and political inexperience.

Louisiana is a crucial state for understanding the plight of the black politician in Reconstruction. For one, the region was an early and important testing ground for both presidential and congressional Reconstruction. Union forces captured New Orleans and sections of northeast Louisiana in April 1862, and President Abraham Lincoln began implementing Reconstruction policies in the state as early as 1863 -- two years before the Civil War had terminated. After Lincoln's death in 1865, Presidential Reconstruction of Louisiana continued for two more years under Andrew Johnson. In 1867, Congress usurped Johnson's control of southern Reconstruction and implemented a series of Reconstruction Acts that were significantly more stringent than the President's measures. Second, Louisiana was home to a relatively prosperous and unique community of 18,000

free persons of color, a group whose leaders assumed the mantel of black political leadership during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Prominent among them were the French-speaking free blacks of New Orleans, the *gens de couleur*, who began the earliest civil rights campaign of the Reconstruction era. *Gens de couleur* figured prominently in the influential *New Orleans Tribune*, the nation's first black daily newspaper, a respected and widely read advocate of civil equality and justice. An elite free black minority, the *gens de couleur* were instrumental in obtaining the franchise for blacks in the state and for securing constitutional guarantees of civil and political equality for all Louisiana men.

The attitudes, strategies, and achievements of free persons of color in Louisiana have been the source of much historical probing. By and large, these studies have focused on *gens de couleur* antebellum or Civil War activities and dwelt primarily on their unique social and economic characteristics. They have also concentrated heavily on divisions between the *gens de couleur* and the general black population. Unfortunately, there has been significantly less exploration of black political participation in Louisiana during Reconstruction. The only exclusive and extended study on the subject, Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction*, lacks a critical analysis of black political attitudes and strategies. Vincent fails to underline the crucial obstacles in the way of black political advancement, misunderstands the biracial context of the black political experience, and does not recognize the eroding political stature of the *gens de couleur* within the black political community. What I have tried to produce, then, is an updated look at black political leadership in Louisiana during Reconstruction that focuses primarily on the nearly insurmountable hurdles of racism, violence, and ostracism that plagued black political leaders, while at the same time recognizing the crippling political effects of internal divisions within the black community.

*F*ears and criticisms of "Radical" Republicans and their "Black and Tan" governments would echo throughout the South after the Civil War and help lay the foundation for a distorted interpretation of black political participation during Reconstruction. Many white southerners believed that a radical faction of Congressional Republicans was attempting to make the reunification process as difficult and humiliating

as possible for the South. They felt that Radical Republicans were moved by hatred of the white South, selfish economic interests, and political ambitions to put the South under military occupation. These southerners believed that the South had honestly accepted the outcome of the Civil War and had demonstrated a willingness to deal fairly with the ex--slaves. Yet, despite their overtures, the "compliant" white southern population had been stripped of its political power and forced to stand by as federal officials helped form new state governments allegedly dominated by corrupt blacks and whites.

Their harsh view of blacks and their allies became incorporated into the early historical writings on the subject and was largely unchallenged for a century. In 1907, Columbia University Professor William Dunning produced *Reconstruction: Political and Economic* in which he sharply criticized the Republican Reconstruction program in the South. Buttressed by a group of talented graduate students, Dunning would go on to produce a series of monographs lambasting corruption, treachery, and ruthlessness in the Radical Republican administration of the South. Dunning and others contrasted the apparent honor and idealism of the Civil War with the perceived corruption and sordidness of Reconstruction. In the writings of the Dunning School, Radical Republicans are the main targets. They are depicted as vengeful, greedy and intimately allied with scandalous northern carpetbaggers and treacherous southern scalawags. Blacks are treated as secondary and debased figures in these accounts, routinely characterized as ignorant, bumbling, and corruptible.[1]

Claude Bowers' book *The Tragic Era*, published in 1929, helped disseminate the traditional picture of Reconstruction and black political participation that lasted into the 1960s. For Bowers, Reconstruction was an era of perpetual debasement where corrupt politicians dominated the federal administration, scheming northern carpetbaggers invaded the South for plunder and profit, treacherous southern scalawags turned on their own people, and ignorant blacks threatened to topple white civilization. Not surprisingly then, Bowers, Dunning and other historians gave the period labels such as: "The Tragic

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[1] Works representative of the Dunning School include: William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic: 1865-1877* (New York, 1907), and E. Morton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947).

Era", "The Age of Hate", and "The Blackout of Honest Government" and helped create sordid images of Reconstruction.[2]

Many of the early historical writings on Reconstruction were colored by erroneous racial assumptions prevalent in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* heralded the principle of "survival of the fittest" and convinced many white Americans of their racial superiority. *The Origin of Species* was cited to demonstrate that whites were the "fittest" to rule and govern America. Moreover, plentiful "scientific" studies of the period purported to "prove" the innate mental and emotional inferiority of blacks. Such studies only served to reinforce existing prejudices and stereotypes in the South, where racial segregation was firmly entrenched by the early twentieth century and the Ku Klux Klan was enjoying a resurgence of popularity.

Fears of "Negro rule" also emanated from so-called Radical Republicans. In his 1930 memoir, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisian*a, Henry Clay Warmoth, former Louisiana Reconstruction Governor, claimed that the New Orleans *Tribune* "held out to the colored people the hope of making Louisiana a 'Negro State.'"[3] He charged that the *Tribune* was behind a plan by select black leaders to manipulate the vote of the freed slaves in order to create a black state run by an oligarchy of *gens de couleur*. Warmoth claimed that the editors of the *Tribune* were encouraged by the protection they expected from the United States Army, and the helplessness of the formerly ruling white people, to urge Louisiana blacks "to follow Haiti, San Domingo, and Liberia and make Louisiana an African State."[4]

Historian W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the early dissenters from the traditional view of Reconstruction. In a 1909 speech entitled "Reconstruction and its Benefits," Du Bois characterized Reconstruction as an idealistic effort to construct a democratic and

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[2] Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), and E. Morton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947).

[3] Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York, 1930), 32.

[4] Ibid., 51 - 54.

interracial political order. He criticized historians of his era who ignored the testimony of the key personage in Reconstruction -- the emancipated slave. He complained that they sacrificed scholarly objectivity to racial bias because they could not conceive of blacks as men. Du Bois outlined the numerous achievements and impressive credentials of many of the black legislators. He discounted the role blacks may have played in the failures of the Reconstruction Era. "Practically the whole new growth of the South has been accomplished under laws which black men helped to frame... I know of no greater compliment to negro suffrage."[5]

In his 1935 book *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880,* Du Bois pointed out numerous achievements of black politicians in the South during Reconstruction. In particular, he discussed the "remarkable part" played by free persons of color in Louisiana. Du Bois highlighted the aggressive demands and well-developed strategy of the *gens de couleur* in obtaining the franchise for blacks. Moreover, he claimed that the black members of the 1867-1868 constitutional convention "took a prominent and effective part" in the deliberations.[6] He concluded that the constitution made blacks "equal to the whites" by providing equal rights and privileges for both races, including the right to vote and the right to attend public schools. Du Bois saw amazing diversity in the group of Louisiana black politicians: "They differed in origin and education. Some looked white, some black, some born free and rich, the recipients of a good education; some were ex-slaves, with no formal training."[7] He also took special note of the influential role of the *Tribune* as a political "guide" for the black masses. [8]

Du Bois and a small group of historians in the 1930s and 1940s criticized the Dunning school for giving insufficient attention to the men whose idealism rose above the greed of the Reconstruction era. They pointed to the freedmen's societies and the work of missionaries and teachers in the South as evidence of continuing idealism

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[5] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," *American Historical Review* 15 (New York, 1910), 799.

[6] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935), 468.

[7] Ibid., 470.

[8] Ibid., 154-157,456-458, 469-470.

stemming from the abolitionist crusade and the Civil War. Yet, their arguments were largely ignored at the time.[9]

It was not until the 1960s that Du Bois' analysis of black politicians during Reconstruction received serious consideration from the mainstream historical community. A marked transformation in the nation's policies and racial attitudes was the event that helped topple the traditional view of Reconstruction. The non-violent civil-rights movement of the 1960s prompted many Americans to reevaluate their racial attitudes and helped spur new civil-rights legislation. In the midst of the crusade came Kenneth Stampp's *Era of Reconstruction*, the most influential summary of the revisionist outlook to emerge from the 1960s. Stampp refuted the notion that the South was brutally treated during Reconstruction and that northern actions were simply self-serving. He pointed to the 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the activities of the missionary societies in the South as ample evidence of the idealism of the era. Stampp and others remarked that blacks did not form a majority in the legislatures of the ex-Confederate states, with one minor exception. In South Carolina blacks formed a majority in the lower house, but bills sponsored by blacks in the lower assembly could be effectively blocked by the white-dominated upper chamber. Furthermore, all southern black politicians, including those in Louisiana, faced unyielding pressure in the form of white skepticism, hostility, or outright violence. If Louisiana blacks and their southern counterparts failed in securing a long-lasting transformation of southern society, it was primarily the result of obstruction and resistance by whites.[10]

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[9] Ibid., 713. For revisionist attitudes in the 1930s see Francis B. Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History* 5 (1939) 49-51 and A.A. Taylor, "Historians of Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro History* 23 (1938), 16-34. Key revisionist writings in the 1940's include: Howard K. Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," *American Historical Review* , 45 (1940), 807-827, Vernon L Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill, 1947); John Cox and LaWanda Cox, "General 0.0. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau', " *Journal of Southern History,* 19 (1953), 427-456, and David H. Donald, "The Scalawag in Mississippi Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, 10 (1944), 447-460.

[10] Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877* (New York, 1965). Other important revisionist works from the 1960s include James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, 1964), and LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice 1865-1866* (New York, 1963).

The work of Stampp and others since the 1960s has helped undermine the image of the black politician as passive, indifferent, and easily manipulated. Noted Reconstruction historian Eric Foner has pointed out in his acclaimed 1988 synthesis *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, that while blacks were sometimes misled because of their political inexperience and economic helplessness, their leaders sought equality and justice for blacks *and* whites. All the while, blacks were seldom vindictive in their use of political power and essentially stuck to issues of political rights and equality before the law. Many were even willing to postpone action on social integration in order to avoid open conflict and concentrate on civil and political rights.[11]

Foner, like Du Bois, puts blacks at the center of the Reconstruction experience. He argues that their individual and community autonomy did much to establish Reconstruction's political and economic agenda. Foner claims that blacks seized as much independence as possible in their working lives, consolidated their families and communities, and staked a claim to equal citizenship. Furthermore, Foner supports and intensifies Du Bois's argument that blacks developed their own leadership apart from whites, and that black representatives were far from ignorant and uneducated tools. Black political leaders, he illustrates, even seized upon America's republican values as a weapon for attacking the nation's racial caste system.[12]

Foner also tackled the post-revisionist notion that Reconstruction was essentially conservative in nature. He argued that black participation in southern political life was a radical development; it constituted a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent in the history of the United States. The transformation of slaves into free laborers and equal citizens is for Foner the most dramatic example of the social and political changes unleashed by the Civil War and emancipation.[13]

The Issue of Divisions Among Louisiana Blacks

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[11] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York, 1988).

[12] Ibid., xix - xviii.

[13] Ibid.,

The issue of the extent and significance of divisions among Louisiana blacks has received considerable attention from Reconstruction scholars . Several historians have concluded that free persons of color were interested foremost in advancing their interests and not necessarily those of the black population at large. Donald Everett has been instrumental in creating an image of an elitist and separatist group of pre-war *gens de couleur* willing to further their interests at the expense of the slave population. In 1955, Everett wrote in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* that "the natural leaders of the free colored population," an educated and prosperous caste, "separated themselves from the vast majority of (blacks) with whom they shared the same legal status." [14] Everett believes that the property owners and slaveholders in the black community identified their interests with those of the white population and pointed out that hundreds of free men of color voluntarily joined the Confederacy. He claims that when Union troops invaded New Orleans free persons of color "contrived" to gain recognition of their civil rights, and ignored those of the emancipated slaves, by becoming Union soldiers and "voicing platitudes" concerning their allegiance to the United States.[15]

Moreover, Everett echoes Warmoth's charge of Africanization. Everett concludes that "in view of later attempts of the free colored class to gain control of the state, their failure to accept the freedmen socially, their desire to educate their children separately, and the class distinctions which continue to exist in the New Orleans colored community today . . . the free-born men of color had visions of dominating the white population in the Reconstruction period." [16] Everett's conclusions demonstrate that Dunning school attitudes had not completely died.

David Rankin provides statistical fodder for Everett's accusations but did not go so far as to repeat charges of black domination. Rankin's 1978 study of the *gens de couleur*, based chiefly on 1860 census records, led him to conclude that free persons of

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[14] Donald E. Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (April, 1955), 43

[15] Ibid., 44, 63.

[16] Donald E. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1952), 272; Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, (1955),58-59, 62, 64.

color in New Orleans were a wealthy and privileged group of skilled laborers and property holders (including slave-holders) who enjoyed special legal protection within Louisiana society. Believing that the *gens de couleur* had close economic and social ties with whites, Rankin argues that many of their group opposed abolition, supported secession, and demonstrated loyalty to whites by pursuing runaway slaves, revealing insurrectionary plots, and suppressing revolts.[17]

Rankin asserts that free blacks often achieved their gains at the expense of slaves. He points out that in 1811 free blacks volunteered to fight against rebellious slaves who were marching on New Orleans. The loyalty of the *gens de couleur* in that crisis, he concludes, led the government to permit a "Battalion of Free Men of Color". Moreover, he added, black troops fought with distinction under Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans and their bravery helped secure rights and privileges for free blacks until the Civil War.[18]

Rankin also identifies black ward officers and leading black spokesmen of the major political organizations in New Orleans during the Civil War. He finds that virtually all were free before the war, most were native-born, and two-thirds came from New Orleans. Furthermore, many came from colored families of French extraction and were light-colored mulattos. Many were skilled artisans or businessmen who were financially more secure than the vast majority of blacks in antebellum Louisiana. Rankin concludes that *gens de couleur* only championed universal suffrage out of political necessity and "feared that in the struggle over abolition the special demands of the free colored community might be overlooked."[19]

Loren Schweninger has provided economic data to buttress the argument that antebellum free persons of color in Louisiana were a prosperous group of blacks with

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[17] David Rankin, "The Impact of the Free Colored Community of New Orleans," *Perspectives in American History,* 11 (1978), 382-386.

[18] Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," *Southern Studies,* 18 (Spring, 1979), 27.

[19] Rankin, "The Politics of Caste: Free Colored Leadership in New Orleans During the Civil War," 126, 105-125.

little social and cultural values in common with freedmen.[20] Schweninger has depicted free persons of color as an insular group of property holders who invested in slaves as "chattel property".[21] He declares that free persons of color treated their slaves no differently than did whites and generally supported the Confederacy. Schweninger speaks much of free colored wealth. He calculates that free persons of color in Louisiana in 1850 held fifty-nine percent of black real-estate holdings in the South even though they constituted only seven percent of the free black population in the South.[22]

The Du Bois school of thought has found its proponents in the writings of Rodolphe Desdunes, Caryn Cosse Bell and others. Desdunes, a prominent black creole spokesmen, produced in 1911 an overwhelmingly sympathetic account of black Louisianans in 1911 entitled *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire* (Our People and Our History). Desdunes portrayed the black leaders in the Civil War and Reconstruction effort as idealistic and peaceful men striving for freedom and equality in the face of great obstruction and intimidation. He claimed that the gens de couleur were "generous servants of the common cause" who contributed their own personal funds to the cause of universal suffrage.[23]

In her 1997 study, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868*, Caryn Cosse Bell downplays black divisions and concludes that the "radical agenda and bold actions" of black politicians in the state during Reconstruction were evidence of a "well-developed philosophy of political radicalism at the time of the Civil War."[24] Bell believes that the political and intellectual traditions of the Afro-Creole community significantly impacted the goals and strategies of black political leaders during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Bell traces black

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[20] Loren Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," *Louisiana History,* 30 (1989), 350, 359.

[21] Ibid., 349.

[22] Ibid., 253, 346.

[23] Rodolphe Desdunes, *Our People and Our History* (Baton Rouge, 1973), 124, 132.

[24] Caryn C. Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge, 1997), 3.

radicalism to eighteenth-century egalitarian movements, and followed its evolution through Catholic inclusionary practices and expression in Romantic literature.[25]

Bell cites Latin European religious influences, a fluid racial order, and revolutionary movements in Europe and the Americas as giving rise to an assertive, prosperous, well-educated, and cohesive free-black community. She writes that the *gens de couleur* were the "most politicized and articulate free black community in the South."[26] Bell portrays the *gens de couleur* as bearers of republican ideals, influenced by the democratic principles of the French Revolution and the American Revolution. She concludes that they were inspired by such revolutionary events as the black-led revolt in Saint Domingue in the French Caribbean and by France's decision in 1848 to abolish slavery and immediately grant the franchise to free men of color and former slaves. Bell cites evidence from literary works, newspaper editorials, and Masonic societies to bolster her claims that Afro-Creole leaders saw the Civil War as another event in a prolonged evolution towards a republican ideal.[27]

John Blassingame has staked out a somewhat middle position on the issue of black divisions. In *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880,* Blassingame agrees with some historians who claim that mulattos were paternalistic towards the freedmen and points out that a fair number of them supported the 1864 "quadroon bill" which would have extended the vote to wealthy and well-educated blacks. However, he concluded that mulattos cooperated with blacks to achieve common goals, and did not block freedmen from leadership positions. He cites the fact that *gens-de-couleur* sponsored *Tribune* launched a spirited campaign to defeat the quadroon bill.[28]

Though his is primarily a social and economic study of blacks in that city, Blassingame nonetheless makes some bold and sweeping generalizations about black politicians in New Orleans and their influence. He argues that they "never obtained more than the semblance of power" between 1860 and 1880 and were "too young,

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[25] Ibid., 3-4.
[26] Ibid., 2.
[27] Ibid., 2-3, 6.

inexperienced, friendless, and poor" to make gains in the political arena. He concludes that blacks never had any real voice in the Republican party.[29]

Blassingame's generalizations on black politics in New Orleans during Reconstruction lack the impressive substantive and quantitative support that marks his forays into the social and economic realms. *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* offers no portrayal of Republican party meetings, nor does it analyze the proceedings of the 1868 constitutional convention. The study also neglects congressional testimonies of black and white leaders. Blassingame's conclusions are also undercut by his misinformed treatment of the New Orleans *Tribune*, the influential black daily newspaper. Blassingame claims that the *Tribune* was "one of the most impressive of New Orleans papers" from 1864 to 1866, but degenerated into a bland "typical nineteenth century political tract" after the Belgian Jean-Charles Houzeau took over editorial duties. Blassingame appears unaware that Houzeau began writing the *Tribune*'s editorials four months into its existence. Later in the book Blassingame cites the efforts of Houzeau and the *Tribune* in attempting to forge closer ties between the newly emancipated freedmen and the established free persons of color.[30] Moreover, the *Tribune* was far from bland and thanks to Houzeau its editorials were highly respected.

Black Political Activism in Louisiana during Reconstruction

Unfortunately, modern political histories of Louisiana Reconstruction have shed little light on the arena of black political activism during Reconstruction. The standard work on the subject, Joe Taylor's *Louisiana Reconstructed*, focuses heavily on federal Reconstruction policy and implementation in Louisiana and gives black politicians a decidedly small part. Taylor did suggest, however, that the *gens de couleur* "were at least as qualified as whites" in the Republican party. He also concludes that the black

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[28] John Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago, 1973), 152-155.

[29] Ibid., xv, 213.

[30] Ibid., 131, 152-153.

delegates were "not pawns" of the white leadership at the 1867-1868 Constitutional Convention and "contributed substantially" to the proceedings.[31]

Ted Tunnell provides a more extensive and sophisticated treatment of free black leadership in his 1984 study of Louisiana Reconstruction, *Crucible of Reconstruction.* In a chapter on the black elite, Tunnell concluded that the *gens de couleur* had adopted a paternalistic attitude towards the freedmen because they felt they knew better than ex-slaves what was in the interest of black Louisianans. Tunnell claims that the *gens de couleur* instructed the freedmen to remain passive and let their "more enlightened brethren" make policy.[32] Tunnell believes that a *gens de couleur* shift from unconcern with the freedmen to elevation of the slave masses reflected more of a "realistic perception of class interest" than a genuine awakening of conscience."[33] Tunnell's main objective in *Crucible of Reconstruction* was to study white southern Unionism, however, and his analysis of free black leadership relies heavily on David Rankin's work.

The only exclusive study of black political participation during Reconstruction is Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction*, published in 1976. In his book, Vincent provides well-researched biographies and useful backgrounds for black politicians in Louisiana during Reconstruction. He also provides a rundown of their contributions to Louisiana Republican policies, the 1867-1868 constitutional convention, and the state legislature. Vincent points out that the *gens de couleur* were at the forefront of much of the black political mobilization and describes them as "respectable" citizens who were often property owners or men from various skilled occupations. He also commends the work of the New Orleans *Tribune* in mobilizing the black community.[34]

However, Vincent glosses over the daunting obstacles in the way of black political advancement. He fails to underscore the concerted efforts of numerous white

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[31] Joe G. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 94, 144.

[32] Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1984),86-87.

[33] Ibid., 91.

Louisianans to undermine efforts to obtain black civil rights and full political participation. Racism, violence, and intimidation were crucial and debilitating hurdles facing black politicians on a regular basis, but in *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (and subsequent articles by the author) they do not receive much attention.

Vincent also fails to explore differences between free persons of color and newly emancipated slaves that might have impacted political decisions. Vincent asserts that the black legislators had "gained the confidence and allegiance" of the black population because of "their commitment to establish true democracy" within Louisiana.[35] Yet he provides little evidence to back up his assertion. Vincent claims, for example, that free persons of color "eagerly volunteered" for the Union cause during the Civil War because they saw the conflict "as a war of liberation".[36] Yet, many *gens de couleur* initially volunteered for the Confederacy. Vincent claims that they probably joined the Confederate ranks "for their personal safety." He ignores the logical argument that slaveholding *gens de couleur* joined the Confedracy to secure their possessions. Moreover, apart from the congressional testimony of one black soldier, there is a notable lack of documentation that would support Vincent's claim of widespread enthusiasm among free persons of color for the arrival of Union troops.

Vincent also neglects to account for important observations of black divisions as found in Jean-Charles Houzeau's *Le Journal Noir aux Etats Unis*, a memoir of the Belgian editor's time at the paper. (Incidentally, Vincent misidentifies Houzeau as a black man in *Black Legislators*). Houzeau pointed out that one of the biggest obstacles in the mobilization of the black political community was the alienation of free persons of color and the freedmen - - and he was determined to rectify the situation. He wrote: "These

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[34] Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: 1976).

[35] Vincent, "Negro Leadership and Programs in the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1868," in Mark Carleton et al., *Readings in Louisiana Politics* (Baton Rouge, 1975), 269.

[36] Vincent, "Black Louisianans During the Civil War and Reconstruction: Aspects of Their Struggles and Achievements," *Griot*, 10 (1991), 85-86.

people have to be made to agree with one another, given confidence by means of the newspaper, driven to demand their rights, and this in the midst of all sorts of intrigues and all kinds of opposition."[37] Houzeau claimed in 1868 that it had taken him three years to make "this division between the mulattos and the blacks [. . .] disappear."[38] Moreover, he found that the *gens de couleur* were "in very sharp opposition" to English-speaking blacks.[39]

In his analysis of the 1867-1868 constitutional convention, Vincent writes that the black delegates played "an active part in the deliberations" and "performed well".[40] As evidence, he notes that black members sat on important committees such as the Committee on Rules and Regulations and the Committee on the Militia. In particular, he cited the contributions of P.B.S. Pinchback and James Ingraham. Vincent believed that their conscientiousness was reflected in their desire to see that qualified men hold important posts in the convention and their efforts to aid the freedmen.[41]

Vincent's conclusions are somewhat undercut by his misidentification of several black delegates. More damaging, however, is his failure to note that only seven of the two hundred and ninety-five resolutions introduced at the convention were related to freedmen concerns. The *gens de couleur* were conspicuous in their absence for calls to aid the freedmen. Certainly, the black delegates were active and performed well during the convention. But why did they not push for public assistance for freedmen?

One of Vincent's oversights is to neglect the biracial nature of the black political experience in Louisiana during Reconstruction. In many ways the fortunes of the black politicians were interwoven with those of white Radicals, both intrastate and federal. In *Black Legislators* Vincent has little to say about the interplay between white and black

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[37] Jean-Charles Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 36.

[38] Ibid., 50.

[39] Ibid., 49.

[40] Vincent, "Negro Leadership and Programs in the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1868," 269, 276.

Radicals. By misidentifying Jean-Charles Houzeau, he also fails to recognize the extraordinary biracial cooperation of the editors at the New Orleans *Tribune*.

Vincent writes of state-level black politicians in Louisiana, and ignores the local black politicians in the state. When *Black Legislators* was published, little scholarly research had been devoted to African-American leaders on local and county levels. Subsequent studies though have shed much light on the subject. Robert Moran, for example, has shown that local black officials in Ascension Parish, Louisiana, did not dominate politics at the local level during Reconstruction, even when they formed a majority. Most often, threats and violence curbed their efforts by whites.[42] Moreover, Terry Seip demonstrated in 1975 that very few blacks held political office in the Baton Rouge government and that blacks received little in the way of municipal government services.[43]

Vincent also fails to put the black political experience in the larger context of the ongoing Americanization of Louisiana. Since roughly 1830, English had superseded French as the first language of Louisianans. The *gens de couleur*, protectors of the French language and literary culture in Louisiana, were similarly diminishing in numbers and influence. Meanwhile, black migrants from the northern United States were seizing positions of influence within the black community. As such, the cultural divisions in the black community meant that the *gens de couleur* could not expect all elements of the free black population to automatically rally behind them.

In *The Afro-Creole Protest Tradition,* Caryn Bell implies that black political activity in Louisiana during Reconstruction should be viewed as part of a continuum - - revolutionary actions in a long series of democratic movements originating in the eighteenth century. While the impact of the French Revolution and democratic revolts in

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Robert Moran, "Local Black Officials in Ascension Parish, 1868-1878," *Louisiana History,* 27 (1986), 273.

[43] Terry Seip, "Municipal Politics and the Negro: Baton Rouge, 1865-1880," in Carleton et al., *Readings in Louisiana Politics*, 242-266.

the French Caribbean on Louisiana are not negligible, it might be best to understand the actions of black politicians in Louisiana as revolutionary reactions to an extraordinary set of events. Slave emancipation and civic equality must have seemed like remote possibilities to free persons of color in 1860. Free persons of color were immediately concerned about protecting their own precarious position in the face of increasing racial oppression and declining economic opportunities. However, the swift occupation by Union forces of parts of Louisiana in 1862, followed by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation the following year, provided a startling new opportunity for blacks to voice pent-up desires for racial equality. At first slowly, then with urgency, free persons of color dispensed with caste pretensions introduced and reinforced by whites.

The Relative Importance of Black Political Divisions

In 1865, Junius ("not a rich creole") responded to charges in the *New Orleans Tribune* of black elitism among *gens de couleur* . He said: "ever since the occupation of this city by the military forces of the United States in April, 1862, the free colored people of this city and state, have night and day been working for and in the interest of the new freedmen . . . all who were formerly afraid to do anything in the direction of moral or physical assistance of the former bondsmen, entered into this work vigorously, and have accomplished great good."[44] While the *gens de couleur* may not have actively helped the plight of slaves in Louisiana before the war, it is clear that the free black elite came to realize during Reconstruction that their fate was "indissolubly bound" with the general black population. As such, *gens de couleur* came to push for equal rights not just for themselves, but for the whole black community of the state.

In *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois cited the editorials of the *Tribune* of September 14, 1865 as evidence of the growing unity of the black community: "We no longer hear of classes of colored men – some to claim the electoral franchise because they are rich, some because they are lettered, some bore an Uncle Sam's musket. All this was sheer aristocracy, and among those neglected there were men as good, as true, as patriotic and as intelligent, as among the privileged classes." Instead of focusing on internal divisions,

Du Bois pointed out the numerous external obstacles in the path of black advancement in the South. The main resistance, he believed, came from white planters, often officers and leaders in the Confederate Army. Du Bois also fingered "traders, capitalists, and adventurers" from the North who came seeking financial gain and who cared little for the plight of the black man. Another group Du Bois cited was the poor whites in the northern part of the states who dreaded sinking to the social level of the blacks. Their fear of social degradation, he believed, bred hatred and, ultimately, violence against blacks. Finally, Du Bois singled out a mischievous element he called "demagogic leaders of the Negroes." Du Bois identified them as politicians and gamblers, recruited from the old overseer and trader classes, who swayed blacks with their rhetoric but who really worked for the planters. It was this element, according to Du Bois, "that more than anything else kept up the turmoil in the state."[45]

Blassingame also points out that black politicians faced an array of obstacles. He highlights that the majority of elected officials in Louisiana during Reconstruction were "property-holding veterans of the Civil War" and that blacks had no control over federal patronage in the state. He further adds that major federal offices in influential institutions such as the Post Office and the Customs House went to whites. If that weren't enough, he adds, black constituents were often illiterate and subject to fraud, intimidation, and manipulation by conservative white forces. And corruption "tainted every move blacks made to use their political power."[46]

Unlike Du Bois, Blassingame claims that the heaviest burden the black politician bore was the "fickleness" of their white Republican allies. While not referring to them as "carpetbaggers" or "scalawags," Blassingame believes that most white radicals were "white supremacists" and "self-seeking, avaricious, and power-hungry men" who manipulated blacks in order to establish a firm voting base for themselves.[47]

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[44] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, 459.

[45] Ibid., 470-471.

[46] Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*, 213-214.

[47] Ibid., 214.

Blassingame claims that whites were able to defeat black efforts to realize meaningful economic and social changes through politics, but he doesn't disparage blacks of successes. He applauds their "brilliant campaign" to obtain the franchise for the black community and claims that they were aggressive in protecting their interests after securing the vote. He cites their efforts to get one-half of the seats of the 1868 Republican convention for blacks and their attempt to block the efforts of white moderates such as Henry Warmoth and Thomas Conway from controlling the Republican party. Though unsuccessful in promoting a black to the post of Governor, black politicians were able to secure other "political plums", such as the state post of Lieutenant-Governor and Secretary-Treasurer.[48]

Eric Foner acknowledges and documented black class differences, but comes to the conclusion that distinctions between blacks were seldom of much importance. He finds that in the face of a common enemy --white racism-- it was imperative for the black community to unite. Foner goes on to argue that even though the free blacks were better off economically than the mass of the freedmen, most were men of modest circumstances, whose personal experiences and economic interests did not diverge sharply from those of their constituents.[49] Foner concludes that black politicians in the South were under intense pressure to form a unified front with white radical politicians. Black politicians were driven by a desire not to embarrass the Republican party and heighten internal contention, to avoid providing ammunition for Democratic charges of "black supremacy".[50]

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[48] Ibid., 211-212.

[49] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 318 - 320.

[50] Ibid., 65-66, 331, 350-352.

Chapter 2

The Formation of Black Political Leadership: Free Blacks, *Gens de Couleur* and the *New Orleans Tribune*

Foreign travelers and northern arrivals often remarked upon the extraordinary makeup and accomplishments of Louisiana's antebellum free colored population. Visitors to New Orleans often commented on the light complexion, social graces, and educational refinement of the city's free blacks. Whitelaw Reid, a Radical Republican who visited New Orleans shortly after the Civil War, commented that the first group of free colored men he encountered "would never have been suspected in any mixed company at the North of being other than intelligent and polished ornaments of the Anglo-Saxon race."[1] Frederick Law Olmsted, northern social critic and famed landscape architect, remarked that the free persons of color in New Orleans were "much superior" to the general black population due to "habits of early life, the advantages of education, and the use of wealth."[2] Even the anti-black New Orleans *Picayune* wrote in 1859 that the free colored people of that city were "a sober, industrious and moral class, advanced in education and civilization."[3]

Yet, despite plentiful signs of achievement and industry, free persons of color in Louisiana were treated with suspicion and contempt by resident whites. The influential planter class, who associated free blacks with slave revolts and adulterated "white" blood, sought to protect themselves and other whites by limiting the number of free blacks. In New Orleans, as well as throughout the state, white officials took steps to block free colored advancement and restrict free black rights. As early as 1751, regulations called for free blacks to be whipped for being disrespectful to whites, attending church unsupervised by whites, or being out after curfew. Free blacks were also warned not to assemble in New Orleans under any pretext whatsoever.

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[1] Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour* (New York: 1866), 244-245.
[2] Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York, 1953), 233.

Moreover, an act of 1806 declared that free blacks "ought never to insult or strike white people, nor presume to conceive themselves equal to the whites; but on the contrary they ought to yield to them on every occasion, and never speak or answer them but with respect, under penalty of imprisonment according to the nature of the offense." Ensuing legislation barred free blacks from, among other things, serving in the state militia, carrying firearms without a permit, attending public schools, voting in civic elections, holding political office, forming religious, charitable, or literary societies, and managing coffee houses. Freed blacks could be returned to slavery if they harbored fugitive slaves and local ordinances forbade free persons of color from traveling freely. At no time during the antebellum period were free people of color legally allowed to vote, (though they reportedly did in rare cases) and free blacks were never allowed direct participation in government. Finally, most jails, theaters, Protestant churches, schools, hospitals, streetcars were rigidly segregated and many restaurants, hotels, private clubs excluded blacks.[4]

In addition to dealing with the problem of a hostile white populace, free blacks also had to come to terms with a deeply-entrenched alienation of the black slave from the free man of color. There were several reasons for such a division. For one, some free men of color had owned slaves themselves. Moreover, free black masters had a reputation, in at least a few regions of the state, as being hard-driving, even brutal, masters. Second, free-born men of color had traditionally separated their struggle from that of the black masses in general, and some believed that they would achieve their cause more quickly if they abandoned the fate of the black masses. In the eyes of more than a few free blacks, their community was nearer to the white man than to the black man and more advanced than the slave "in all respects." [5]

Historians have often described antebellum free persons of color as a "privileged class." They usually cite laws passed by Louisiana's legal system, which helped define and institutionalize legal free black rights and securities throughout the period, and point to the

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[3] New Orleans *Picayune*, July 16, 1859. (Herein cited as *Picayune*.)

[4] Thomas Ingersoll, "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 48 (1991), 194-200; H. E. Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana* (Rutherford, New Jersey, 1972), 163-165, 170-173; David C. Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," *Southern Studies*, 18 (1979), 29.

considerable accumulations of wealth by a limited number of free persons of color. Yet in light of the concerted and continual effort by white leaders to undermine these rights, and the oppressive racism of the period, "privileged class" is an inappropriate and misleading classification of antebellum free persons of color. Free blacks could not be expected to constitute a true class when they were feared and oppressed as ex-slaves and seen as potential menaces to white society. The creation of the labels "free men of color" and "free women of color" by white officials could only result in a degraded free black subclass that could be checked to see they did not intermarry with whites or otherwise subvert white society. In a society filled with white fear of black revolts, it was expedient for white planters to offer free blacks incentives to crush slave resistance. Creating mutual distrust between free blacks and slaves, whites inhibited the formation of black ties that might lead to the undermining of planter domination. In sum, free people of color enjoyed some latitude to assure loyalty, but not so much as to encourage them to challenge white dominance. [6]

Louisiana's Free Black Populace

In 1860 Louisiana was home to a total of 18,647 free black residents, a population that exceeded any of the other free black communities in the Deep South states. The city of New Orleans alone accounted for 10, 689 free blacks, a figure larger than nine of the eleven ex-Confederate states. The percentage of free blacks in the total black population in Louisiana was also almost double that of the other Deep South states and nearly fifty-percent of blacks found in New Orleans in 1860 were free (though ninety-eight percent of those living outside the city were slaves). Although the slave population in Louisiana outnumbered the free black population 13 to 1 in 1860, black political leadership during the Civil War and Reconstruction came primarily from former free men of color and rarely from the large body of emancipated slaves.[7]

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[5] Jean-Charles Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 81.

[6] Ingersoll, "Black Manon in the Capital City of the Slave South" (Chapter 11 of *Mammon and Manon: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, New Orleans, 1818 - 1819*, forthcoming); Donald C. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1952), 268-272; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 29.

[7] United States Census of 1860; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 19-24; Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 67.

Self-conscious, proud, and legally recognized, the *gens de couleur* -- the French speaking free black elite of New Orleans -- provided the bulk of the political leadership for the black community in Louisiana during the Civil War and early Reconstruction periods. By and large French Catholics, the *gens de couleur* were among the most prosperous group of African descendants in the United States. The *gens de couleur* dominated certain skilled trades, such as carpentry and masonry, some held considerable estates, and roughly thirteen percent of its community owned slaves. The community also boasted a strong literary heritage, notable for its Romantic poetry, and a distinctive military history highlighted by its contribution to the defense of New Orleans in 1812. Many *gens de couleur* received a private secondary education and some attended prestigious institutions of higher learning in the United States and Europe. When Whitelaw Reid encountered representatives of the *gens de couleur*, he was impressed with their cultured and refined air: "Every man of them was well educated. All spoke French fluently; the English of all was passable, of some perfect. Some of them were comparatively wealthy, and all were in easy circumstances." [8]

The origins of the free colored community in Louisiana can be traced to its European settlement. Some French and Spanish settlers and adventurers in Louisiana took black women as mistresses. These European men occasionally recognized the mixed-blood children that resulted from these alliances and might provide them with bequests of land and monetary assistance. The Spanish government also made it possible for slaves to purchase their freedom. A lack of white skilled laborers in Louisiana provided opportunities for skilled slave artisans to purchase their freedom.[9]

Though there were only 165 free persons of color when Spain occupied Louisiana in 1766, the free colored community grew considerably in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

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[8] Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*, 260; Caryn C. Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1997), 2; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War On The Free Colored Community of New Orleans," *Perspectives in American History*, 11 (1978), 380; Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 66-67.

[9] Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War On The Free Colored Community of New Orleans," 381; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 19-20; Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 15, 18; Loren Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," *Louisiana History* (1989), 346-347; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 136-150.

centuries. Most influential to the community's growth was a wave of migration to Louisiana. Between 1790 and 1810 a revolution in French-controlled Saint Domingue, the wealthiest of the Caribbean sugar islands, drove thousands of free blacks towards Louisiana. In all, the *gens de couleur de Saint Domingue* brought their relative prosperity, education, military experience, and tradition as free persons of color to the black community in Louisiana.[10][11]

There was a mixed reaction to the arrival of the refugees. Some in the Gallic community hoped that the French-speaking immigrants would bolster the French community in the face of the growing English-speaking American presence. To that end they were willing, albeit reluctantly, to accept the black slaves and free persons of color who arrived along with white refugees. Some in the white planter community worried that these newcomers might spur Louisiana slaves to revolt. As one nervous planter cautioned: "In our bosom we have a number of Negrophiles who blow the seductive venom into the hearts of Negroes and Mulattoes and place in their hands iron and fire with which to destroy the Whites." [12] The sight of armed blacks in a military parade in 1803 was "painful and perplexing" to the commanding American general who fretted that local black militia "might produce those Horrible Scenes of bloodshed & rapine, which have so frequently been noticed in St. Domingo."[13]

As a result, in 1807 *all* free blacks were legally proscribed from entering Louisiana by the territorial legislative assembly. Moreover, no slave under thirty could be freed unless he saved the life of a member of his master's family. Manumission of slaves, a key source of free persons of color in the eighteenth century, became increasingly limited in the early nineteenth century.

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[10] Ira Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste", *Journal of Social History* (1975), 311-312; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 23; Virginia Dominguez, *Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, 1986), 102; Paul Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact," *Louisiana History*, 24 (1988), 125-140.

[11] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 37-38; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), 114-116; Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact," 110-112.

[12] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 28.

[13] Ibid, 29-30, 38; Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste," 310; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters,* 114-117; Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact," 112-118.

The more restrictive codes, coupled with the rising price of slaves, radically reduced the incidences of self-purchase[14]

Partly as a result of economic prosperity, and partly as a reward for free black loyalty during the War of 1812, state officials did not further reduce free black rights between 1815 and 1830. Moreover, enticed by the prospect of plentiful jobs, some free blacks from the North and South United States migrated into New Orleans after the war. Principally buoyed by a state-wide increase in natural reproduction, the free black community grew to 16,710 in 1830 and accounted for 13.2 percent of the state's black population. Thereafter, immigration became less consequential to the growth of the free colored population. By 1850 over eighty percent of the free persons of color were native born. A decade later fully 98 percent were native born.[15]

The Louisiana free colored community emerged by the mid-nineteenth century as primarily an urban, mulatto community where the prosperous refugees from Saint Domingue, and the skilled black artisans who managed to buy their way out of slavery, secured a strong foothold in the local economy. Skills learned enabled free people of color to enjoy a growing prosperity. In particular, the wealth, high occupational status, French language and culture, urban residence, and brown skin of *gens de couleur* elevated the free people of color in the white man's eyes and encouraged whites to consider them a breed apart from the overwhelmingly rural black slaves.[16]

Louisiana's legal system helped define a free black subclass that shared some of the legal rights and privileges of whites. The Louisiana Supreme Court, for example, declared that the free man of color "is capable of contracting. He can acquire by inheritance and transmit property by will. He is a competent witness in all civil suits. If he commits an offense against the laws, he is to be tried with the same formalities, and by the same tribunal, as the white man."[17] Free persons

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[14] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana* , 33-37, 75-76; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters,* 114-116. Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana,* 160-165; Joseph Logsdon and C. Cosse Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," in Arnold R. Hirsh and Joseph Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 208, 210.

[15] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters,* 114-116; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 23.

[16] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters,* 113; Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste," 311.

[17] Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana,* 176-190.

of color could testify against whites in criminal cases, and like whites, they were exempt from testimony given by slaves. In some criminal cases whites and blacks were subject to the same punishment. As such, Louisiana was the only slave state in 1850 that permitted a free person of color to bear witness against whites in civil and criminal cases.[18] Nevertheless, the relatively secure position of the free colored subclass was more a result of military, economic, and demographic circumstances than legal proclamations. Louisiana's small white population during the colonial era made her easy military prey, and thus somewhat dependent on free colored soldiers. French officials had created a black military force to fight Native Americans in the Natchez War of 1730 – 1731 and in the Chickasaw Indians campaigns of 1739 and 1740. The Spanish attempted to insure free black loyalty in the face of French threats by offering medals and cash incentives to free black soldiers. American authorities in Louisiana worried about incursions by nearby Spanish forces and were relieved when the free black forces aided in repulsing British forces during the War of 1812.[19]

Free blacks also proved a useful defense against slave revolts. When plantation slaves in St. John the Baptist rebelled in 1811, some free people of color offered their services to put down the rebellion. A group of free people of color also fought admirably under General Andrew Jackson during the war of 1812. By the 1830s free people of color owned mercantile stores, grocery stores, and tailoring shops, and worked as brickmasons, carpenters, stonemasons, mechanics, cigarmakers and other skilled occupations. In rural parishes they managed productive farms and plantations, produced sugar, rice, and corn, and owned herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. Free blacks established a firm economic base for their legal privileges and by the time of the Civil War they were contributing heavily to Louisiana's economic prosperity.[20]

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[18] Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 24-25; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 176-190.

[19] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana* , 16-17, 54-57; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 127-128; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 26-27

[20] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 124; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 27; Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," 347.

Free Blacks and Slaves

In a society where whiteness was equated with goodness and blackness was equated with debasement, it is not surprising that mulatto free people of color would own black slaves. Uncompromising standards of racial purity and unity hardly offered rewards to those championing their blackness. According to Loren Schweninger, nearly one in three black families in Louisiana was a slaveholder in 1830. In eight rural sugar and cotton parishes 43 *gens de couleur* owned 1,327 blacks, or nearly one out of nine slaves owned by blacks in the United States. In all, 965 free people of color owned 4206 slaves in Louisiana in 1830. Schweninger claims that most of these slaves were simply "chattel property".[21]

Yet, free blacks often bought slaves to free them. In many instances free blacks owned only a single slave, seldom over three, and they were often members of the family. According to Robert Reinders, emancipation court records for 1827 to 1851 show that of 1,353 petitions to free slaves, 501 were entered by free blacks. Furthermore, he adds, in the 1850's the process of manumission became more difficult--a freed slave had to leave the state-- and in 1857 manumission was made impossible. Thus, the slave system may have forced many free blacks to invest their limited capital in the purchase of slave relatives.[22]

An increasingly tense racial atmosphere in the 1830's following the revived abolitionist movement and the Nat Turner insurrection prompted white officials to introduce increasingly restrictive measures. An act in 1830 was introduced in order "to prevent free persons of color from entering into this state" and declared that free blacks that had arrived in Louisiana before January 1, 1825 would be obliged to register. Free persons of color who had entered Louisiana after 1825 were given two months to leave the state. Also in 1830 it was decreed that anyone who emancipated a slave had to post a bond of one thousand dollars as a guarantee that the freed slave would leave the state within thirty days. [23]

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[21] Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," 346-349; John Blassingame, *Black New Orleans; 1860-1880* (Chicago, 1973), 19; David C. Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana", 27

[22] Robert C. Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850 –1860," *Louisiana History,* 6 (1965), 282; Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana,* 19.

[23] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana* , 79; Everett, "Free Persons

Free persons of color in Louisiana came under increasing attack from a nervous and defensive white population in the 1840's and 1850s as abolitionist movements gained ground in the country and controversy over the 1850 fugitive slave law mounted. In 1842, a law was passed declaring that free blacks entering Louisiana by ship were subject to arrest and imprisonment. Subsequent legislation introduced in 1850 called for the refusal of claims to freedom from blacks having resided in free territories in the United States or abroad. In 1852, a statute declared that no slave could be emancipated under any condition unless he emigrated from the United States within twelve months. In 1855 a new manumission procedure was introduced whereby a slave owner would now have to enter suit for emancipation of a slave and the case would be judged by a jury of peers. Though declared unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court, the act was followed by another in 1857 that prohibited any future emancipation of slaves. In essence, there were no means left for a slave to obtain emancipation after 1857; even the Louisiana police and state courts had no power to free a slave.[24]

Free blacks were also the targets of economic restrictions, calls for expulsion, and press vilification. In 1859 free persons of color were prohibited from engaging in certain types of businesses, such as billiard halls, liquor establishments, and coffee houses. Furthermore, various plans were concocted to ship the free blacks of Louisiana to Liberia, Haiti, Mexico, and other areas of the Caribbean. Tensions reached a fever pitch in Saint Landry Parish when a group of slaveholders called for the expulsion of free people of color from the community. While colonialization never attracted serious financial support from the white community in Louisiana, it and a barrage of anti-black press in the 1850s did uproot some blacks. Some *gens de couleur* leaders, frustrated by the repression of the 1850s, fled to France and Latin America, especially Haiti and Mexico.[25]

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of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865", 92.

[24] Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana,* 110-114; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865", 93; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 20

[25] Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 117-150. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865", 92-93, 112; Rankin, "The Tannenbaum Thesis Reconsidered: Slavery and Race Relations in Antebellum Louisiana," 28; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 160-170; Lawrence Reddick, "The Negro in the New Orleans Press, 1850-1860," *Phylon* (1961), 246; Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 87.

The campaign of exclusion and harassment resulted in a noticeable stagnation in the growth of the free black population in the rural parishes between 1840 and 1860. Though there was no fixed pattern of geographical location for free people of color in the rural parishes in the antebellum period, there was a marked concentration in Natchitoches, Opelousas (later Saint Landry), Attakapas (later Saint Martin and Saint Mary), Pointe Coupee, Saint Charles, East Baton Rouge, Rapides, and Plaquemeines. (Other areas of free black concentration included black enclaves such as "Niggerville" in Saint Landry and Ten Mile near the Louisiana, Texas border.) Whereas in 1850 there were 3,524 free black males and 3,977 free black females in rural Louisiana, a decade later there was only a slight increase to 3,696 free black males and 4012 free black females.[26]

It has been noted that by the outbreak of the civil war the free black population was fully ten and a half times larger than it had been in 1803. However, though the free black population grew steadily from 1810 to 1840, the free black populace gained only 8000 new members from 1820 to 1860, marking a decline in their proportion of the black population to only 5.3%. Furthermore, the number of free blacks fell considerably in the last two decades of the antebellum period, from 25,502 in 1840 to 18,647 in 1860. Though planter efforts to limit the free black community were unevenly implemented and enforced, in all, free blacks were fewer and less prosperous in 1861 than they would have been had the planter class not strictly limited their freedoms.[27]

Free Blacks in the Economy

Despite harassment, Louisiana free persons of color managed to recoup some of their losses by 1860 and emerged as the wealthiest group of free blacks in the nation. In 1850, free blacks owned a total of $4.3 million in total real estate in Louisiana, and $2.2 million of this amount was to found in New Orleans. Some had acquired real and personal properties of considerable value through inheritance from relatives and white parents. Women, for example,

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[26] Caryn C. Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 87; Ingersoll, "Black Manon in the Capital City of the Slave South;" Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana,* 153-159.
[27] Ingersoll, "Black Manon in the Capital City of the Slave South;" Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 87; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana,* 153-154.

were often willed property and monies from their white lovers. They owned forty-five percent of free black wealth in New Orleans before the Civil War. Moreover, the prosperity and diversity of black-owned businesses in New Orleans, as well as the skill of the region's black artisans, was probably not duplicated in any other city in the United States. In New Orleans, free blacks earned a disproportionate share of certain skilled jobs. Though only 25 percent of the total labor force, free blacks held between 30 and 65 percent of all jobs as steamboatmen, draymen, masons, bakers, carpenters, cigarmakers, plasterers, barbers, and gardeners during Reconstruction. [28]

By 1850 one out of three rural free black landowners in Louisiana (181 of 543) owned at least $2000 worth of real estate. In 1850 there were 242 large, medium, or small planters and a few owned sugar and cotton plantations. In Saint Landry free black planters were fairly numerous by 1861 and 16 owned more than $10,000 each in real and personal properties. These farmers and plantation owners, largely colored Creoles, owned a total of $1.8 million worth of land, twenty-four percent of the property owned by blacks in the South. In 1850 there were 242 large, medium, or small planters and a few owned sugar and cotton plantations. In Saint Landry free black planters were fairly numerous by 1861 and 16 owned more than $10,000 each in real and personal properties. Most were small farmers who cultivated a few hundred acres, owned several slaves, and tended small herds of livestock, but among them were quite wealthy free mulattos. In country parishes most regions featured free black carpenters, blacksmiths, merchants, mechanics, and cigarmakers. In 1850, for example, there were 346 free blacks in 24 different skilled occupations in rural parishes. Coopers were especially numerous in sugar parishes where demand for barrels is high.[29]

The considerable accumulations of wealth by a limited number of free persons of color has created a misleading impression of general and uniform prosperity within the free black community. Fluctuating economic conditions, limited organizational skills and resources, and physical and political oppression all limited black economic opportunities. Free blacks were

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[28] Blassingame, *Black New Orleans; 1860-1880*, xvi, 10-11, 16, 74 ; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 233- 237.

[29] Schweninger, "Socioeconomic Dynamics among the Gulf Creole Populations: The Antebellum and Civil War Years," in Carl A. Brasseaux et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country* (Jackson, Mississippi, 1994), 35; Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 154-158, 200-217.

often the last to get hired and the first to get fired. A prolonged economic depression from 1837 to 1843 and restrictive regulations caused a decline in black property holdings in New Orleans. Most black businessmen in New Orleans were actually small, one owner, service-oriented enterprises. In New Orleans, black businessmen were often tailors or owners of barbershops. Few blacks owned manufacturing companies. Banks did not lend money to free blacks and only a few colored men had surplus capital to lend to their brethren. Black businesses actually declined in number and prosperity from 1830 to 1850.[30]

Most of the 10,000 free blacks in New Orleans in the 1850's were unskilled laborers and only a few of the black skilled workers were relatively prosperous. While free blacks dominated certain skilled trades, certain crafts, such as printing, baking, and lithography were all but closed to free blacks. In urban areas, unskilled free blacks had difficulty finding employment. Many worked as common laborers, draymen, waiters, chimney sweeps, railroad hands, cabmen, fishermen, and hunters. Free blacks had a tentative monopoly on menial jobs such as waiters and draymen. In New Orleans, free blacks faced severe competition from whites, especially the immigrant Irish who came to New Orleans in increased numbers in the 1840s. Foreign-born workers became chief competition to free blacks and blacks lost half of their jobs as butchers, wheelrights, and printers.[31]

The great majority of free blacks in the countryside were propertyless, forced to earn their living as farm laborers. They often competed with whites for farm jobs and occasionally worked side-by-side with slaves on sugar and cotton plantations. Furthermore, most free black planters were owners of small estates and formed a very small part of the total free black population. In 1850 there were 158 small farmers and they were to be found in Calcasieu, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafouche, Rapides, and Saint Tammany parishes.[32]

Free persons of color used the Louisiana legal system to their advantage whenever possible. Nineteenth-century records from civil courts in southwestern Louisiana are filled with

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[30] Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850 –1860," 274 –278; Blassingame, *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880,* 59-71.
[31] Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850 –1860," 274 –278.
[32] Sterx, *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*, 217-218.

suits brought on by free persons of color to protect their property.[33] Creoles of Color effectively used the local legal system to protect their interests until well after the Civil War, despite concerned efforts by whites to deny them their rights. As white resentment of free persons of color mounted in the late antebellum period, particularly in the 1850s, white creditors sued their Creole of Color debtors for indebtedness more and more frequently, evidently as part of a concerted effort to coerce the *gens de couleur* into leaving the prairie region. Such legal intimidation proved unsuccessful, however, as free persons of color won eighty percent of all suits of indebtedness against them in Saint Landry Parish. Even during the Civil War, free persons of color won more civil suits than they lost.[34] The collective legal fortunes of the prairie Creoles of color waned during the Reconstruction era as a result of their increasingly precarious economic circumstances. They increasingly fell prey to creditors collecting overdue debts. [35]

Facing a shortage of black male partners, free women of color were often forced to become breadwinners. Most worked in unskilled positions such as washerwoman, and domestics and some peddled food products. Others worked as keepers in lodging houses and some "quadroon women" would rent rooms to "white gentlemen" and traveling salesmen. Semi-skilled free women of color worked as seamstresses, hairdressers, nurses, merchants, and midwives. [36]

Free Blacks and Louisiana Society

Precariously balanced between whites and slaves, many free blacks depended on immediate and extended families for support. Free persons of color largely married within their own group and socialized almost exclusively with one another. In New Orleans, *gens de couleur* largely resided in the First and Fourth districts. Most were literate, and a significant portion, at least until the 1830s and 1840s spoke and wrote in French. Free blacks placed heavy emphasis on the procurement of an education for their children and regular church attendance. Financially,

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[33] Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 46.
[34] Ibid., 50-51.
[35] Ibid., 52.
[36] Ibid., 228-230; Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850 –1860," 274 –278.

free persons of color assisted one another through mutual financial exchanges: lending money, cosigning and countersigning land deeds and notes, extending credit and selling slaves. [37]

Free persons of color appear to have maintained cordial, if not intimate, relations with whites. This was especially the case in urban areas were racial lines were more fluid. Free blacks were inextricably connected to whites in the economic realm. Those who maintained shops and stores or owned farms and plantations relied on white customers and merchants to sell their goods or staple crops. Free blacks also came into contacts with whites when traveling, when seeking to free a family member, and when attending church. In New Orleans, the *gens de couleur* relationships with whites in New Orleans appear to be tied foremost to immigrants, especially those from France. [38]

Though social mingling with whites was rare, some black women continued to take up liaisons with white men. White women used their considerable social power to limit these unions to a marginal number of young white men and free black women. Famous were "quadroon" balls where light-complexioned black women were courted by white gentlemen. Yet, the light complexion of many free blacks increasingly became a function of mulatto marriages and the French language, which tended to confine *gens de couleur* to New Orleans or other francophone communities.[39]

In light of the black community's diversity in antebellum Louisiana, the convergence of black aspirations and goals during the Reconstruction era is remarkable. Urban *gens de couleur* had little in common with the language, habits, music, and emotionalism of the mostly rural Louisiana slave community. While some social mingling of the slave and free black classes in urban areas existed, there was little social contact between the groups in the rural areas where

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[37] Schweninger, "Socioeconomic Dynamics among the Gulf Creole Populations: The Antebellum and Civil War Years," 55-56.

[38] Schweninger, "Socioeconomic Dynamics among the Gulf Creole Populations: The Antebellum and Civil War Years", in Carl A. Brasseaux et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 55-60. In a study of Louisiana's Bayou country, Carl Brasseaux contends that free persons of color in the region partook in the "cultural mimicking" of whites by embracing many aspects of white creole culture, including economic capitalism, and private education. See Brasseaux et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 74-75.

[39] Ingersoll, "Black Manon in the Capital City of the Slave South;" Brasseaux, "Creoles of Color in Louisiana's Bayou Country, 1766-1877," in Brasseaux et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 71.

race lines were drawn more sharply. Free blacks in the prairie districts usually distanced themselves from the slaves.[40]

Furthermore, French-speaking Catholic *gens de couleur* may have sometimes regarded English-speaking Protestant American blacks, particularly those born outside of New Orleans, as rivals instead of allies. Free blacks who migrated to New Orleans from other states in the Union settled in the American section in the second municipality and avoided the Francophone districts. While most *gens de couleur* attended integrated Catholic churches throughout Reconstruction, the American free blacks created their own separate institutions, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Prince Hall freemasonry. They did so to protect their rights in the face of the rising tide of racial discrimination during the 1850s and, perhaps inadvertently, to forge a separate identity within the confines of the American racial hierarchy. [41]

The lines were not uncrossable, however, as convergence existed. Educational needs, particularly those in the creole sectors, led many of the Catholic French-speakers into closer association with Protestant English-speakers. Only the wealthiest families could send their children outside the city for schooling beyond the elementary grades. Most black creoles had to turn to public and Protestant schools for an education. For secondary or higher education, most black creoles also had to turn to Protestant colleges that opened during Reconstruction. These institutions served as an instrument of Americanization for many French-speaking white and black creoles in the postwar era.[42]

Divisions in the black community were also symbolic of a shifting cultural terrain transforming New Orleans and other areas of Louisiana. The large number of immigrants from France and the French-speaking West Indies had nurtured the French culture, language, and institutional loyalty that pervaded black creole society. Yet, the growing American presence in the former French territory in the 1830's signaled a decline in the use of the French language and a corresponding lessening of French cultural influences. By the 1840's the use of French in New

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[40] Gwendolyn Mildo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture," and Hirsh and Logsdon (introduction to part iii) in Hirsh and Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans*, 59-60, 189-195.
[41] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 202-204.
[42] Ibid, 242.

Orleans was on the wane as the number of native-English speakers grew, and as northern and southern emigrants to Louisiana moved into prominent positions in the business and social communities. An influx of Irish and German immigrants from 1840 to 1860 also swelled the ranks who spoke, or were learning to speak, English and were eager to adopt American mores and habits.[43]

Gens de couleur leaders maintained their place in the upper echelons of the social, educational, and political leadership of the black community after 1830 but fewer members of the black populace were reading their French-language journals and political tracts. Politically-speaking, g*ens de couleur* were influenced by the revolutionary movements in Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and argued for civil equality on political principles. By 1848 the French had not only ended slavery in the French West Indies but also gave full political rights to all black inhabitants of these islands. [44]

Free Blacks and the Civil War

When the Civil War broke out, free persons of color in Louisiana were far from united in support of either the Union of the Confederate cause. Initially the free back militia of New Orleans, the Louisiana Native Guards, organized for the defense of the city and partook in Confederate military parades. About three thousand free blacks signed up to aid the Confederacy. When New Orleans was captured by Union forces, however, the Louisiana Native Guards disobeyed orders and remained in the city to greet the invaders. The militia offered its services to Union General Benjamin Butler. By the end of the war, 24,000 Louisiana blacks had served in the Union Army and many prominent free persons of color became soldiers for the United States.[45]

Historians have cited the congressional testimony of Charles W. Gibson, a free colored soldier from New Orleans, as evidence that free blacks were forced into supporting the Confederate cause in 1861. Gibson testified that refusal to aid the rebellion meant repercussions,

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[43] Hirsh and Logsdon, "Franco-Africans and African-Americans," (introduction), in Hirsh and Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans*, 189-197; Blassingame, *Black New Orleans; 1860-1880*, 134.
[44] Hirsh and Logsdon, "Franco-Africans and African-Americans", 195; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 202-203, 211-215.

including the possible seizure of his property. Gibson even suggested that his life would be in danger if he did not comply. As evidence, the black soldier recounted that he had been warned by a policeman to enter the service of the Confederacy or be lynched. He admitted that he had not heard of the death of anyone who had failed to acquiesce to similar coercion and declared that "nobody ever lost his life, for we never went into any engagement." Gibson joined a black company, but resigned about two weeks later.[46]

The Congressional testimonies and the discussions between Butler and the Louisiana Native Guards do not accurately capture the complexity of free black reactions to the Civil War. While some blacks probably joined the Confederacy under duress, numerous rural free black planters who owned slaves probably joined the Confederacy in an effort to protect their property. Other free blacks, especially free black businessmen, were probably reticent about openly supporting the Union cause and endangering their profitable economic alliances with well-connected whites. Love of land and a tradition of protecting it may have also affected the sentiments of other free blacks who knew that loyalty in times of crisis had been rewarded in the past. It is also likely that free men of color wanted to preserve their distinct status above the slaves. According to some historians, the free people of color demonstrated little interest in the slaves except as property. In any event, no free black was brave enough to voice his claims for civil equality until the Union forces appeared.[47]

The Civil War brought much economic hardship on the free people of color. Free blacks lost land, slaves, farm machinery, livestock, buildings, and various personal belongings. According to Loren Schweninger, the unsettled political situation, the lack of credit and currency, the difficulty securing farmhands, the refusal of former slaves to work under the same conditions as before the war, and flooding and crop failures in 1866 and 1867 forced many

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[45] Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," 275-276.

[46] U.S. Congress, House, *New Orleans Riots*, 39th Congress, 2nd session, no. 16; 126; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 217; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," 275-276.

[47] Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, (April, 1955), 44; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," 27; Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 231-232; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 218-219.

formerly prosperous free Creoles of color to the brink of disaster. Schweninger calculates that between 1860 and 1870 total black wealth decreased in Iberville Parish went from $665,100 to about $104,600; in Natchitoches, from $739,700 to $370,800; in Pointe Coupee, from $796,000 to $259,6000; in St. Landry, from $609,900 to $236,200; and in St.Mary, from $228,700 to $83,100. He also cites a decreased value of holdings among blacks in skilled occupations. Only 17 free people of color held real estate valued at more than $10,000 in 1870 while most held property valued at $3000 or less.[48]

Compounding the devastating economic impact of the war was the disappearance of the legal system that helped define the free black position in Louisiana. The emancipation of black slaves swept away the legal distinctions that helped set the *gens de couleur* apart from the black masses. *Gens de couleur* now constituted a tiny minority in the region's black population. Some members of their group rebelled against their loss of status and the inevitability of the social amalgamation of *gens de couleur* and freedmen. It would take time for some *gens de couleur* to realize that their plight was now "indissolubly bound" with that of the freedmen.[49]

Jean Charles Houzeau and the *New Orleans Tribune*

The main vehicle for formulating and espousing black political thought in the midst of this social and economic upheaval was the *New Orleans Tribune.* During its brief existence from 1864 to 1871[50], the New Orleans *Tribune* played an influential role in Louisiana Reconstruction politics as, first, the vibrant and eloquent spokesman of the *gens de couleur*, and then eventually the whole black community.

The *New Orleans Tribune* was created in 1864 by Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, a mulatto Louisianan who had studied medicine in Paris and at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. A bilingual tri-weekly at the time of its first issue on July 21, 1864, the *Tribune*, was published daily, except Monday, from October 4, 1864, until it suspended publication on April

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[48] Schweninger, "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," 354; Schweninger, "Socioeconomic Dynamics among the Gulf Creole Populations: The Antebellum and Civil War Years," 61; Blassingame, *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880*, 69; Ingersoll, "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718 –1812," 179.

[49] Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 95-96.

[50] The paper actually ceased publication in 1869 and returned only briefly in 1871.

25, 1868. (The *Tribune* was later revived and published irregularly until sometime in 1871.) Roudanez had previously attempted to provide a medium for black expression in 1862 with *L'Union,* a French language newspaper aimed at the city's "colored Creole" population. Though *L'Union* created a foundation upon which the *Tribune* built, the latter paper reached a far larger readership and spoke more clearly for the interests of the entire black population. The biracial nature of the *Tribune* group, including well-known blacks such as Roudanez, Trevigne, Mary, and Dostie and whites such as Houzeau, Durant, and later, George Wickliffe, set an example for Radical Reconstruction that was too briefly followed. It attempted to sketch the outlines of a society in which economic, political, and social equality was a reality.[51]

The *Tribune* achieved a considerable following in Washington D.C. among congressmen such as Charles Sumner, Lyman Trumbull, and Richard Yates. When Senator Henry Wilson visited New Orleans during Reconstruction, his first stop was the office of the *Tribune*. The Louisiana correspondent of the New York *Tribune* described the paper as "a good Union paper – the best in New Orleans. The National Equal Rights League passed a resolution at its Louisiana convention declaring it a "duty" for every league in the state to subscribe to the journal.[52]

Through the Civil War and early Reconstruction, the *Tribune* consistently advocated the right of suffrage for all blacks. Stipulations concerning the franchise in the constitution of 1864 was not acceptable to the *Tribune* or to *gens de couleur*. The limited extension of the suffrage to free blacks was merely authorized and not actually granted. The tone of the whites-only delegates at the constitutional convention alarmed the *gens de couleur*. There was endless talk about amalgamation, race war, black degeneracy and savagery, and enthusiastic responses to measures that would deny blacks the suffrage or bar them from learning trades or professions. Thus, in May, 1865, the *Tribune* took the lead in organizing free blacks, returning black soldiers, white Radicals, and former Union army officers into a political club called "The Friends of Universal Suffrage" with the purpose of extending the franchise to blacks. The Friends of Universal Suffrage appointed a delegation in 1865 to call upon Governor James Wells, an ex-slave-holding

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[51] William P. Conner, "Reconstruction Rebels: The *New Orleans Tribune* in Post-War Louisiana," *Louisiana History*, 21 (1980), 162-164, 180; Patrick Leavens, "*L'Union* and the *New Orleans Tribune* and Louisiana Reconstruction," (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State, 1966), ; Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 43.

[52] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 39-40; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 79.

unionist, with a petition demanding enfranchisement of all the state's blacks. Wells rejected the demand. [53]

The *Tribune* tackled a variety of issues relating to the plight of blacks in Louisiana. For example, the *Tribune* insisted that the ex-slaves be paid weekly wages, instead of the system of yearly contracts instituted by General Banks. The paper demanded the rejection or dismissal of southern representatives at Congress, and attacked white leaders in the Republican party who sought to gain power for private ends by advocating black rights. The *gens de couleur* also demanded various forms of civil equality. In particular, they were intent on securing the amalgamation of public schools. The *Tribune* made repeated calls for the desegregation of schools.[54] The paper also urged an end to segregation of public transport. Finally, The *Tribune* assailed the ex-confederates and rebel sympathizers who occupied local, municipal, and state political posts, and prophesied the persecution of blacks after the removal of federal troops from the South.[55]

Roudanez, who sank over $30,000 in the *Tribune*, was the leading force behind the paper. Born June 12, 1823 in Saint James Parish, Roudanez was the son of a French merchant and a free woman of color. Roudanez studied in France, where he received a bachelor of letters and a bachelor of sciences in 1847, and a doctorate in medicine in 1853. Unlike other foreign students who remained in France, Dr. Roudanez returned to the United States and received a second medical degree in 1857. Considered a "mulatto far above the crowd" by the Belgian editor Houzeau, Roudanez was the president and principal stockholder in the paper.[56]

Roudanez summed up his objectives as such: "The right to vote must be secured; the doors of our public schools must be opened, that our children, side by side, may study from the same books, and imbibe the same principles and precepts from the book of books-learn the great

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[53] F. Wayne Binning, "Carpetbaggers' Triumph: The Louisiana State Election of 1868," *Louisiana History,* 14 (1973) 24 -25, 28; *Tribune*, June 18, 1867.
[54] See: *Tribune*, July 24, October 24, October 31, and November 3, 1867.
[55] Charles B. Rousseve, *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature* (New Orleans, 1937), 120; Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 36. Rousseve appears unaware of Houzeau's contribution to the *Tribune*, for the Belgian editor is not even mentioned in Rousseve's study .
[56] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 25n, 27-28.

truth that God 'created of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth'-so will caste, founded upon prejudice against color, disappear."[57]

In one of the most important examples of biracial cooperation in the Reconstruction era, the principal editor of the *Tribune*, the first black daily in the United States, was a white man from Europe. Jean-Charles Houzeau was editor of the *Tribune* for a little more than twenty of its first twenty-four months of existence. Thomas Durant, an influential white radical, believed Houzeau essential to the *Tribune*'s success and doubted whether "there is in the United States a newspaper writer that one could compare with him, and I presume that there is hardly anyone his equal in France."[58] In addition to his eighteen-hour days as an editor, Houzeau was a member of several aid organizations. He was part of the New Orleans Freedmen's Aid Association, devoted to helping freedmen set up their own farms, and vice president of the Louisiana Homestead Association. The latter organization assisted freedmen in their efforts to obtain land under the Southern Homestead Act of 1866. Furthermore, he drafted resolutions on black rights, contributed to pamphlets describing the freedmen's condition, made speeches, and was elected to a post in the Friends of Universal Suffrage and the Republican Party.[59]

Jean-Charles Houzeau was born in 1820 near Mons, Belgium. Trained as a scientist, Houzeau had written scholarly articles on astronomy in the 1840s and in 1846 became an assistant astronomer at the Royal Observatory in Brussels. However, Houzeau soon became involved in the great political and philosophical debates that were sweeping Europe in 1848. Concerned about the social consequences of scientific applications, Houzeau wrote articles highlighting the need for better public education and workmen's compensation, among other issues, and joined a secret Belgian society espousing democratic ideals.[60]

Houzeau was dismissed from the Royal Observatory as a result of his democratic activities in 1849, but seven years later, at the age of thirty-six, he was elected a member of the

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[57] Quoted from James McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (New York, 1965), 280.
[58] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune,*40.
[59] Ibid., 43.
[60] Ibid., 2-6; William P. Conner, "Reconstruction Rebels: The *New Orleans Tribune* in Post-War Louisiana," 163-166.

Belgian Royal Academy. Uninspired with the duties of an administrator, Houzeau decided to leave for the United States in 1857 and he arrived in New Orleans on October 28. After a few months in Louisiana, Houzeau left for Texas where he spent the next four years doing scientific studies, working as a land surveyor, and writing articles for a Belgian periodical describing life in America. Houzeau became involved in helping black fugitives and persecuted Unionists in Texas find safety from persecution. Threatened by white racists, Houzeau escaped to Mexico during the winter of 1862. Houzeau returned to New Orleans on a Union warship in January 1863, but left soon thereafter for a five-month stay in Philadelphia. In November of 1864 Houzeau returned to New Orleans, his third visit to the city, and became editor of the *Tribune*.[61]

"I found an unjust and privileged ruling class," Houzeau wrote of New Orleans in a private letter, " and . . . an oppressed class that had been trampled underfoot and had no role in society." [62] Houzeau found New Orleans blacks to be "very decent, very kind, very polite, and generally superior to the whites in ordinary situations."[63] Houzeau was not uncritical of blacks, however. He found that the *gens de couleur*, though well intentioned, were somewhat lazy, and "not sorry to find the work all done and to take the credit for it."[64] Houzeau claimed great affinity for the freedmen, claiming that 'I think and feel that which a freedman must think and feel . . . I really am one of them."[65] Although he had no African blood in his veins, Houzeau was defined as a black because, as he recounts, "the defiant stance that I took was so extraordinary, so exorbitant, that the only way to explain it was to imagine that I might be of African blood myself." [66]

Houzeau sought to transform the *Tribune* into a newspaper of national importance. "Rather than speaking in the name of and interest of a small group," he wrote, "I thought, should defend the masses of the proscribed race and unite the oppressed population completely around its standard."[67] Houzeau found two serious obstacles in his way. The first was that the *Tribune*

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[61] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 6-17.
[62] Ibid., 20.
[63] Ibid., 9.
[64] Ibid., 30.
[65] Ibid., 42.
[66] Ibid., 83.
[67] Ibid., 79.

had been founded as a French-language newspaper, a "touching homage" to the French creoles. Houzeau felt that the use of French, "kept these colored men apart from the general life of the country." The difficulty was that the colored creoles "would be understood only by their own small group; they could not speak to the government of their country, the Congress, the northern press, public opinion, or their fellow citizens—nor could they make themselves understood by even the five million black slaves."[68]

Houzeau's immediate goal was to emphasize the English-language edition of the *Tribune* through which he hoped to increase the overall influence of the paper. Houzeau felt that the French-language edition of the paper appealed to a small and relatively weak segment of the population, the free blacks and liberal Europeans. Houzeau believed that the exclusive use of French in the paper "kept these colored men apart from the general life of the country," and thus separated from the freedmen. The Belgian lamented that "this obstacle had always seemed to me to be the biggest one of all," and the paper need to become a true "tribune" for the general black population of Louisiana. Henceforth, the "sole object of the French-language section would be to maintain the unity of ideas and policy in the center of the directing group, while the English-language section would deal with the outside world. The latter would be our major weapon of attack and defense and thus it demanded the most attention and care."[69] Thus, English would have to take precedence over French if the *Tribune* was to become the driving and unifying force Houzeau envisioned.[70]

Houzeau believed that abandoning the lower black sub-class was a mistake when white prejudice "weighed equally" against all those who had African blood, no matter how small the amount. Houzeau found "a conspiracy of scorn" in New Orleans as whites held blacks - - or whites "lowly enough to associate with blacks" - - intrinsically worthless. The erroneous belief that the black or colored man was in all cases inferior to whites had readily been accepted.

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[68] Ibid., 80. According to the federal censusmakers, there were 3,953,760 slaves and 488,070 free blacks in the United States in 1860.
[69] Ibid., 80-81.
[70] Ibid., 33-34, 80-81.

Houzeau found this conclusion "absurd" and asserted that "the head of the black or colored series unquestionably surpasses the bottom of the white or "Caucasian" series.[71]

Houzeau drew upon his vast knowledge and experiences to construct stylish, powerful, and provoking essays on law, politics, biology, government, biological equality, and current events. Houzeau sought to maintain a "high level" of discourse by means of exploiting the "mediocrity" of the white press. Houzeau quoted works of political economy and technology and cited historical narratives in order to refute the "blunders" that the "lying press" had made. He often drew parallels between historical events and the current political situation, such as between the southern planters and the French émigrés of 1792. Like the émigrés, slaveholders had revolted against their country in the hope of saving institutions that the country no longer wanted, and whose natural term had arrived. Houzeau had made a detailed study of "three great states," France, England, and the United States, and found occasion to cite "curious and instructive incidents."[72]

In its early editorials, the *Tribune* claimed that it was an "organ of an oppressed class," yet spoke in paternalistic tones on how the *gens de couleur* were ready to aid the freedmen: "The emancipated will find, in the old freemen, friends ready to guide them to spread upon them the light of knowledge, and teach them their duties as well as their rights." It was clear which group was to provide leadership: "But, at the same time, the freemen will find in the recently liberated slaves a mass to uphold them; and with this mass behind them they will command the respect always bestowed to number and strength."[73]

When the *Tribune* produced its first issue, Houzeau was still in Philadelphia and Paul Trevigne wrote the paper's editorials. Trevigne was a free man of color born and raised in New Orleans. Prior to the Civil War, he was a language teacher at *the Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents*. Trevigne helped keep alive the literary tradition of the French-speaking colored creoles. Trevigne's intellectual interests, to some extent at least, defined the disabilities from which *L'Union* suffered and which hampered its effectiveness as a voice for the entire black

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[71] Ibid., 83, 93.
[72] Ibid,. 89-90.
[73] *Tribune*, December 27, 29, 1864.

population. Trevigne also worked for the *Tribune* and two other black newspapers, the *Louisianian* and *Le Crusader*.[74]

Though he gradually expanded his philosophy to include the mass of freedmen, the caste distinctions which had characterized the earlier paper found its way into the *Tribune*'s early editorials. For instance, Trevigne warned the freedmen that liberty was "not the sign of anarchy and laziness." He complained that blacks had shown a lack of discipline and were fond of boasting. Yet, throughout the summer and fall of 1864 Trevigne spoke out for the interests of the freedmen and free blacks alike. Thus, the early basis for the *Tribune's* editorial policy was laid by its first editor, Paul Trevigne.[75]

The *Tribune* leaders attempted to cement a political coalition among different subclasses of black New Orleanians by drawing upon key allies within the black community, particularly Oscar J. Dunn and James Ingraham. Dunn, a former slave, was a respected member of the free black community and could draw upon his experiences in bondage to forge ties with freedmen. Ingraham linked the political activities of the black radicals to a national organization of black Americans, the National Equal Rights League. Both men were Anglophones and outside the regular *gens de couleur* political circle. The NERL , for its part, demanded unequivocal abolition of slavery and universal male suffrage. Houzeau backed this stance and asked if any black man was "bold enough and selfish enough to go to the ballot-box and exercise the right of voting, when thousands of his brethren, as good citizens as he, would be lookers on . . . declared unfit to be men?" [76]

Ingraham created a state chapter of the new organization at a state convention of black leaders in January, 1865. The gathering endorsed the resolutions of the Syracuse convention, formed the first state chapter of the league, and voted for Ingraham as its president and the *Tribune* as its official organ.[77]

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[74] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune,* 71n; Rodolphe Desdunes, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, (Baton Rouge, 1973) 66; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 221-222.
[75] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 221-222; Leavens, "*L'Union* and the *New Orleans Tribune* and Louisiana Reconstruction," 27,41, 49-51.
[76] Quoted in Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction, 83.*
[77] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 231-232. While Ingraham called for black unity, his major preoccupation was the role to be enjoyed by the "people of refinement and education." See *Tribune*, December 27, 1864.

Gens de Couleur, the *Tribune* and Louisiana Politics

The *gens de couleur* had for a long time been interested in securing the suffrage for themselves and wartime events gave them an unprecedented opportunity to press their case. They first brought up the issue in November 1863 when free men of color petitioned Governor Philip Shepley to enfranchise black Louisianans born free before the Civil War. After receiving no reply from Shepley, or District Commander Nathaniel Banks, the free people of color directed their suffrage appeal to President Lincoln. In light of the Emancipation proclamation, the service of blacks in the Union army, and the political reorganization of Louisiana, the time was ripe for increased black political participation. Thus, one thousand free black property owners, twenty-seven black veterans of 1812, and twenty-two white radicals signed a petition. They sent two black delegates, Arnold Bertonneau and Jean Baptiste Roudanez to deliver the petition to Lincoln and radical members of Congress. Lincoln never publicly endorsed the idea but, after meeting with a delegation of Louisiana free blacks in Washington in 1864, the President wrote to the governor of the state suggesting he consider granting the franchise to "very intelligent" blacks and those who had "fought gallantly" for the Union cause. At the Louisiana constitutional convention of 1864, a large number of mulattos supported a motion that would have permitted only the wealthy and well-educated mulattos to vote.[78]

The original petition would have limited suffrage to free black men and appear to create legal distinctions among African Americans. On March 10, Bertonneau and Roudanez produced an addendum to their petition, apparently at the behest of Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner and Pennsylvania Representative William Kelly.[79] The addendum asked that black voting require also "the extension of this privilege to those born slaves, with such qualifications as shall affect equally the white and the colored citizen."[80] Bertonneau and Roudanez appear to have been shamed into including the ex-slaves into the petition. Less plausible is the contention that

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[78] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 224; Blassingame, *Black New Orleans*, 153; Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (London, 1979); 513. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction, America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York, 1988),183; Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1976), 22.

[79] McPherson, *Negro's Civil War*, 278-279.

[80] Ibid., 279-280

the original petition was largely the strategy of allied Louisiana white Republicans, and that the blacks accepted it only "after much persuasion and long deliberation."[81]

When Houzeau reached New Orleans the battle between Banks forces and the *Tribune* leaders was well under way. Black and white American allies in the National Equal Rights League of Louisiana joined forces with Radical Republicans in Congress to defeat a bill backed by Lincoln's administration to restore Louisiana to the Union. Because the radicals insisted upon black male suffrage throughout the South, they felt that Louisiana's restoration without any black suffrage would jeopardize their larger goals.[82]

Banks cohorts tried to recruit black American Protestants to help them in their struggle against the Francophone *gens de couleur*. They appealed to the religious and cultural prejudice to divide the black political opposition and seek support for their more moderate plans. Both black and white Protestants objected to the Catholic faith that predominated among *gens de couleur*. While most of the freedmen and women were English-speaking Protestants of American heritage, the Catholic Church had remained in the hands of the foreign-born, French-speaking population. The Catholic Church had condoned slavery, supported the Confederacy as well as prohibited racial intermarriage, denied black men the priesthood, and implemented segregation in schools, cemeteries, and lay societies. building community organizations bolstered ethnic autonomy among both the creoles and the Americans. The most defiant radical leaders turned to traditional French, anticlerical outlets- spiritualist societies and Masonic lodges. Major Plumly and Thomas Conway tried to use the freedmen against the army's political adversaries, the creole dominated radicals. Because most of the refugee freedmen and women in New Orleans were Americans with ties to the Baptist and Methodists, the Banks group worked closely with those churches.[83]

In April 1865 the Banks forces launched the *Black Republican* claiming that "the American negroes are indignant" about the attacks of the "rich colored men" and were starting the paper "to more fully represent the cause of the black man." Plumly wrote to Lincoln that

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[81] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 227.
[82] Ibid., 237.

"the American colored people here, disgusted with the 'N.O. Tribune'- the French Jesuit (color'd) paper, that under Durant and a few colored Creoles, has always been against us- are just starting another paper."[84] The columns of the Black Republican nurtured the potential ethnic antagonisms within the black community of New Orleans. The paper repeated the old innuendoes about wealthy, free black creoles and their non-American sentiments. It praised Banks and his labor program and found excuses for his failure to implement black suffrage in Louisiana[85]

The *Tribune* insisted that the idea of having the freedmen cut away from the *gens de couleur* will not work." The paper admitted that the two groups differed "somewhat in religious matters" but confidently declared that "the interests and the blood of both classes will keep them as a unit. Our society should be one – formed of one people instead of two – keeping only as immaterial varieties, unknown to the law and its officers, the differences of origin, color, fortune, education, language, religion and physical strength."[86]

Despite their plots, the Banks group failed to undermine the radical program for racial change in Louisiana. For the next three years the *Tribune* evoked the political demands of the New Orleans black community "without any significant dissent." Black Louisianans not only gained universal male suffrage but also went beyond almost all other southern states in their attempt to end racial segregation. The radicals mandated the integration of all government facilities, including public schools, and also private businesses licensed by the state to serve the public . . . in quest of these ends, black leaders remained united behind the agenda set by the *Tribune* -- at least for a time.[87]

In the fall of 1864 Charles Smith of Saint Mary's Parish introduced a bill in the state senate that provided that "every person having not more than one-fourth black blood, shall be considered and recognized as white, in the state of Louisiana." Smith expressed concern that men who were three-fourths white were treated as blacks. The bill was quickly dismissed but Smith reemerged with another bill asking that the suffrage be granted to blacks based on

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[83] Ibid., 232-236.
[84] Ibid, 238.
[85] Ibid., 238-239.
[86] *Tribune*, October 23, 1867.

"intellectual fitness", military service, or the payment of at least thirty dollars in taxes. Smith's bill was summarily rejected. [88]

The *Tribune* was leading a campaign against the Smith bill then pending in the new state legislature. Designed by Banks, the bill proposed to enfranchise those free black men who were quadroons or lighter in complexion by legally defining them as white men. The *Tribune* attempted to show that no caste system existed within the ranks of the New Orleans colored population: the plan was lacking in principle, inasmuch as one could argue that a mulatto, or the entire colored population, had as much right to vote as a quadroon. Such an act would create dissension among the colored people because of caste lines – "white, white washed, and blacks." The *Tribune* suggested that ill-will created by passage of the bill would have proved a barrier to further progress of the colored race when other demands were voiced.[89] The *Tribune* elaborated:

> Colored men desire political advancement and equal rights, they do not desire the humbling of their brothers to serve as foot-walks for the attainment of privileges that are denied to the men of our race who are presently spilling their blood for the defense of our country. There may be among our population a few 'aristocrats of light skin,' but they are in a minority. The majority of us, who have admired the principles of '93 know by experience that cast distinctions can only cause bitterness and weakness. We understand too well that if we wish the sympathies of all friends of progress and men of good will, our first duty is to place ourselves at a high level of civilization and to demand for all colored men what we claim for ourselves. To do aught else would be a scandal in the eyes of reason, a great joy for the enemies of the black man, and a triumph for the sophisms of the planters who are trying to establish the inferiority of the negro race.[90]

Several of the paper's staff engaged in another, more damaging conflict with their most important black American ally, Oscar J. Dunn. Leading creoles, including *Tribune* editor Paul Trevigne, had formed rival and competitive Masonic lodges. Dunn had supported the radical demands of the free black creole to remove all color bars from public life, but did not feel that the logic of integration extended to the voluntary societies that blacks fostered within their communities. He accused the white French-speaking masons of avoiding the challenge of true integration by forming all-black units within their grand lodge. The remarks coincided with Dunn's personal defeat as a delegate to the constitutional convention from a ward with numerous black creole voters.

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[87] Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 241.
[88] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction,* 81.
[89] *Tribune*, November 21, 1864; Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," 58.
[90] Quoted from McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War*, 283-284.

The *Tribune* was also wrestling with the problem of the present and future status of black labor. Within a month of first publication, the *Tribune* was harshly criticizing General Banks' "free labor' system, claiming that the former slaves had been made serfs by these labor regulations. The paper pointed out that agricultural workers could not leave the plantation without an employer's pass and were paid artificially low wages. Trevigne exposed the inequities of the free-labor system as it applied to the former slaves and began to suggest policies which would naturally culminate in true economic independence for the freedmen. In September he called for federal confiscation of plantation land, its division into five-acre lots and its distribution to "those persons who had, by dint of daily and long continual toil, created all the wealth of the South." The confiscation and distribution of Confederate plantation land remained a central tenet of the *Tribune*'s economic philosophy.[91]

The *Tribune* further maintained that freedmen had the right to control their own labor and to make a decent living. The paper denounced general Bank's free labor system that ran from late 1862 until mid-1864, protesting that it allowed whites to keep key plantations. The editor's solution was to "let the land go into the hands of actual laborers." According to the plan, the planter class would be replaced by workers and freedmen would purchase small shares in "self help" banks, which would in turn by land and factories and rent them to voluntary associations of workers. Earlier the *Tribune* and *L'Union* had encouraged the federal government to confiscate the southern plantations, divide them into small farms, and distribute them among the freedmen.[92]

One of the *Tribune's* favorite targets was The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, known commonly as the Freedmen's Bureau. Originally created by Congress in March, 1865, and shut down in June, 1872, its primary purpose was to assist freedmen in their transition from slavery to freedmen. At one time the bureau's largest school system was in Louisiana: in early 1866 it boasted 150 schools, 265 teachers, and 19,000 pupils. Yet, Houzeau and the *Tribune* believed Bureau agents were easily isolated and manipulated by white planters. "Should the Bureau be withdrawn not ten colored men would take notice of it or find anything

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[91] Conner, "Reconstruction Rebels: The *New Orleans Tribune* in Post-War Louisiana", 170-171.
[92] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 36-38, 38n.

changed," Houzeau wrote "Planters alone would lose . . . the machinery of the Bureau is now used by them to intimidate the uneducated blacks, and to make the most of their contracts."[93]

Jean-Charles Houzeau came to appreciate the formidable differences of color, class, and culture that separated the established old free born black population and the newly emancipated slave population. He recognized that divisions within the black community itself were hampering the struggle for equality, and he wanted to bridge the gap between the *gens de couleur* and the freedmen: "These people have to be made to agree with one another, given confidence in themselves by means of the newspaper, driven to demand their rights, and this in the midst of all sorts of intrigue and all kinds of opposition."[94] Houzeau would have to overcome the caste prejudices of the *Tribune* editors, who wrote in an early editorial that "one cannot, without being unfair, confuse the newly freed people with our intelligent population."[95]

Influenced by Houzeau, the *Tribune* broadened its message to include equality before the law, desegregation of Louisiana's schools, the opening of New Orleans streetcars to blacks, and the division of the plantations among the freedmen. Houzeau made the alliance between free blacks and freed slaves the cornerstone of *Tribune* politics, as the only means of preventing the transformations from sliding into reaction.[96]

Tribune editorials belied a fear and insecurity that cut through all of its high-principled rhetoric. As Houzeau well knew, 'white supremacy' was still the clarion call of many southerners, and it "can have but one object, and that is to re-enslave the man of African descent." Furthermore, as the *Tribune* well noted, public offices were in the hands of the former governing class, and "to retain that position is one of the aims" of conservatives.[97]

"Was it not true," the paper asked "that southern planters were intent on "depriving of their rights a million of colored citizens of the United States who have already enjoyed the ballot"? Was it not true that the former slave owners wanted "to build a minority government to suit themselves." If a race war existed, the paper concluded, it was "started by the whites," and

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[93] Ibid, 45.
[94] Ibid, 36.
[95] Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 36, 63-64.
[96] Houzeau, "Le Journal Noir aux Etats Unis," *Revue de Belgique*, (May, June 1872), 4 -28, 97 – 122; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 49.
[97] *Tribune,* October 30, 1867.

"pursued by the whites." The paper reasoned that the "only way" to safeguard black interests was for the black politicians to "keep united, and to show an undivided front on every question."[98]

Furthermore, the *Tribune* warned the black delegates to be wary of their white political partners: "There will be . . . a 'white man party,' which is already organizing, in the vain hope of controlling the future government of the state . . . They will promise our men situations and public offices, to bribe some, if they can, to their white man system. They will take in a few colored men, as exceptions, in order to secure the balance of public offices to themselves. But how foolish would be those who would rely on such promises. Most of them would be deceived."[99]

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[98] Ibid., December 20, 67.
[99] Ibid., October 30, 1867.

Chapter 3

Black Political Strategies and Setbacks, 1865 to 1867

The *New Orleans Tribune* was well aware that Americans had been following Reconstruction developments in the Bayou State for quite some time. Reconstruction in Louisiana had begun soon after General Butler's forces invaded New Orleans in April, 1862.[1] President Abraham Lincoln hoped to establish a secure and cooperative Republican government in Louisiana that would eventually restore the state to the Union. In 1863 he introduced his modest "Ten Percent" Reconstruction plan, whereby a state could be reintegrated into the Union when ten percent of its voters in the presidential election of 1860 had taken an oath of allegiance to the United States and pledged to abide by emancipation. Lincoln's plan was slow to be implemented in New Orleans and the occupied northeast sections of Louisiana, but signs of political consolidation were emerging. Under General Nathaniel Banks, who had replaced General Butler in late 1862, Louisiana Unionists established a loyal "Free State" government and in 1864 produced a new constitution that abolished slavery. [2]

After Lincoln's assassination in 1865, President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, quickly recognized several of Lincoln's "Ten Percent" governments and conferred amnesty and pardon upon many leading participants in the rebellion.[3] In Louisiana, Johnson replaced the Lincoln-approved governor with James Madison Wells, a former slaveholding Union military leader. Wells, in turn, quickly dismissed Lincoln-Banks appointees in the Free State government and crafted an administration dominated by reactionary Unionists and ex-Confederate soldiers. Wells appointed police jurors, sheriffs and other officials by the hundreds from the masses of rebel sympathizers. General Banks, who had been away from Louisiana when Wells took office, returned to

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[1] According to the 1860 federal census, the Crescent City was home to 144,601 whites, 13,385 slaves, and 10,689 free blacks -- fifty-five percent of the state's free black population.

[2] Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 3, 9.

[3] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York, 1988), 193 -194.

New Orleans in April and tried to convince Johnson that the Louisiana governor was undermining federal Reconstruction policies. Banks' appeal backfired, and in May Johnson relieved the general of his command.[4]

For the mass of Louisianans, the end of the Civil War brought little relief from hunger, and economic and social chaos. Mass unemployment plagued numerous regions of Louisiana in the immediate aftermath of the war and many returning soldiers found no work. Farming suffered from a lack of animals for plowing and a blight of worms. Industrial activity had been decimated, and little capital remained for rebuilding. Moreover, freedmen resisted working for their former masters in a system that resembled their former servile state[5]

Death, economic ruin, and disfranchisement removed numerous prewar leaders from the political scene. Their absence created a leadership vacuum and a destabilizing element in Louisiana government. Defeat thrust federal authority into their lives in the form of Union soldiers and served as a constant reminder of a loss of power. In many regions of Louisiana, hatred and bitterness toward the federal government had taken deep root.[6]

In the face of a hostile white populace, and in the midst of volatile conditions, Louisiana black leaders tried to forge an effective, unified, and responsible leadership as best they could. Accomplishing that, they believed, might help convince a hostile South and a skeptical North that blacks were indeed capable of properly exercising their political and civil rights. Thus, *gens de couleur*, like other southern black leaders, told their constituents that a hard-working, dignified, honest, and restrained black population might gain the respect and approval of whites. They told freedmen that success came to those who worked hard, were sober, honest, and educated, engaged in faithful industry, practiced "judicious economy," cultivated habits of thrift and temperance, made their homes "models of neatness," and led moral, virtuous Christian lives.[7] Yet, despite their

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[4] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction,* 95-96.

[5] Samuel C. Hyde, *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democrats in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810-1899* (Baton Rouge, 1996), 146-148.

[6] Ibid., 138, Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour* (New York: 1866), 263, 408-413.

[7] Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York, 1979), 513, 522; Foner,

best intentions, black political leaders would have little hope of receiving the blessing of a white populace largely resentful of the very existence of black political rights.

The Black Political Program

Religious uplift was a vital part of the black political program in Louisiana. The *Tribune* added a religious department to the paper consisting of inspirational poetry and uplifting articles emphasizing the vital importance of religious and political unity. The paper also spoke of parents sending their children to school; of teaching freedmen about the sanctity of marriage; and of churches being led by qualified pastors.

Addresses and manifestos framed by the black leaders reflected a sense of vulnerability and apprehension in the face of uncertain white support. Thus, they made timid appeals to the "wisdom, justice, and sense of magnanimous generosity" they hoped to receive from the white South. As P.B.S. Pinchback of New Orleans explained: "In this country, there are thirty white men to one black man; therefore it ill becomes the colored men to make violent and intemperate demands. Let them ask for justice, and for nothing more . . . Anyone can see the suicidal policy of arraying the black man against the white."[8] Even moderate black demands would meet stiff resistance in most quarters.

Many free-born blacks were eager to cultivate close relationships with whites at the political level. But many freed blacks wished to assert their independence of white influence. Dominated and controlled by whites under slavery, freed blacks had no wish to relapse into a subservient position. Yet, free persons of color argued that in many cases it made sense to defer to whites, since the latter group had education and experience.[9] P.B.S. Pinchback summed up the predicament of blacks when he said they "could get no rights the whites did not see fit to give them."[10] Thus, Louisiana blacks usually had less conspicuous positions either in local government, often on the police jury and local federal patronage positions or on party committees. Pinchback himself declined to be

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Reconstruction, 114.

[8] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 145.

[9] Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 511-512; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 113.

[10] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction,* 145.

nominated to the post of governor in the winter of 1868 because he felt that a black governor would provoke heightened racism both North and South.[11]

Deference had its limits however. Blacks also did not express any longing for the days of slavery: they declared the experience dehumanizing and brutal. They could sympathize with the suffering and loss of life and property endured by many whites during the Civil War but this empathy did not translate into praise for the Confederate cause or the "peculiar institution."[12] In the spring of 1865 *Tribune* officials perceived that white officials like Major Plumly, Thomas Conway, and General Hurlbut acted as if they knew better than blacks themselves what was in the best interests of black Louisianans. The *Tribune* warned federal and state officials that blacks intended to manage their own affairs: "We need friends . . . but we do not need tutors. The age of guardianship is past forever, and we shall act for ourselves."[13]

The cornerstone of Louisiana black political ideology was the Declaration of Independence. Blacks often cited Jefferson's pronouncement that all men were created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights - - life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness - - as justification for their call for full citizenship. Black leaders often borrowed from revolutionary rhetoric or made patriotic appeals. For g*ens de couleur*, the French Revolution's cry of *liberté, fraternité, egalite* served as an immediate reference and in their eyes the Old South was the *ancien régime.*[14] Black leaders deemed the franchise essential to protect their fundamental civil liberties, whatever the inspiration. Inalienable rights could not be secured, argued *Tribune*-owner Roundanez, "without adequate protection for the class or classes that are deprived of the rights and immunities enjoyed by the most favored." He added that: "the man who has no rights of his own, has no real protection."[15]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long, 518.*

[13] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction, 86.*

[14] Geraldine McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction in Louisiana, 1860-1880," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1975), 42-45.

[15] Elsie Lewis, "The Political Mind of the Negro," *Journal of Southern History,* 21 (1955), 191.

Praise for American democracy was also mixed with denunciations of federal agencies. Despite gratitude for their liberation, blacks were frustrated with northern missionaries and government officials who appeared indifferent, or even hostile, to the cause of full civil equality . Blacks spoke of unprovoked violence, daily intimidation, restricted movement, unpaid wages, and a biased judicial system. They told of taunts by their white counterparts and ridicule over the prospect of blacks governing themselves.

In August 1866, the *Tribune* even advised federal officials to close the Freedmen's Bureau. The fundamental problem, editor Houzeau concluded, was that the Freedmen's Bureau was "imbued with the common prejudices" against blacks. Moreover, the paper added, "agents of the Freedmen's Bureau are very few. In most parishes there are none." Houzeau and Roudanez had often complained that Bureau agents, few in number and often isolated, were easily intimidated by southern planters and other hostile local white officials. Thus, according to the *Tribune*, Bureau agents often sided with planters and not freedmen when labor disputes erupted.[16]

Louisiana's black political leaders demanded equality before the law and sought limited forms of social equality. For one, they were intent on securing the amalgamation of public schools. The free black community also urged an end to segregation of public transport.[17] Not surprisingly, free persons of color also fought for the economic and political fruits of freedom. Many *gens de couleur* were relatively economically independent because of their property ownership before the war and were able to exercise their entrepreneurial talents without the debilitating restraints imposed on slaves. Meanwhile, ex-slaves were relegated to continuing economic dependence as wage laborers and sharecroppers. Whereas most freed blacks welcomed federal supervision of plantation labor, many *gens de couleur* opposed government intervention. Some *gens de couleur* simply rejected the notion of direct government assistance as a principle, others saw Bureau agents as tools keeping ex-slaves on plantations. Both groups worried that the freedmen would be forced to eke out a living as a subsistence farmer. Thus, General

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[16] Ibid 45; Howard White, *The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: 1970), 8-12, 177.
[17] See for example: *New Orleans Tribune*, July 24, October 24, October 31, and November 3, 1867. (Herein cited as *Tribune*.)

Stephen A. Hurlbut told free persons of color: "you are striving for social equality, they for personal freedom."[18]

Issues of desegregation and social equality do appear to have been far from the minds of the average freedmen. An 1864 survey of Louisiana's rural blacks by General Banks revealed that political issues were relatively unimportant to them. Banks reported that education and labor relations mattered more to rural blacks than politics. Their most common objectives dealt with domestic and economic issues: to end the separation of families, to eliminate flogging, to educate black children, to end abusive labor, and to receive reasonable wages for work performed.[19] J. Willis Menard, black and from New Orleans, was convinced that whites who were embracing the concept of black suffrage were doing so to further their own political ambitions. He believed that "suffrage is a second consideration" for blacks and that "security of life, liberty and property . . . is the first and most urgent want of the colored race in the South."[20]

The Making of Black Politicians in Louisiana

The black political leader in Louisiana was often different than those he sought to lead. In New Orleans, as elsewhere in the state, he was typically a young man of unusual ancestry, above-average wealth, and exceptional ability. Historian David Rankin has identified the origins of 174 of New Orleans' black leaders during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Rankin found that 169 of the black leaders had been free men of color, even though half the black population in New Orleans were slaves. In addition, he has culled the following information: Most of the black leaders in New Orleans were in their thirties and began their political careers before 1865 and remained active during the 1860s. Often they were the ward officers and leading spokesmen of the major political organizations of the city: the Union Radical Association, the National Equal Rights

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[18] M.K. Joshi and J. Reidy, "To Come Forward and Aid in Putting Down this Unholy Rebellion," *Southern Studies*, 21 (1982), 338-339.

[19] Joe G. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877,* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 38; Joshi and Reidy, "To Come Forward and Aid in Putting Down this Unholy Rebellion," 338-339.

[20] Lewis, "The Political Mind of the Negro," 195; *Tribune*, November 6, 1866.

League, the Friends of Universal Suffrage, and the Republican party. Some belonged to the oldest and most respected free colored families of Louisiana. [21]

In addition, many leaders came from families of French extraction and many had lived most of their lives in the city. Most were also natives of Louisiana and nearly two-thirds were born and reared in New Orleans. The great majority of these politicians were light-colored mulattos, and many were actually quadroons or octoroons -- some of whom could have actually passed for whites. Almost all of them held jobs that demanded either skill or schooling; most of these leaders could read and write before the war, and many had received formal education. They were financially more secure than the great majority of blacks in antebellum New Orleans and a few were among the wealthiest people in the city. A total of fifty-nine participated in the Civil War, all on the Union side even though a number of them initially joined the Confederate ranks.[22]

Many Louisiana black politicians were prominent in trades and business. Robert H. Isabelle, a free-born mulatto, worked as a clerk in a cotton factory and as a dyer, and during the Civil War was a soldier with the Louisiana Native Guards. Isabelle was also a co-editor of a short-lived black New Orleans newspaper, the *Black Republican,* and in 1868 he was a corporal in the New Orleans police force. A son of a free woman of color, Oscar Dunn had worked a music teacher and a barber before the Civil War and enlisted in the Union army in the first unit of black soldiers raised in 1862. He rose to the rank of captain but resigned in 1863 to protest the promotion of a white officer to a rank he believed he deserved. Dunn worked closely with a group around the New Orleans *Tribune*, which toward the end of the Civil War demanded black suffrage. Curtis Pollard, an ex-slave, was a Baptist minister and operated a grocery store. He also served on the Madison parish police jury. Francis Dumas, a prominent Crescent City slave owner who had secretly educated his slaves, came within four votes of capturing the Republican party nomination for governor in 1868. A steward on riverboats and a well-known

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[21] David Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, 40 (1974), 419-436.

[22] Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 419-436.

riverboat gambler, Pickney B.S. Stewart had enlisted with Union forces during the Civil War but resigned because of discriminatory treatment by white officers. Involved in the movement for black suffrage centered in New Orleans, P.B.S. Pinchback would become an important Republican power broker and would become the first black governor of a state.[23]

Louisiana Blacks and the Republican Party

Whatever their earlier trepidations, Louisiana free blacks were now demanding the suffrage for *all* blacks and were working with whites to achieve it. On June 10, 1865 Louisiana Radicals, including some free blacks, organized the "Friends of Universal Suffrage." It was, stated Jean-Charles Houzeau, "the first time that whites had decided to sit publicly and in a regular manner with blacks." The Central Committee of the organization included Henry C. Warmoth, a young ex-federal soldier who had organized the National Republican Association in July, and now joined forces with native "Friends." They addressed a petition to Wells to include blacks in the new registration. Wells refused.[24] The organization's primary goal was universal suffrage, but more generally it opposed "any discrimination founded upon origin of birth" and advocated that "all be given a fair chance in the world, with the same rights before the law."[25] As Houzeau explained: "To demand suffrage for the black and the colored man implied a simultaneous demand for all the civil and political rights guaranteed to their citizens."[26]

The Friends of Universal Suffrage merged with white Republicans to form the Louisiana Republican Party. Delegates met at a convention in New Orleans from September 25 to 27, 1865. The 111 members adopted a resolution signaling that "all acts

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[23] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders* (New York, 1993), 114, 171-172; Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1976), 7-14, 33; Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 421; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 75, 77, 135.

[24] Philip Uzee, "The Beginning of the Louisiana Republican Party," *Louisiana History*, 12 (1971), 204-205.

[25] *Tribune*, June 16, July 8, 1865; Logsdon and Bell reason that the freedmen were not included in the suffrage request because Louisiana slaves had not yet been freed either by Lincoln's decrees or by any state action. See Joseph Logsdon, and Caryn C. Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," in Arnold R. Hirsh and Joseph Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 224.

[26] Jean-Charles Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 111.

and resolutions of this convention be made in the name of the Republican Party in Louisiana."[27] The convention declared that Louisiana was a territory and was entitled to a delegate in Congress. The position fell to Henry Warmoth and a "voluntary" election was held on November 6 to ratify the convention's choice of a territorial delegate. Warmoth won ratification and was warmly received by Radicals in Congress.[28]

Back in Louisiana, James Ingraham was helping to form a Louisiana chapter of the National Equal Rights League. NERL grew out of the National Convention of Colored Men, which had met at Syracuse, New York, in October 1864 to coordinate ideology and strategy for the black community. The delegates demanded the abolition of slavery and the adoption of universal male suffrage. Resolutions were passed which proclaimed the concept of natural equality and human rights and advocated political and civil rights for blacks. The convention also established a National Equal Rights League, with state and local branches, to serve as the instrument through which unity of action and opinion could be effected.[29]

In January 1865 some hundred-odd delegates had convened for a week in New Orleans. The three-part program for economic, political, and social change called for the removal of all federal restrictions upon the labor contracting process, unrestricted manhood suffrage regardless of color, and an end to all civil distinctions based on color. The gathering voted Ingraham as president and the *Tribune* as its official organ. The convention was a starting point for free persons of color and freedmen to forge a unified political program.[30]

Resistance to Black Political Participation

Many Louisianans, however, were formulating responses to increased black liberties. Most whites were angered by the implications of black freedom and many planters resented the tremendous loss of capital they experienced as a result of the

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[27] *Proceedings of the Convention of the Republican Party of Louisiana , Held at Economy Hall, New Orleans, September 25, 1865 and of the Central Executive Committee of the Friends of Universal Suffrage of Louisiana now the Central Executive Committee of the Republican Party of Louisiana* (n.p., n.d), 13-14.
[28] Uzee, "The Beginning of the Louisiana Republican Party," 206-207.
[29] Lewis, "The Political Mind of the Negro," 189-190; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 231.
[30] Joshi and Reidy, "To Come Forward and Aid in Putting Down this Unholy Rebellion," 337-338.

collapse of the slave system. In the months immediately following the surrender, many whites simply refused to treat the freedmen as anything other than slaves.[31]

At the local level Louisiana officials fashioned various town ordinances, or "black codes", to regulate people of color in much the same way as slave statutes had done in the pre-Civil War days. Blacks were stripped of their right to vote and were forbidden from serving on a jury. They could not travel freely without proper authorization, were obliged to respect curfews, and could not assemble in groups. They also could not carry firearms. Some ordinances even barred blacks from renting or leasing land. In order to ensure a stable labor supply for the plantations, the codes introduced severe penalties for blacks who broke labor contracts, agreements that usually committed them to work for the same employer for one year.

If the black codes were not a clear enough signal to federal authorities, reports and testimonies to Congress showed that the "rebel spirit" was alive and well in Louisiana. Colonel James W. Shaffer of the United States Army, who was stationed in Louisiana in 1865, reported that sentiment in that state had become "very much more rabid" against the federal government and had renewed bitter feelings against the North.[32] Reverend Joseph E. Roy, a Louisiana agent of the American Home Missionary Society, declared that "there was scarcely any national spirit [in Louisiana]-- a lip loyalty, but not one of the heart."[33] The Reverend claimed that he had never heard "any sense of wrongdoing" in Louisiana in regards to the rebellion. T.J. Mackey, an engineer in the Confederate army who lived in Shreveport, Louisiana, believed his people were "not only opposed to the government of the United States, but bitterly antagonistic to all who declared themselves as willing to act in good faith towards the government."[34] Thomas Knox, a farmer-emigrant from the North wrote in 1865 that the "spirit of discontent still remains in many localities, and will retard the process of reconstruction."[35]

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[31] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 140-141.
[32] U.S. Cong., *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, Florida-Louisiana-Texas,* 39th Congress, 2nd session, no. 68, 55. (Herein cited as *Congressional Report on Reconstruction.*)
[33] *Congressional Report on Reconstruction*, 67.
[34] Ibid., 150.
[35] Thomas W. Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton Field: Southern Adventure in Time of War* (New York, 1965), 497.

Reports made clear that white southerners were ready to use every means at their disposal to regain control of their political affairs and subjugate blacks. For instance, Thomas Knox reported the widespread fear that "the old inhabitants will lose their political rights."[36] Knox spoke of their "hope of compelling a return to the old relation of master and slave."[37] Though secession no longer appeared a viable alternative to them, many southerners, it was reported, "were looking to gain control" of the national government. "If they can gain the representation they desire in Congress, they think that with the aid they can get from the north, they can pass such laws as they please."[38] Warmoth: " I think I may safely say that nine-tenths of those who were engaged in the rebellion, with whom I have conversed, unite in saying that they hate the government of the United States and should rejoice in its downfall," [39]

Violence characterized Louisiana from the beginning of Reconstruction. Republicans, Freedmen's Bureau agents, Federal soldiers, and blacks of all stripes suffered frequent attacks. During the summer and fall of 1865, at least sixteen shootings and stabbings occurred in the eastern Florida parishes alone. Dozens of incidents of assault, battery, and intimidation were also reported and legal reprimands were few. Insufficient manpower and a sluggish bureaucracy inhibited Federal authorities from curbing the scope of the violence. Local whites usually refused to cooperate with federal authorities in any way.[40]

Louisiana blacks were often the targets of white frustration. As Reverend Roy explained, white southern people "seem to have transferred their spite at the government to the colored people." [41] General George Custer of the United States Army reported "a very strong feeling of hostility" towards the freed slave and said that whites "do not hesitate to improve every opportunity to inflict injuries upon him." [42] The black leader Oscar Dunn spelled out black fears in New Orleans: "The feeling among them is that

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[36] Ibid., 497.
[37] Ibid., 497, 503.
[38] *Congressional Report on Reconstruction*, 128.
[39] U.S. Cong., House, *New Orleans Riot,* 39th Congress, 2nd session, no. 16, 5-6, 43. (Herein cited as *New Orleans Riot: House Report*)
[40] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 160.
[41] Ibid., 63.

there is no security for them under the present municipal government; that there is no justice for them."[43]

It was evident that whites would fight any measure to give blacks the right to vote. Major General Lorenzo Thomas of the United States Army, who had been stationed in Louisiana before, during, and after the Civil War, claimed that white southerners were "undoubtedly opposed" to giving the suffrage to blacks. Yet, he added that they would be willing to give them other rights such as to sue and give evidence in the courts.[44] When asked about extending civil and political rights to blacks, another claimed that "without any exception," blacks would "vote for the government and not for the rebels."[45]

Federal officials were learning that should southerners regain the power to manage their own affairs, there would be "no question" that they would reduce blacks to slavery.[46] Thomas Conway, federal superintendent of the freedmen in Louisiana, told members of Congress that without federal protection, blacks "would not be able to secure their wages; no justice would be shown them."[47] In particular, Conway pointed to the "most odious features of slavery" preserved in the black codes. The Freedmen's Bureau official reported that police in New Orleans were arresting freedmen as vagrants because they were not carrying certificates of employment from their former owners and that he personally released many of them from jail.[48] Indeed, Colonel Shaffer concluded that if there was no interference from federal authorities, the blacks "would be in a worse condition than they were in a state of slavery."[49] Blacks would be easy prey for vindictive white vigilantes.

There were also reports of white southern resistance to black education and black property ownership. Reverend Roy was told by the superintendent of education for the Freedmen's Bureau that in one Louisiana city four schools among the colored people had been broken up and in another "one colored school-house had been torn down and

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[42] Ibid., 75
[43] *New Orleans Riot: House Report,* 69.
[44] Ibid., 142.
[45] Ibid.,116.
[46] *Congressional Report on Reconstruction*, 154.
[47] Ibid., 80.
[48] Ibid., 79.

another burned after the withdrawal of troops."[50] Colonel Shaffer reported that "universal opinion" in the South was that blacks should not be allowed to acquire or hold land.[51] Conway believed that the unanimous feeling in the South was that blacks "shall not own an inch of land or have any schools. They are more hostile to the establishment of schools than they are to owning lands."[52]

There were many reports of rebels in public positions. "I have it from good authority," one report stated, "that in the post office and custom-house in New Orleans rebels flock there."[53] Thomas Conway reported to have seen Governor Wells give commissions as judges, district attorneys, mayors of towns, and other offices "to men who yet wore their confederate uniforms."[54] Conway claimed that Wells ejected men from office in Louisiana "until every loyal man was out of office there."[55] Others reiterated Conway's assessment of Wells' actions and offered that they produced "a great change" in the feelings of returning rebel soldiers who were encouraged by the governor's actions to flout federal policies. Henry Warmoth, the Republican leader claimed: "I believe [the municipal offices in New Orleans] are filled by men who have been most prominent in the rebellion, or by men who have made themselves most obnoxious to the United States government."[56]

Moreover, in various parts of Louisiana, armed bands of vigilantes called *comités de vigilance* had been waging a reign of terror on blacks and Republican sympathizers. Owning no land, freed blacks lacked means to achieve self-sufficiency and many blacks resorted to stealing privately owned livestock in order to survive. White property owners had responded to petty theft and minor criminal activity by organizing armed night rides who threatened alleged criminals with death if they did not leave the county. They also

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[49] Ibid., 62.
[50] Ibid., 63.
[51] Ibid., 62.
[52] Ibid., 82.
[53] Ibid.,128.
[54] Ibid., 81.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *New Orleans Riot: House Report,* 41.

targeted locals with undesirable political views. Many blacks were intimidated into fleeing the stricken areas.[57]

The vigilante groups spurred reports that Union men, black and white, lived in constant fear. Many Union men had their lives threatened, Reverend Roy recounted, and rebel whites were threatening to "clean out these northern men" in the event Union troops were removed. Thomas Conway believed that Union men could not protect their property or lives "without the aid of the military,"[58] and many told federal officials that if the federal troops were removed "they would not live there."[59]

The isolation that many Union men felt was both physical and psychological. Republican Marshall Twitchell summed up his situation as a northern Union soldier sent to implement federal policies in Bienville Parish in 1865: "I was surrounded by a community in which there were at least one thousand disbanded Confederate soldiers, all having no love for the government which had just vanquished them and of which I was the representative. There was an intense bitterness against the colored soldiers, once their slaves but now, under my direction their masters. In case of needing assistance, I was without telegraph, railway, or water connection . . . I am free to confess that had I known beforehand what my position was to be, I should have remained with my regiment."[60] Fear and isolation, coupled with hostility, were powerful influences undermining the effectiveness of Republican officials.

Republicans could not expect protection from courts filled by ex-rebels. "I do not think that a man having the sympathies of the confederates who would kill a Union man here would be convicted of murder by any jury that could be empanelled here," Henry Warmoth remarked.[61] Jean B. Jourdan, a black Republican, declared that: "I would not live here twenty-four hours if the troops were withdrawn, because of the bitter feeling

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[57] Carl Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country* (Jackson, Mississippi, 1994), 82-84.
[58] *Congressional Report on Reconstruction*, 80.
[59] Ibid.,116.
[60] Tunnell, *Carpetbagger from Vermont: The Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 90-91.
[61] *New Orleans Riot: House Report*, 43.

they have towards the United States government, and towards every one who upholds the Unites States government."[62]

If hostility from Confederate sympathizers and Wells cronies were not daunting enough, Louisiana's black politicians also had to contend with competition in their own party from white Radicals. The Louisiana Republican Party had been organized in September 1865 through a coalition of free blacks, Unionists, and carpetbaggers on a platform of universal suffrage and "the equality of all men before the law." However, Roudanez and his black followers were suspicious of their white partners when groups of white Radicals, formed into organizations called Ben Butler clubs, requested admission to the Republican party. Until the previous month they had excluded blacks from membership, and they had shown a reluctance to extend the franchise to blacks while at the same time only favoring limited disfranchisement of ex-confederate rebels.

The *Tribune* denounced the Ben Butler Clubs as false Radicals who feared enfranchisement of blacks who would block their entrance into public offices. The *Tribune* was also angered that ward clubs, local political organizations with large majorities of blacks, were almost exclusively headed by whites.[63] In the battle for the leadership of the black masses, black spokesmen criticized white loyalists who had not always approved black suffrage. The *Tribune* commented that the white radicals, with the typical arrogance of their race, had no real belief in black equality and assumed that all black men were political pawns.[64]

Louisiana blacks had originally been concerned about linking the "Friends of Universal Suffrage" with the Republican Party. *Gens de couleur* worried about being manipulated by whites in the days leading up to the fusion: "Shall we become obedient tools in the hands of a party whose policy is not completely settled on the very question that brought us together in this convention."[65] Convention radicals dropped their

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[62] Ibid., *207.*
[63] *Tribune*, October 27; F. Wayne Binning, "Carpetbaggers' Triumph: The Louisiana State Election of 1868," *Louisiana History*, 14 (1973), 26.
[64] Clara Lopez Campbell, "The Political Life of Louisiana Negroes, 1865 – 1890," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1971), 47 -48.
[65] *Tribune,* September 26, 1865;.

resistance only after the Republican Party adopted a resolution calling for universal suffrage as the basis of the party's national platform.[66]

Fears of black political power spilled into the Republican state convention of June 1867 when Robert Isabelle, who had served as captain of black troops during the war, introduced a resolution apparently designed to give blacks a majority of seats in the coming constitutional convention. A committee on resolutions came back with an unfavorable report and said it condemned the attempt by members of one race to monopolize the offices of the government. Several blacks then demanded the inclusion of the word 'colored' in the Republican platform and the motion was passed. Yet, the powerful committee on reorganization submitted a report that added a large number of white persons to the powerful state central committee of the party. Forty-six of the seventy-nine names were whites, including many who were not members of the state Republican party at the time their names were submitted.[67]

One of the most violent events of the Reconstruction period, the 1866 New Orleans Riot, was prompted by widespread fear of black political power. Two years earlier, General Banks had coerced the constitutional convention of 1864, beyond abolishing slavery, to authorize the legislature to enfranchise blacks on the basis of military service, exceptional intelligence, or payment of taxes. Yet, the limited extension of the suffrage was merely authorized, and not actually extended.[68] The Free Staters of the Louisiana government decided to authorize black suffrage but could not carry out their new objectives by legislative action. So they attempted to do so by joining forces with moderate Republicans and reconvene the constitutional convention of 1864.[69]

Word spread of the government's intention and inflamed white reactionaries organized to disrupt the convention, scheduled for July 30th. On that day, convention members assembled at twelve o'clock, but adjourned because only twenty-six of their members were present. Meanwhile, a crowd of hostile whites, including policemen, had

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[66] Caryn C. Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and The Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1997), 258-259.
[67] Binning, "Carpetbaggers' Triumph: The Louisiana State Election of 1868," 27.
[68] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction,* 79.
[69] Bell, *The Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 260.

gathered outside the institute. Around one p.m. perhaps a hundred or so blacks marched across Canal Street towards the convention carrying an American flag. Taunts by white onlookers led to fights between the marching blacks and angry spectators and at least one shot was fired. The procession continued but once stopped outside the Mechanic's Institute, whites fired on the group and some blacks returned the fire. Blacks scattered and some entered the convention hall. The police and the crowd began firing into the windows of the building. Then, police broke into the institute and discharged their revolvers into the crowded hall. The police and mob reloaded while the group of blacks attempted to beat them off with chairs and clubs. Some conventionists attempted to surrender but they too were gunned down.[70] Federal troops finally arrived at three o'clock. But by then at least forty-six blacks died and another sixty suffered severe wounds. Only one white attacker was killed and ten received slight wounds. [71]

The country responded to the riot with shock and anger. Republican majorities in both chambers of Congress who had long opposed Johnson's lenient restoration of the southern states, responded by passing a series of "radical" Reconstruction Acts in 1867 which divided the ex-confederate states into military-occupied districts. Local governing bodies and the courts functioned under the scrutiny of resident federal officers. In early 1867 General Philip Sheridan, commanding the Fifth Military District, issued a proclamation that proclaimed his control of local civil authority. The decree stated: "Existing civil functionaries will be continued but simply provisionally and subject to removal should their conduct not comport with the military commander's view of their duty." The planter elite deeply resented the loss of their commanding power in state government. They used the fear of slave unrest to create an "us versus them" mentality that encouraged rural whites to accept planter protection.[72]

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[70] *New Orleans Riot: House Report*; Letter from Major General P.H. Sheridan to President Andrew Johnson, August 6, 1866 as quoted in Harvey Wish, ed., *Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1877: Firsthand Accounts of the American Southland after the Civil War, by Northerners and Southerners* (New York, 1965), 54-55. Jean-Charles Houzeau was present in the Institute at the time of the riot but managed to escape. See his testimony in *New Orleans Riots: Report*, 73-74 and in Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune,* 159.

[71] *New Orleans Riot: House Report*, 5-6.

[72] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 151.

Congressional Reconstruction required new voter registration, a measure intended to disfranchise Confederate leaders. Black enfranchisement provided the best means to promote the fortunes of the Republican party in the South and for the freedmen to secure their rights as citizens. [73] Buttressed by the Reconstruction Acts, General Sheridan took the initiative in the spring and summer of 1867 to replace a number of powerful Louisiana political figures with men "in sympathy with the law."[74] He also stringently purged the voting rolls of ex-rebels, helping ensure that Louisiana blacks made up more than 78,000 of the 127,693 registered voters for delegates to a new constitutional convention scheduled for November.[75]

The results of the constitutional convention appeared to confirm the massive disfranchisement of white voters. The convention secured approval by a vote of 75,083 to 4,006. Republicans elected ninety-six of the ninety-eight delegates, with blacks making up one-half of that number. In reality, the election did not provide a truthful indication of the level of disfranchisement. Hopelessness and disgust kept most whites away from the polls. Most recognized that the conservatives had no chance for success and others could not accept the idea of voting alongside blacks.[76]

Unfortunately for Louisiana radicals, President Johnson soon undercut the measures passed by the radical Congress. On August 17, 1867, Johnson removed General Sheridan as commander of the Fifth Military District and replaced him with Winfield Scott Hancock, a known Democrat. Johnson explained that Sheridan had removed an alarming number of Louisiana public officials and had interfered with the Reconstruction Acts. General Hancock immediately revoked an order of Sheridan's that required that blacks be placed on the jury list for state courts.[77]

Meanwhile, black assertiveness was provoking some of the harshest actions by whites. Violence escalated with the introduction of paramilitary organizations. During

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[73] ibid., 155; Joseph Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction, Louisiana, 1862- 1877* (Baton Rouge, 1982), 49.
[74] Philip Henry Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan: General US. Army, Volume II* (Montreal, 1888), 254.
[75] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 46-47, 54; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 128 - 129, 131 - 139.
[76] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics,* 156; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed,* 146-148.

the spring and summer of 1867 Republican organizers established self-defense organizations known as Loyal League Clubs among the blacks in eastern Louisiana. Throughout the summer of 1867, local Freedmen's Bureau agents and federal officers reported growing political agitation among the freedmen. Whites became agitated by the publication of political tracts issued by the New Orleans Radical Club, headed by Warmoth and others. By August 1867, Freedmen's Bureau agents reported that blacks increasingly left work to attend to political meetings.[78]

The explosive conditions surrounding the elections the fall of 1867 and the spring of 1868 appear to have promoted the rapid growth of white secret societies across Louisiana. Though claiming to act in self-defense, they functioned primarily as a means of maintaining white supremacy. In the winter of 1867 and 1868, the first reports of a Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana began to circulate. Organized in Tennessee, the Klan initially functioned as a social club for Confederate veterans. Evidence suggests that by the spring of 1868 Klan outfits existed in the Florida parishes as well as in upstate Louisiana. The Klan combined a commitment to white supremacy with a murderous contempt for white and black Republicans. Terror served as the weapon of choice for Klansmen and murder, arson, and intimidation all played an integral role in the Klan's nightly adventures. Their violent activities demanded absolute secrecy; few ever admitted membership.[79] The White Camelia organized in Louisiana with a commitment to assert white supremacy in a political and economic agenda. They typically incorporated menacing persuasion with economic intimidation. In eastern Louisiana, political control was the key objective of the White Camelia, whereas Klansmen regarded racial dominance as preeminent.[80]

To counter Democratic intimidation, white Republicans warned blacks that if they failed to vote the Republican ticket they would not receive their share of land and mules. Republicans routinely promised compensation to freedmen if Republicans were voted into office. Federal garrisons demonstrated an unwillingness to intervene on behalf of

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[77] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 57; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 142.
[78] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 160-162.
[79] Ibid., 163-164.

black Republicans. Thus, blacks had the option of risking their lives by voting Republican or of forfeiting their only realistic hope of economic advancement by voting Democratic.[81] Pinchback summed up blacks' plight: "[We] are between the hawk of republican demagogism and the buzzards of Democratic prejudices. The aspirants for position in our party threaten us with excommunication if we do not follow every jack o'lantern who raises his feeble light, and the Democrats invite us to annihilation if we turn away from these Republican jack o'lanterns."[82]

Despite Johnson's reactionary policies, Henry Warmoth had helped merge Banks' moderate forces and the *Tribune* radicals to create the Republican party of Louisiana and then use it to push his own candidacy for governor. Two years later he would stack the nominating convention of 1867, and carefully nurture opposition to blacks within the African-American community. Warmoth formed an important alliance with John P. Newman of the Ames Methodist Episcopal Church who, in his weekly newspaper, the *New Orleans Advocate*, warned his readership against "certain men of color in New Orleans who now claim the exclusive right to rule this city." When Newman threatened to encourage Protestant freedmen to revolt against the black creole radicals, the *Tribune* attacked the northern "philanthropists" who wished to divide black New Orleans "in politics, in religion, in social relations."[83]

The rigid application of the disfranchisement law helped Warmoth and the Republicans by discouraging many potential white voters from subjecting themselves to the humiliation of rejection at state elections. Returns show that approximately 36,029 whites voted in the April 1868 election. The number of participants amounted to slightly more than 4I percent of adult white males, a dramatic decrease in voter turnout from elections in the late 1850s. Thus, though claims that 50 percent of white males had been denied suffrage are almost certainly exaggerated, following the implementation of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, nearly one-third fewer whites voted, whether from disillusionment or choice. Both the constitution and Warmoth secured the voter's

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[80] Ibid., 164-166.

[81] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 171.

[82] Lewis, "The Political Mind of the Negro"; New Orleans *Semi-Weekly Louisianan*, August 3, 1871.

approval by comfortable majorities. East Baton Rouge, Livingston, St. Helena, and Washington Parishes joined sixteen primarily upstate cotton and Sabine River region parishes in rejecting the constitution.[84]

Republicans moved swiftly to consolidate their power. The legislature granted the governor the authority to fill vacant political positions and replace officials considered ineligible. Warmoth accordingly removed many elected officials on the state, parish, and municipal levels and replaced them with party loyalists, thereby alienating many business and professional men. Warmoth further antagonized conservatives by appointing scores of Federal soldiers, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and local Republicans with questionable expertise and backgrounds to responsible positions. [85]

The corrupt practices of some Republican officials contributed to hatred of Republicans and, importantly, reinforced disillusionment with government. Increases in the rate of taxation coupled with increases in salaries the legislature provided for themselves and other elected officials provoked great resentment. In addition to the seeming lack of concern for the state's welfare shown by some Republican officials, accusations of theft of public and private funds damaged their image. Most damaging were accusations of massive corruption on the part of the legislature. According to the allegations, Republican legislators routinely pocketed huge sums in the form of levee and asylum bills.[86]

In the selection of a congressman from eastern Louisiana in November 1868, white conservatives incorporated economic intimidation, psychological terror, and murder. Local Democratic executive committees issued protection papers to freedmen who voted Democratic. Several prominent blacks received letters from the KKK urging them to "turn over" to the Democratic party or face death. As the election neared, the Klan made nightly raids in full costume and dynamited trees near republican homes. The

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[83] Logsdon, and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 246-247.
[84] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 157; Donald W. Davis, "Ratification of the Constitution of 1868-Record of Votes," *Louisiana History*, 6 (1965), 301-305; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed,* 143-144.
[85] Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*, 158.
[86] Ibid., 174-177.

"tree burstings" frightened Republicans enough that they were afraid to leave their homes, much less venture to vote. Others were murdered by the Klan.[87]

The 1868 Opelousas Riot, one of the worst examples of Reconstruction violence in south Louisiana, stemmed from a political struggle between Democrats and Republicans, as the parties fought for control over the region's large black electorate. St. Landry had rejected the Radical Constitution but Warmoth and the Republicans had won a narrow victory for state offices in the parish vote in a hotly contested election. In Saint Landry, Republicans had scored impressive electoral victories in 1867 but by mid-April 1868 the Democrats were able to mobilize sufficient strength to defeat ratification of the constitution within Saint Landry Parish. Following the Democratic victory, both parties moved to neutralize each other by the time of the 1868 presidential election. Democratic leaders attempted to lure or intimidate blacks into voting the Democratic ticket. Republicans used rallies or barbecues to lure black voters to the fold, but some advocated violence as a means of intimidating the dominant Democratic white electorate.[88]

On September 28, a local judge inflicted a sever caning upon Emerson Bentley, the White Radical editor of the Saint Landry Progress and a teacher in a black school. Rumours circulated that Bentley had been murdered and thus local Republican leaders and *gens de couleur* began mobilizing armed supporters to assemble at Opelousas. The call to arms was unsuccessfully opposed by several prominent white blacks who hoped to avoid armed confrontation between the races. Some black politicians went into the countryside to spread the word that Bentley was alive and to dissuade blacks from taking arms. Meanwhile Opelousas municipal officials organized a posse and entered the rural area surrounding the parish seat. An armed confrontation at a farm sparked a race riot. On September 28, armed blacks killed a white man attempting to join armed bands of whites then gathering. Whites attempted to assassinate a white man responsible for the Republican call to arms.[89]

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[87] Ibid., 169-170.

[88] Carolyn Delatte, 'The Saint Landry Riot: A Forgotten Incident of Reconstruction Violence," *Louisiana History*, 17 (1976), 42; McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction in Louisiana, 1860-1880,"; Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 99-100.

[89] McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction in Louisiana, 1860-1880,", 294-299; Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of*

The following day approximately two thousand armed whites converged on Opelousas. Bands of whites then disarmed blacks within a twenty five mile radius of Opelousas, killing any who attempted to resist, while other invaders destroyed the presses of the *Saint Landry Progress*. Vigilantes removed black prisoners arrested from the parish jail and then executed them along with one of the *Progress*'s white editors. An independent military investigation concluded that twenty-five blacks had died in the "riot." Republican sources put the black death toll at two hundred to three hundred. Blacks were subsequently disarmed and subdued; white allies fled or joined the Democratic ranks. Some of the most committed *gens de couleur* withdrew from politics altogether. *Gens de couleur* appear to have curtailed their political activities significantly after the bloody Opelousas riot of 1868, which claimed between twenty-five and fifty black victims.[90] The Opelousas Riot effectively killed radicalism in Saint Landry Parish. The Republican party virtually ceased to exist in that parish after 1868 and the black politicians subsequently kept a low profile.[91]

Color in the Bayou Country, 101-102.

[90] Brasseaux, et al. *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 96-97, 99.

[91] McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction in Louisiana, 1860-1880," 298-299; Brasseaux, et al., *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, 102-103.

Chapter 4

Defeat in Triumph: The Black Delegates and Their Participation at the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868

"RADICAL MANAGERS BENT ON AFRICANIZING THE SOUTH" screamed the front-page headline of the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* on November 24, 1867. The paper was reacting to the opening of a series of constitutional conventions, ordered by the Republican-controlled Congress, designed to create new state governments in the ex-confederate states as a basis for future readmittance into the Union. Just a day earlier, ninety-eight lawmakers had convened in New Orleans to begin formulating a new constitution for the state of Louisiana. The overwhelming majority of the registered white populace in Louisiana had refrained from voting for convention delegates, unwilling to participate in the "radical" political transformations that were bringing blacks citizenship, the vote, and the possibility of governing. Numerous Louisiana whites chose to ignore the delegates assembled at the Louisiana constitutional convention, all but two of them Republicans, who were vowing to produce a document guaranteeing equal rights for blacks, and requiring public officials to accept, under oath, black civil and political equality. White hostility would be a powerful force on the delegates assembled throughout the duration of the convention.

The *New Orleans Tribune* was well aware of the importance of demonstrating that a black community could offer effective political governing. The Louisiana convention would be the first of the southern constitutional conventions to convene, and, as such, Louisiana blacks would be the first Afro-Americans to join with whites in laying the foundation for a state's political and legal future. "The whole country -- nay, the whole world," the paper predicted, "will be watching our moves, to decide whether popular government... is practible [sic] or not."[1]

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[1] The *New Orleans Tribune*, October 23, 1867. (Herein cited as *Tribune*.)

Many Louisiana whites shuddered in fear and disgust at the apparent usurpation of political power by Louisiana blacks that the constitutional convention represented. The *New Orleans Daily Picayune* commented bitterly that the majority of the "old population" of Louisiana, its disfranchised pre-Civil War white populace, would have "no voice" in the drafting of the new constitution. The editors claimed that the new government was being created against the wishes of the "only people of Louisiana known to the constitution of the United States." Taking aim at Congressional Republicans, the *Daily Picayune* further lamented that an "external force" was set to abolish all the old landmarks of Louisiana's politics and that its citizens were bracing for the new government "with undisguised terror." Most prophetically, the paper warned that the present unwanted predicament "will last only until the normal powers... revive."[2]

Fears of "Negro rule" and the "Congo Congress" were also emanating from Louisiana Republican ranks. Henry Clay Warmoth, an influential leader who would emerge as the Republican nominee for governor, was convinced that the *Tribune* "held out to the colored people the hope of making Louisiana a 'Negro State.'"[3] He charged that the *Tribune* was behind a plan by select black leaders to manipulate the vote of the freed slaves in order to create a black state run by an oligarchy of *gens de couleur*, a term used to describe New Orleans free blacks. Some white Republicans argued that the *gens de couleur* yearned for social and civil equality even though the black masses concerned themselves primarily with economic prosperity and education. Warmoth claimed that the editors of the *Tribune* were encouraged by the protection they expected from the United States Army, and the helplessness of the formerly ruling white people, to urge Louisiana blacks "to follow Haiti, San Domingo, and Liberia and make Louisiana an African State."[4]

The *Tribune* thus warned the black delegates to be wary of their white political partners: "There will be, in the coming Convention, a 'white man party,' which is already organizing, in the vain hope of controlling the future government of the state . . . They

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[2] The *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, November 21, 1867. (Herein cited as *Picayune*).
[3] Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York, 1930), 32.
[4] Ibid., 51 - 54.

will promise our men situations and public offices, to bribe some, if they can, to their white man system. They will take in a few colored men, as exceptions, in order to secure the balance of public offices to themselves. But how foolish would be those who would rely on such promises. Most of them would be deceived". [5]

The Composition of the Delegates

In an editorial on October 23, 1867, the *Tribune* predicted that the convention would be marked by a titanic struggle between two opposing forces: "There will be in that Convention two parties, the "Pure Radicals" and the "Compromising Republicans". Efforts will be made by parties outside of the convention to secure the ascendancy of the compromising section. But such efforts are doomed to fail."[6] According to the *Tribune*, Pure Radicals were those members dedicated to the application of the principle of equal rights to all men, irrespective of color and race. Among the "Pure Radicals" were *gens de couleur* from established free black families and championed by Doctor Roudanez and the *Tribune*. The great majority of the black convention delegates -- at least 85 percent -- had been free men of color. Compromisers, on the other hand, were willing to ignore or evade the wholehearted application of equal rights. The latter faction was deemed controlled by carpetbaggers-- mostly former Union officers newly settled in Louisiana. [7]

In mid-November the *Tribune* published the names of the delegates who would be representing Louisiana parishes at the "Radical Convention" in New Orleans. The forty-names represented a disparate and diverse group. It included blacks, whites, ex-slaves, ex-slave owners, northerners, southerners, urban professionals, rural farmers, tradesmen and ministers. The *Picayune* criticized the composition of the convention, characterizing it as a "motley crowd", of whom "the best that can be said is: that they are, by simplicity of ignorance, merely the tools of a knowing few."[8] The paper castigated the group as "strangers to the State and its people, brought in and set up in position by outside influences, and commissioned to do the will which dictates through a partisan caucus

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[5] *Tribune*, October 30, 1867.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *Tribune*, October 23, and November 28, 1867; Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction : War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 117 – 118.
[8] *Picayune*, November 21, 1867.

Black Delegates at the Constitutional Convention

last name	first name	parish	race	free/slve	occupation(s)	army
Antoine	Caesar C.	Caddo	B*	free	barber, grocer, lawyer, editor	Y
Bertonneau	E. Arnold	New Orleans (Third)	M*	free	merchant	Y
Blandin	Ovide C.	New Orleans (Third)	B	free	grocer	
Bonnefoi	Émile	West Baton Rouge	M	free	planter	Y
Bonseigneur	Henry G.	New Orleans (First)	M	free	merchant	
Brown	William	Iberville	M	free	editor, teacher	
Burrell	Dennis	St. Jean Baptiste	B	slave	blacksmith	
Butler	William	St.Helen	B	?	farmer	
Cromwell	Dr. Robert I.	New Orleans (Second)	B	free	doctor, editor	
Cuney	Samuel E.	Rapides	M	free	storekeeper, carpenter	
Deslonde	P. G.	Iberville	M	free	planter, editor	
Donato Jr.	Auguste	St. Landry	M	free	planter	
Dupart	Gustave	St.Tammany	?	?	?	
Dupart	Ulger	Terrebonne	?	?	?	
Esnard	J. B.	Ste. Mary	M	free	slaveowner	Y
Francois	Louis	East Baton Rouge	B	free	grocer	Y
Gair	John Gair	East Feliciana	M	slave	carpenter	
Gardner	R. G.	Jefferson	?	?	?	
Guichard	Leopold	St. Bernard	M	?	farmer	
ngraham	James H.	Caddo	M	slave	carpenter, editor	Y
sabelle	Robert H.	New Orleans (First)	M	free	clerk, dyer, police, lawyer, editor	Y
sabelle	Thomas	New Orleans (First)	M	free	storekeeper	Y
Kelso	George Y.	Rapides	M	free	editor	
Lange	Victor M.	East Baton Rouge	M	free	storekeeper	
Leroy	Charles	Natchitoches	M	free	shoemaker, storekeeper	
Lewis	Richard	West Feliciana	M	?	farmer	
Martin	Thomas M.	Jefferson	M	free	carpenter	
Massicot	Jules A.	New Orleans (Third)	M	free	?	
Meadows	William R.	Clairborne?	?	slave	farmer	Y
Morris	Milton	Ascension	B	?	businessman	
Moses	Solomon R.	New Orleans (First)	B	slave	laborer	
Murrell	William	Lafourche	B	free	minister, editor	
Myers	Theopile	West Baton Rouge	B	free	planter	
Oliver	Joseph C.	St. James	M	free	lawyer	Y
Pierce	John	Bossier	?	?	?	
Pinchback	P. B. S.	New Orleans (Second)	M	free	steward, editor, lawyer, bus.man	Y
Pointdexter	Robert	Assumption	B	?	farmer, businessman	Y
Pollard	Curtis	Franklin and Madison	B	slave	minister, farmer, storekeeper	
Riard	Fortuné	Lafayette	M	free	carpenter, merchant, agent, lawyer	
Riggs	D.D.	Washington	?	?	?	
Roberts	J. H. A.	Jefferson	?	?	?	
Rodriguez	Lazare A.	New Orleans (First)	M	free	shoemaker	Y
Scott	John	Winn	?	free	carpenter	y
Snaer	Sosthene L.	St. Martin	?	?	?	
Thibault	Charles A.	Plaquemines	M	free	farmer	
Tinchant	Edward	New Orleans (Second)	B	?	soldier	Y
Valfroit	P. F.	Ascension	M	?	teacher	
Villiams	Henderson	Franklin and Madison	B	?	farmer	?
Vilson	David	New Orleans (First)	?	free	barbershop	
B -- black						
M --mulatto						

Table II: Distribution of Original Resolutions Introduced by Delegates at the Constitutional Convention

Issues	**Resolutions**	**Percentage of all Resolutions**
Financial, economic	81	27.4
Procedural, rules	77	26.1
Voting rights	30	10.2
Civil, political, public rights	26	8.8
Delegate compensation	25	8.5
Printing	10	3.4
Labor, lands	7	2.7
Transitional government	7	2.4
Military	6	2.0
Judiciary	6	2.0
Marriage	5	1.7
Praising Congress	5	1.7
Education	4	1.3
Religion	3	1.0
Health	2	0.8

Table III: Black Votes on Specific Constitutional Articles

Black votes on specific constitutional articles

Last name	free/slave	occupation(s)	Article 2	Article 13	Article 97	Article 134	Article 98
Antoine	free	barber/grocer	?	y	y	y	n
Bertonneau	free	merchant	y	y	n	y	n
Blandin	free	grocer	y	y	y	y	n
Bonnefoi	free		y	y	n	y	n
Bonseigneur H	free	merchant	y	y	a	?	a
Brown	free		y	y	y	?	y
Burrell	slave	blacksmith	?	y	y	y	y
Butler	?		y	y	y	y	a
Cromwell	free	doctor	y	y	y	y	y
Cuney	free		y	y	?	?	n
Deslonde PG	free	sugar planter	y	y	n	a	y
Donato Jr.	free	son of planter	?	y	n	y	n
Dupart, G	?		y	y	n	y	?
Duparte, U	?		y	y	?-G	y	?
Esnard	free	slaveowner	y	y	n	y	y
Francois	free	grocer	y	y	n	y	y
Gair	free	carpenter	y	y	y	y	a
Gardner	?		y	a	y	y	y
Guichard	?	clerk	y	y	n	y	n
Ingraham	free	carpenter	y	y	y	y	y
Isabelle, R	free	clerk/dyer/police	y	y	y	y	y
Isabelle, T	free	business man	y	y	n	y	n
Kelso	free		y	y	y	y	n
Lange	free	property owner	y	y	n	y	y
Leroy	free	shoemaker	y	y	?	y	y
Lewis, R	?		y	?	y	y	y
Martin	free	carpenter	?	y	y	y	n
Masicot	free		?	y	y	y	y
Meadows	slave	farmer	y	y	y	y	y
Morris	?		a	y	?	y	y
Moses	slave	builder ?	y	y	y	y	y
Murrell	free	minister/publisher	?	y	a	y	y
Myers	free	planter	y	y	a	y	n
Oliver	free		y	y	?	y	y
Pierce	?		y	y	y	y	y
Pinchback	free	steward	y	y	y	y	n
Pointdexter	?		a	y	y	y	y
Pollard	?	minister/farmer	y	y	y	y	y
Riard	free	business man	y	y	n	y	n
Riggs	?		y	y	n	y	y
Roberts	?		y	a	?	a	a
Rodriguez	free	shoemaker	y	y	n	y	a
Scott	free	carpenter	y	y	y	y	?
Snaer	?		y	a	y	y	?
Thibault	free?	clerk	y	a	n	y	n
Tinchant	?	soldier	y	y	y	y	n
Valfroit	?		y	a	n	a	y
Williams	?		a	y	y	y	y
Wilson	free	barbershop	y	y	y	y	y
total vote: Y-N			70-0	35-31	58-16	61-12	44-30

from Washington."[9] The Democratic press in Louisiana further reported that the conservative members of Congress were anxious for the defeat of the "mongrel constitutions", claiming that President Johnson "openly expresses the same views" and abhors the possibility of endorsing "negro supremacy" constitutions.[10]

The exact racial distribution of delegates at the convention is difficult to ascertain, but evidence suggests that there were an equal number of black and white members. The earliest race count of the delegates came from the *Tribune*, which printed a list of the delegates two weeks before the convention was set to begin. The paper reported that there were forty-nine white delegates and forty-nine black delegates. In subsequent histories of the Reconstruction era the *Tribune*'s count has been challenged. For example, in 1910 in the *Journal of Negro History*, Alice Dunbar Nelson claimed that there were 44 colored and 54 white members. In 1930, A.E. Perkins claimed that there were 48 white delegates and 48 black delegates in his *Who's Who in Colored Louisiana.* Major studies of black participation in southern Reconstruction, such as W.E.B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* in 1935 and Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* in 1976, have repeated the *Tribune's* count of 49 delegates per the two races. Vincent published his own list of the black delegates at the convention, borrowing heavily from A.E. Perkins.

In 1984 Ted Tunnell claimed in *Crucible of Reconstruction* that the actual figure was fifty black members and forty-eight white members. Tunnell charged that the *Tribune* "deliberately miscounted" the delegates. He believed that the paper underreported the number of black delegates at the convention because the editors were alarmed over the charges of Africanization of the political process in the South. Tunnell further surmised that the *Tribune* was fearful that the southern press might harp on the fact of a black majority in the convention and negatively influence northern backing for radical Reconstruction. He pointed out that the *Tribune* never verified its initial calculation before the proceedings and reported that another contemporary account had

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[9] Ibid.
[10] *Picayune*, November 29, 1867.

concluded that the convention "was composed largely of colored delegates." [11] Eric Foner, the most prominent Reconstruction historian of the era, has accepted Tunnell's figure of fifty black delegates, and uses the number in his most recent work *Freedom's Lawmakers: Black Directory of Political Officeholders during Reconstruction.*[12]

Yet, *Tribune* editorials leading up to the convention indicate that there was little deference shown by the editors of the paper towards the southern press. The paper dismissed accusations of Africanization as "absurd" but agreed with the principle that "the most numerous race has to govern".[13] The *Tribune* criticized the "ventriloquism of the Northern Copperheads" and pointedly remarked to the southern press that it is "vain to think of overturning what has been done" and return to white supremacy.[14]

Evidence found in *Tribune* editor Jean Claude Houzeau's memoir also contradicts the notion that the paper *Tribune* "deliberately" misled the northern press. Houzeau, an influential radical from Europe, was the chief architect of the *Tribune*'s editorials during this period and probably the keenest observer of the black political class in Louisiana. In a private letter to his mother back in his native Belgium, Houzeau stated that the convention was composed of "98 members, with 9 pure blacks, 40 mulattoes of diverse colors, but light for the most part; and 49 whites."[15] The letter was dated December 3, 1867, ten days *after* the convention had begun.

Furthermore, George Jackson, identified by Ted Tunnell as a slave from Saint Landry, does not appear in the delegate counts of Vincent, Perkins, or the *Tribune*. Foner's *Black Directory* includes Jackson, but can only cite *Crucible of Reconstruction* as a source. Incidentally, in several entries for his *Black Directory*, Foner cites Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana during Reconstruction* as his only source. Yet, Vincent made several errors in his list, including incorrectly identifying James Lewis as a black.

Despite reviewing census records, contemporary reports, congressional testimonies and private correspondence, I have not been able to independently verify the

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[11] *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia*, 1867.
[12] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 113-115. Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders* (New York, 1993).
[13] *Tribune*, October 23, November 7.
[14] Ibid., November 10, 1867.
[15] Jean-Claude Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 142.

origins of four of the presumed colored members. Especially challenging has been identifying ex-slave delegates. Slaves were listed under their owner's name in the United States census up to 1870, and thus the historian needs to know the name of the slaveholder in order to locate the slave. Even presumed free men of color are often not found in the census records. Black testimonies before congressional committees have clarified some doubts concerning racial composition, but have also revealed the murkiness inherent in race identification in reconstruction Louisiana. For example, J.B. Esnard, identified as a black politician, testified that he was unaware if he indeed had any colored blood in his body.[16]

In four important ways the black delegates at the Louisiana constitutional convention were distinct from the black delegates at other southern constitutional conventions. For one, the black representation at the Louisiana convention was equal to that of whites. Meanwhile, of the over 1,000 delegates to constitutional conventions in the ex-confederate South between 1867-69, only 267 were black. Thus, overall blacks made just over a quarter of the representation at the assemblies.[17]

Second, ex-slaves were less of a presence at the Louisiana convention than they were at other constitutional conventions. Eric Foner theorized that the urban free elite in southern states took the initiative in the political organization of blacks immediately after the war, but that former slaves came to supplant much of the early leadership by 1867. While that scenario may have been the case in other ex-Confederate states, the paucity of freedmen representation at the constitutional convention shows that black political power at the state level in Louisiana remained in the hands of the freeborn elite. Though background information on some members is missing, Table 1 reveals that the majority of the black delegates, at least twenty-eight, were born free. Though free blacks constituted at least 4.3% of the total black population in Louisiana in 1860, they

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[16] U.S. Cong., *House Miscellaneous Documents,* 41st Congress, 2nd session, no. 154, pt 1, 698-699; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States* (Washington:1965), pages 053, 325, 340,346, 528, 542.

[17] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xvii-xxi. South Carolina was the only state in which black delegates at a constitutional convention actually outnumbered white delegates.

constituted over 57% of the black representation at the convention in 1867, and up to 88% of all members of unknown status were born free.[18]

Imbalance in representation within the black community is not surprising in light of the advantages that the free-born group had enjoyed relative to slaves in Louisiana. The 10,000 *gens de couleur* of New Orleans, for example, were a relatively prosperous and literate group, with marked autonomy vis-à-vis whites, and some experience in political organization. The 300,000 recently emancipated slaves, on the other hand, were mostly destitute, often dependent on whites for employment, and lacked the educational opportunities open to freeborn blacks. In all, only seven of the black delegates are confirmed as being born into slavery, and two of them, John Gair and James Ingraham, were legally free before the Civil War. Thus, there were roughly seven free men of color for every ex-slave at the convention.

Third, most of the Louisiana black delegates were not involved in agriculture. Foner states that "farmer" was the largest occupational category among the black officeholders in the south, accounting for 294 officials throughout the Reconstruction South. Yet, at the Louisiana constitutional convention only 12 of the 49 black delegates could be positively identified as farmers or planters. They were outnumbered by the thirteen black businessmen and the nineteen black professionals. The principal reason for the modest number of farmer-delegates was that few representatives came from the plantations of rural Louisiana.[19]

Fourth, unlike other southern states, black Louisiana leaders at the convention were not drawn principally from the church. A substantial occupational grouping of black politicians in the South during Reconstruction was that of minister. There were 237 religious leaders among the black Reconstruction officials and, according to Foner, most of the era's prominent black leaders emerged from the church. Yet scanning the list of black delegates at the Louisiana constitutional convention, only two ministers, Edwin Burrell and Curtis Pollard, are to be found. Furthermore, they were to play relatively minor roles at the convention.

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[18] Ibid., xvii-xxi

[19] Ibid., xvii-xxi; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 111 - 113.

Other professional occupations were better represented. At least four black delegates were editors (and several more would become editors) and at least three were lawyers. While teachers accounted for 172 black officeholders in the Reconstruction south, some of whom created schools for black children and used their literacy to assist the newly emancipated, only two teachers, P.F. Valfroit and William Brown, were found at the Louisiana convention.

In other ways, though, the black Louisiana delegates did resemble their counterparts in the southern constitutional conventions. Foner finds that many southern black politicians of the era were originally artisans. His generalization holds true for the black contingent at the Louisiana constitutional convention. Several skilled tradesmen were indeed at the proceedings, including five carpenters and two barbers. Not coincidentally, the *gens de couleur* population of New Orleans had an excellent reputation for skilled labor within the white community. Three ex-slaves and four freeborn black delegates were indeed Louisiana artisans. Foner concludes that the black artisans were either former slaves whose skill and relative independence accorded them high status in the slave community, or free blacks who had followed skilled trades before the Civil War.[20]

Many black officeholders in the South were businessmen, the majority of them barbers, grocers, tradesmen, and shop owners of the native free black middle class. Table 1 reveals that many of the black Louisiana delegates were also involved in business. At least thirteen of the delegates were merchants, grocers, storekeepers, or other types of businessmen. Most came from urban centers such as New Orleans and Baton Rouge and many, such as Caesar C. Antoine, counted whites among their prized clientele. More than a couple of the black delegates could claim expertise in several trades.[21]

Like their counterparts in the other southern conventions, many of the black members had served the Union forces during the Civil War. P.B.S. Pinchback, a light-

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[20] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xx.

[21] *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1965), 528.

skinned mulatto, originally enlisted as a private. A few months later he was assigned to recruit black soldiers and himself became a captain in the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards. Ceasar C. Antoine, a freeborn black, was a captain in a unit he raised himself, the 7th Louisiana infantry. James H. Ingraham, freed from slavery at age six, enlisted in the 1st Louisiana Native Guards and rose to the rank of captain, but resigned from the army in 1864 in the face of a purge of black officers. Robert H. Isabelle had enlisted in the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards but found that "the same prejudice" existed in the army as well in civilian life. Isabelle reenlisted though, and rose to the rank of second lieutenant. Robert's brother Thomas served as a first lieutenant in the seventh Louisiana Volunteers. Arnold Bertonneau was a captain in October 1862 in the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards. In 1864 he signed a petition to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton protesting unequal pay for black soldiers. In all, almost a third of the delegates, at least fifteen members, had military experience.[22]

The black delegates at the Louisiana constitutional convention were not political neophytes. Arnold Bertonneau, a free merchant from New Orleans, was one of two blacks who traveled to Washington to present a petition for black suffrage to President Lincoln. The petition led Lincoln to suggest to Louisiana governor Michael Hahn that the franchise be expanded to include an elite group from the black community. Robert Cromwell had played a prominent role at the January 1865 New Orleans convention that demanded black suffrage, and was a delegate to the September 1865 convention that founded the Republican party of Louisiana. At the June 1867 state Republican convention he spoke in favor of rebel land confiscation. Robert Isabelle played a leading role at the January 1865 New Orleans convention that demanded black suffrage and was present in September at the convention that created the Republican party in the state. In 1863 and 1864 P.B.S. Pinchback became involved in the movement for black suffrage centered in New Orleans. As early as November 1863 he spoke at a rally for political rights in the city. After the death of president Lincoln he left for Alabama, where he

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[22] Ibid., 8, 18, 113 – 115, 171; Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1976), 33,49; David Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, 40 (1974), 434.

spent two years speaking at black meetings and pressing for black education. After returning to Louisiana in 1867, Pinchback was elected to the constitutional convention.

Perhaps the most experienced politician among the black delegates was James H. Ingraham. Ingraham was a leading figure in the movement for equal rights spearheaded by New Orleans free blacks. He represented Louisiana at the national black convention that met in 1864 in Syracuse, New York. He served as president of the Progressive Union Association and was among those pressuring the treasury Department for a role in forming government policy in Louisiana. Ingraham was secretary of a mass meeting demanding suffrage in New Orleans in December in 1864, and the following month he was president of the convention of the Equal Rights League. In March 1865, he helped lead black protests against General Banks' labor system, which, he charged, "re-enslaves us." In 1865, he was also active in the Friends of Universal Suffrage and a delegate to the convention that founded the Louisiana Republican Party.[23]

Yet, for all the political experience these members may have amassed, the black delegation was without some of its leading politicians. Missing, for example, was James Lewis. From 1865 to 1870, Lewis organized schools for the Freedmen's Bureau. He also served as captain of the New Orleans police force and as a member of the board of police commissioners. The son of a white slaveowner and a slave woman, Lewis had met P.B.S. Pinchback when both were young men working on Mississippi steamboats and had raised two companies of black soldiers for the Union Army during the Civil War. Lewis served as captain in the 1st Louisiana Native Guards, but resigned because of General Bank's purge of black officers. Louis Charles Roudanez, the founder and proprietor of the *Tribune* was also absent from the convention. Also missing was Antoine Dubuclet, the son a prosperous free black sugar planter. One of the wealthiest free blacks in the South, he owned $100,000 worth of property on the eve of the Civil War, and more than one hundred slaves. Dubuclet was also a leading figure at the January 1865 convention in New Orleans that demanded black suffrage.[24]

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[23] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 113-114; Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," 426.

[24] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 65; Rankin, "The Impact of Civil War on the Free Colored Community of Louisiana," *Perspectives in American History,* 11 (1978), 393.

Most notable, however, was the absence of Oscar J. Dunn. Dunn was president of the December 1864 mass meeting regarding suffrage in New Orleans, played a prominent role in the January 1865 black suffrage convention, and was present at the founding convention of the state Republican Party in September 1865. He was also active in the New Orleans Freedmen's Association, establishing early in 1865 to assist former slaves in leasing plantations. Dunn also served as an investigating agent for the Freedmen's Bureau and secretary of the advisory committee to the Freedman's Savings Bank in New Orleans. In 1866, he established an employment agency to find jobs for laborers with "fair employers." In 1867 Dunn was appointed by General Philip Sheridan to the New Orleans Board of Aldermen, and then as president of the board of metropolitan police. Dunn ran for a seat in the Constitutional Convention in New Orleans's fourth district, but was defeated by P.B.S. Pinchback.[25]

In the months leading up to the Constitutional Convention there was some friction between prominent black leaders, most notably Dunn and Pinchback. Dunn, the most recognized *gens de couleur* political leader, was heavily backed by Roudanez and his *Tribune*, but saw his position challenged by Pinchback at the Louisiana Republican convention in September. Through Dunn, Roudanez had hoped to unify and solidify diverse black elements in Louisiana. Dunn had the advantage of calling on his own experiences as a slave to appeal directly to the freedmen. He did not suffer the disconnection with the masses that afflicted the wealthy and educated Roudanez. Pinchback, elected vice-president of the June Republican convention, did not have the same close ties with the *gens de couleur* and did not receive much recognition from the *Tribune*. (During the Constitutional Convention Pinchback would be more often praised by the *Daily Picayune* than the *Tribune.)* In addition, Pinchback did not share Dunn's deep suspicions of white radicals and disagreed with the *gens de couleur* that any black could do a better job of representing black interests than any white man. In short, Pinchback was one of the least radical black representatives. With the exception of

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[25] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 65, 67; Vincent, *Black Legislators*, 41. Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 76; Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, 47, 74 n

Pinchback and one other delegate, all the black leaders at the Republican convention, including Dumas, were *gens de couleur* and friendly with Dunn.[26]

Dunn's absence from the convention in New Orleans would mean the loss of a strong and influential voice for Louisiana freedmen during the proceedings. Dunn was active in helping protect freedmen from the unfair labor practices often used by white planters and was influential in convincing the *Tribune* to take up the plight of the newly emancipated slaves. In his place would be Pinchback, a conciliator (some would claim an opportunist) not so willing to challenge white delegates.

The Performance of the Black Delegates at the Convention

The strident editorials of the *Tribune* leading up to the opening of the constitutional convention made it clear that the 'pure' Radicals felt they had a realistic opportunity to control the proceedings. "We [blacks] have more than the ballot; we compose a majority in the state, and with the help of our Radical friends, we compose a majority in the Convention. We are, therefore, able to make the law." In order to realize their goal, the *Tribune* realized, it would be imperative for the black delegates to show "an undivided front on every important question."[27]

Yet, there were indications from the beginning of the convention that the pure Radicals would have difficulty establishing their dominance. On the second day of the proceedings a resolution was proposed that would have obliged all subordinate members of the convention to be drawn equally from the two races. The measure was in line with *Tribune* demands that officers for the convention be equally selected by both races. Yet, the resolution was opposed by Robert Cromwell, a black physician outside the *Tribune*'s circle of influence. Cromwell, who once claimed that mulattos were "unfit to be his public associates," joined a white delegate in calling for the "best qualified" delegates regardless of race. Furthermore, on a subsequent motion to elect a permanent president of the convention, only whites were nominated.[28] *Gens de couleur* would have little success in containing strong dissident African-American voices during the convention.

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[26] Clara Campbell, "The Political Life of Louisiana Negroes, 1865-1890," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1971), 54 -55.

[27] *Tribune*, October 30, 1867.

[28] *Daily Picayune*, November 26, 1867; Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 53.

Procedural rules and regulations were obviously important to a relatively inexperienced group of black politicians sitting down to frame a state constitution in the aftermath of tremendous social, political, and economic upheaval. The prospect of formal debate must have been especially intimidating to the uneducated former slave fresh from the farm. The initial fumbling of the members, both black and white, can be seen in the lack of rhythm or reason to the great diversity of resolutions they proposed in the early days of the convention. The first sessions are dotted with, among other things, invitations to judges, military commanders, and clergy to view the proceedings, as well as calls for copies to be made of United States laws and previous Louisiana constitutions. The lugubrious manner in which the assembly lurched towards the pressing matters of the day irked some members. By the sixth session W. Jasper Blackburn, a white editor, implored the convention to "dispense with minor business" and get to the task of framing a constitution.[29]

To be fair, the early days of the convention were used for the formation of committees to develop specific aspects of the constitution or to deal with expenses and other matters related to the convention. Many of the early resolutions were referred to one of the committees for discussion. Blacks were well represented on the various committees. For instance, the Committee on the Militia had seven black members, including the chairman P.B.S. Pinchback. Five blacks served on the Committee to Draft a Bill of Rights and its chairman was also black, James H. Ingraham. The Committee on Contingent Expenses also had a black chairman. Four blacks served on the Committee of Public Education and five sat on the Committee of Thirteen on Rules and Regulations.

The express goal of the convention was to frame a constitution that would allow Louisiana to be readmitted into the Union. In order to attain their objective, the delegates would be obliged to include a bill of rights embodying the principles of the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments. In other words, members were being asked to guarantee the civil and political equality of blacks in a state that had recently ended a brutal war designed to keep large segments of the black population in perpetual slavery.

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[29] *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention for Framing a Constitution for the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1868), 16. (Herein cited as *Official Journal*)

As expected, there were differing points of view as to how best to define and incorporate black civil and political rights in Louisiana. Moderate and progressive points of view ultimately crystallized into two separate constitutional drafts being filed by the Committee to Draft a Constitution. Unfortunately, no printed debates accompanied the constitution, but the two drafts help identify the major lines of contention during the convention. The majority report, the more conservative of the two documents, was written by Rufus Waples, William Cooley and four other white delegates. The minority report was sponsored by James Ingraham, and three fellow black delegates: J.H.A. Roberts, P.F. Valfroit, and Charles Leroy. The two reports served as the battleground for the conservative and liberal factions within the convention. Their specific articles became center points of debate on such contentious issues as civil rights, disfranchisement, and education.[30]

Table 2 provides a reminder that the immediate and grim task of reconstructing Louisiana often took precedence over the designated objective of framing a constitution. Given the dire financial plight of the state, general economic and financial provisions were frequently offered and discussed at great length. Many of these resolutions would not make their way into either the majority or the minority reports and thus were never a part of the final constitution. Similarly, distrust of entrenched local officials (and some military leaders), prompted the Republican delegates to seek ways of securing voting procedures. Numerous were the calls for disfranchising "disloyal" officers, setting up a temporary legislature, and registering "loyal" voters. Of course, political self-interest also motivated delegates to speak of voting rights at length. The representatives were fully aware of the resentment that the convention, in particular, and the Reconstruction acts, in general, had provoked among the white populace in the state. Enfranchising large numbers of ex-confederates would lead to defeat on ratification day for the constitution and imperil their individual political careers.

The number of times a topic was introduced in a resolution did not necessarily reflect its importance to the delegates. Many of the resolutions dealing with rules and regulations were innocuous and uncontested demands or requests for existing or proposed

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[30] The majority report begins on page 84. The minority report begins on page 96.

legislation. Inversely, resolutions relating to concubinage and education were few in number, but were often pursued and attacked with great fervor.

Both constitutional drafts offered a Bill of Rights, a section never before included in a Louisiana constitution, the minority report went much further to define and protect civil rights. For instance, while article two of the minority report stipulated "that all men are born equal," and that governments "are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," the majority report did not expressly acknowledge even that basic premise.[31] Article eleven of the minority report stipulated that the rights of citizens to travel "shall not be infringed", yet the majority report ignored the issue altogether. Ingraham and his black colleagues also felt free to address diverse social and economic issues not touched upon by their white counterparts. The black authors mandated that children "bound out" to masters during the war should be returned to their parents. They also stipulated that no public assistance was to be allotted to charities that practiced racial discrimination, and there was to be no imprisonment on account of debt. Other issues found in the minority report included provisions for free elections, subordinating the military to the civil authority, and a ban on out-of-state trials for Louisiana prisoners. The majority report did contain a unique clause of its own, however. It ordered that "no law shall be passed regulating labor and fixing the price thereof. [32]

Much debate centered on Article 1 of both reports, which stated that "all persons, without regard to race, color, or previous condition, born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the state."[33] The minority report, however, contained a provision for the protection of "public" rights, including some provisions for social equality, while the majority report would only go so far as to mention civil and political rights. The white conservative William Cooley complained that he could not understand "the idea of a private individual exercising public rights."[34]

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[31] *Official Journal*, 84, 96
[32] Ibid., 86, 96-97.
[33] Ibid., 84, 96.
[34] Ibid., 116 –117.

What Cooley and other conservatives did understand however, is that enshrining black public rights was a step towards the feared prospect of social equality between the races. The Democratic press in Louisiana covering the convention was quick to pounce on this issue and stir up white agitation. "Exciting Discussion on Social Equality" was the lead for a *Daily Picayune* article summarizing a day's debate on the Bill of Rights. George Ferguson, a white conservative, attempted to table Robert Isabelle's amendment introducing "public" rights in the constitution. Blacks were sensitive enough about charges that they were legislating social equality for Robert Cromwell to feel compelled to declare to the convention that "we do not expect social rights." [35] Despite the apprehension, Isabelle's amendment calling for public rights did carry, and thus the minority article defining state citizenship prevailed.[36]

Considering the difficulty of ensuring black civil, political, and public equality in a populace largely determined to keep blacks in a subordinate, if not dependent, position, it is striking how little the rights of the vulnerable ex-slaves were the subject of resolutions in the convention. Despite the on-going upheaval associated with the freeing of hundreds of thousands of black slaves, the delegates would refer to the rights of freedmen specifically in a total of only six resolutions.[37] Caesar C. Antoine was one of the few black delegates to refer to the plight of the ex-slaves in Louisiana. On December 27 Antoine referred to the "gross injustice and persecution" of the freedmen at the hands of the former rebels and slaveholders, and proposed uniting with constitutional conventions in Alabama and Virginia in order to petition Congress for the continuance of the Freedmen's Bureau. His motion was later adopted by the convention.[38]

Ironically enough, if there was any real champion of the black underclass in Louisiana at the convention it was most likely a white delegate, Frederic Marie. A white hotelkeeper from France, he was virtually alone in his calls for instruction and protection for the freedmen. He implored the delegates on December 19 to provide "some instructions . . . to the laboring classes, appraising them of their rights and duties, and

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[35] *Picayune*, December 28.
[36] *Official Journal*, 115-116.
[37] See resolutions on December 6, 19, 27 and 28, January 13, and February 18.
[38] *Official Journal*, 115.

giving them useful advice."[39] Towards that end, Marie proposed setting up a committee whose duty it would be to explain to the freedmen "the best means of securing their rights and protecting their interests."[40] Nine days later Marie proposed that the new Louisiana legislature "regulate and secure the rights and privileges of laborers" in order to ensure that they be fully paid for their crops.[41] Perhaps Marie's European formation enabled him to rise above the racism of his white American counterparts and the social detachment that many *gens de couleur* felt vis-a-vis the freedmen.

It is perhaps understandable that many of the white delegates would be hesitant to champion civil and political equality for blacks. For prejudiced whites, even Republicans, the potential leap from civil and political equality to social equality appeared imminent and threatening. Democratic papers also reinforced deeply held racial prejudices by warning of the hated specter of black men marrying white women. Added to that was a threatening political dimension. Some white politicians feared being usurped by the up-and-coming black politician. One Republican organizer expressed the fear that "The Union men are getting apprehensive that they will be overthrown by the negroes."[42]

It is perhaps less understandable that black delegates would be so cavalier towards the plight of their newly emancipated brothers. The *gens de couleur's* apparent lack of concern for freedmen's rights during Reconstruction has prompted some historians to question their commitment to the freedmen. David Rankin and Loren Schweninger, in particular, have emphasized disparities between the two groups in Louisiana. Indeed, as Eric Foner has pointed out, only a handful of black Reconstruction officials were actively involved in efforts to assist freedmen in acquiring land or advocated confiscation of the land of ex-Confederates. Many black officials agreed with the prevailing "free labor" attitudes of nineteenth-century America that pointed to individual initiative, and not public assistance, as the route to economic gain and upward social standing. Free blacks from both North and South, many of whom had achieved great success despite the

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[39] Ibid., 81.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 117.
[42] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 129.

obstacles thrown in front of them, expressed most forcefully the idea of competitive equality, without direct government economic assistance. At the Republican convention in Louisiana, Oscar Dunn had attempted to shield vulnerable freedmen by speaking against the adoption of a proposition advocating the confiscation of lands belonging to ex-rebels: he was afraid that such a proposal might spark a backlash by white planters against poor black laborers. Dunn suggested that blacks did not need land distribution in order to thrive. Thus, Article 11 of the majority report stated that "no law shall be passed regulating labor and fixing the price thereof" passed with the help of P.B.S. Pinchback and other influential black leaders.[43]

If Oscar Dunn was reluctant to provide public assistance to the freedmen, it is little wonder that a Dunn-less black delegation would provide virtually nothing in the way of concrete aid to ex-slaves. The *gens de couleur* were not unaware of the freedmen's priorities. A survey of Louisiana rural blacks in 1864 reported that education and labor relations mattered more to them than politics. Commonly reported objectives were: to end the separation of families, to eliminate flogging, to educate black children, to end abusive labor, and to receive reasonable wages for work performed.[44] Before the convention had begun, the *Tribune* had pledged to aid freedmen: "The emancipated will find, in the old freemen, friends ready to guide them to spread upon them the light of knowledge, and teach them their duties as well as their rights. But, at the same time, the freemen will find in the recently liberated slaves a mass to uphold them; and with this mass behind them they will command the respect always bestowed to number and strength."[45] At one juncture in the convention, George Wickliffe, a radical white, did indeed introduce a measure intended to assist the freedmen in purchasing land. The assembly approved the first half of the proposal, requiring the subdivision of all lands sold by the courts into small 10-to-50 acre tracts. It rejected, however, the critical second half of the article, which restricted any person or company from buying over 150 acres at a sale. As such, the numerous land-holding delegates would be free to snatch up large quantities of land. In sum,, little land would ultimately be available for purchase. Blacks

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[43] Ibid., 55 – 56; Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xxvi-xxvii. *Official Journal*, 120.
[44] Joe G. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed: 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 38.

accounted for thirty-six of the fifty-five delegates on the floor; the black majority voted twenty-five to eleven against the 150-acre restriction. Professor Tunnell has concluded that the black votes revealed a "damaging dim-sightedness of the freedmen's interests," an accurate assessment, but the actions reflected the narrow and parsimonious economic philosophy of the day.[46]

Discussions of black "rights" rarely centered on economic issues relating to freedmen and were more likely to touch on transportation, and integrated schooling -- issues closer to the *gens de couleur*. Many common carriers and places of business either refused to serve blacks or relegated them to inferior accommodations despite federal laws. A common experience of black travelers, including congressmen and state officials, was being refused service in a first-class railroad car or steamboat cabin, and being forced to ride in the "smoking car" or on deck. Many black officials did not accept passively being refused equal access to public facilities. In 1871 P.B.S. Pinchback sued the New Orleans, Mobile, and Chattanooga Railroad for denying him sleeping car accommodations. Black officials devoted considerable effort to the passage of national and state anti-segregation legislation.[47]

Thus, not surprisingly, the *gens de couleur* were the driving force behind the adoption of article thirteen of the Bill of Rights, ensuring the right to travel freely on common carriers. P.B.S. Pinchback proposed that "the right of all persons to travel on the common carriers and be entertained at all places of a public character" not be infringed.[48] Robert Ingraham expanded Pinchback's resolution by proposing that all "business places" requiring a license from the state also be non-discriminatory. Though Ingraham's amendment was tabled, Pinchback supported the notion that businesses be deemed "public places" and thus be opened to all. Supported by white delegates such as George Wickliffe and Stephan Packard, Pinchback was ultimately successful in broadening his original resolution to include non-discriminatory access to businesses. Judge Cooley, reflecting the guarded stance of conservatives towards black civil rights,

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[45] *Tribune*, December 27, 29, 1864.
[46] *Official Journal*, 266; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 133.
[47] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xxvii-xxviii.
[48] *Official Journal*, 121.

unsuccessfully moved to amend the article by inserting that was "not intended to give any greater rights and privileges to colored persons than are now enjoyed by white persons."[49]

Integrated schooling was a contentious issue close to the hearts of the *gens de couleur*. While blacks and whites agreed on the principle of publicly funded schools, the prospect of racial integration in the schools provoked passionate reaction among conservative whites. Conservatives in the convention seemed fearful of the reaction that an integrated school system would provoke among the white citizens. George Dearing complained that the minority article would have a "demoralizing influence" on Louisianans. The majority report on education had only called for the establishment of free public schools throughout the state for all children. Implicit was a denial of the principle of mandated school segregation. The minority report however, called for the creation of at least one free public school in every parish and "no separate schools" in the state. Unified black voting carried the minority version of the article to adoption. Judging from the numerous recorded protests to the minority article, no other issue in the convention spurred such passionate dissension. William McMillen, for one, claimed that the article would defeat the organization of a common school system in Louisiana. Presumably, he assumed that white parents would simply refrain from sending their children to school with blacks. George Snider warned that the article's adoption would result in the defeat of the constitution on the day of ratification. The only black to record his reason for voting in the affirmative was Thomas Martin. He claimed that the article would "elevate and enrich" the black community" [50]

One reason that both black and white delegates were reluctant to champion black rights overtly is that doing so could lead to serious personal repercussions. Violence and intimidation were omnipresent features of post-Civil War southern society, and the most serious danger confronting Reconstruction officials. No fewer than 156 black officials – over ten percent of the total in the South– were victimized by violence, generally by the Ku Klux Klan, White League, and other organizations allied with the Democratic party. John Gair, a black Louisiana delegate, would be murdered by a mob within a year of the

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[49] Ibid., 122-125.
[50] Ibid., 200-201.

convention. Thirty-four black officeholders were murdered in the South, most during Reconstruction, but a few after the South's "Redemption". While white officials were less prone than blacks to be victims of violence they were routinely targets of social and economic ostracism by other whites.[51]

Cognizant of the hostility towards the "black and tan" convention, the first resolution at the Louisiana convention dealing with race relations was an attempt to refute the notion that the delegates were bent on Africanizing the state:

Resolved, that the delegates to this convention, as the direct and legal representatives of the Radical Republican party, and as the true friends of the colored race, do hereby utterly repudiate all desire for class legislation and all desire to Africanize the state of Louisiana, and that we do not, as a people or party, desire or mediate, nor will we countenance bloodshed or revenge. [52]

Judging from table 2, financial issues garnered much more attention at the convention than did civil rights. The multitude of resolutions and ordinances dealing with financial issues were diverse and far-reaching. While some dealt with broad issues such as taxation schemes, state expenditures and revenues, many dealt with fixing the delegates' travel allowance and paying the Convention's clerks. In light of the tremendous devastation in the South after the Civil War, it is not surprising that numerous financial measures were introduced by delegates in the hopes of providing means of immediate financial relief for the citizens of Louisiana. To this end Thomas Cromwell, the black physician representing New Orleans' second district, introduced a measure early in the Convention that called for repudiation of all debts incurred by the rebellious Confederate state of Louisiana. Cromwell's resolution would be echoed a couple of days later by two white delegates and would find its way into the constitution.[53]

Of course repudiation of the Confederate debt would not bring new funds into Louisiana's coffers, so several delegates urged for petitions to be sent to Congress asking

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[51] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xxviii.
[52] *Official Journal*, 9.

for direct financial relief. Judge Cooley, a white lawyer representing West Baton Rouge, called for the Convention to endorse a measure emanating from Georgia's constitutional convention asking for a $30 million loan from the federal government towards rebuilding the South. White delegates, such as George Reagan from West Baton Rouge Parish and W. Jasper Blackburn representing Claiborne Parish, introduced similar resolutions asking Congress for aid in the guise of grants. Black delegates were not the initiators of these demands for federal aid, but were not impassive observers either. Henry Bonseigneur of New Orleans asked that the state make a proper accounting of its actual debt and expenses and Thomas Isabelle, also of New Orleans, urged Congress either to repeal or modify the cotton tax.[54]

Several of the black delegates took the initiative in introducing measures to create a new tax system for the state. Dennis Burrell, a former slave representing St. John the Baptist Parish, advocated a property tax while Thomas Martin, a free man of color from Jefferson Parish, called for legislation to tax farmers. In a move to provide relief for small farmers, Edward Tinchant of New Orleans urged that no taxes be levied on properties less than sixty acres. James Ingraham also proposed specific property exemptions.[55]

One proposal to raise revenue for the future Louisiana government was to issue state bonds. Blackburn, a white delegate from Claiborne Parish, was successful in having his resolution adopted to issue bonds at an annual rate of interest of 8%. Black delegates proposed additional means of contributing to the state coffers. David Wilson, a black barber from New Orleans, urged that the state license a lottery and James Ingraham suggested a 50-cent liquor tax to help defray the expenses of the Convention.[56]

One omnipresent topic in which both races were equally interested was the issue of monetary compensation for their services at the Convention. It is striking to note that of the one hundred and seven finance-related resolutions introduced by members of the Convention, almost a quarter of them dealt in some way or another with delegates'

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[53] *Official Journal*, 54, 59.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 38, 54, 112.
[56] Ibid., 25, 34, 130.

remuneration or with compensation for support staff at the Convention. While members would eventually settle on a *per diem* of $13 per day and 20 cents a mile, the issue was hotly contested throughout the session as members attempted to reduce or suspend the allowance.

For delegates whose businesses were routinely shunned by white southerners, or who found themselves too far away from their parishes to tend to their plantations, the *per diem* allowed by the Convention may have been insufficient compensation for lost revenues. Most black property holders were men of relatively modest incomes and often precarious economic standing. The combination of a decline in southern property values, the advent of black and, in some states, poorer white officials, and the exclusion of the old elite from political power produced a drastic fall in the wealth of southern officeholders. The median wealth of northern-born whites in the Reconstruction constitutional conventions was about $3,500, of southern-born white delegates $3400, and of blacks, $650.[57] Still, political office was a better way for many blacks to advance their economic standing than laboring in the postwar southern economy. The thirteen dollars *per diem* earned by the members of the Louisiana constitutional convention far outstripped the wages most blacks could ordinarily command, and offices like sheriff garnered far higher rewards in commissions and fees.[58]

Some of the calls for compensation at the convention smacked of outright greediness. For example, in the last few days of the convention a flurry of resolutions made their way to the floor to provide financial compensation for delegates and others affiliated with the proceedings. George Ferguson, white, and a former sergeant of police in New Orleans introduced a resolution asking for $2,000 in redeemable warrants to be issued to each member of the convention. When his motion was dismissed as ridiculous, he then asked to give each delegate $500 as a reward for their "good behavior" during the convention. While much less extravagant calls for additional compensation were also rebuffed, clerks, special messengers and the Sergeant-at-Arms all were rewarded with

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[57] Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xxvi-xv
[58] Ibid.

substantial payments. The black delegate Robert Isabelle even proposed rewarding certain reporters $100 for their "impartial reports" during the convention.[59]

One of the most contentious issues during the convention was disfranchisement. Debate on the subject centered primarily on the voting rights of ex-confederates. Article 96 of the majority report permanently disfranchised all leaders or officers of "guerrilla bands" during the Civil War from voting and restricted them from holding office in the state. Members of secession conventions who voted for or signed the ordinance of secession and politicians who "approved or encouraged" secession were barred from voting or holding office in Louisiana until January 1878. Cooley, Ludeling, and other white conservatives put forward a statement declaring article 96 as "the most liberal proposition" favorable to the Convention. Stephen B. Packard attempted to expand the scope of voting prohibitions by including local, state, and federal officials who had "given aid or comfort" to the Confederates, but his motion was lost. Favoring leniency, William Cooley countered Packard's motion by proposing to limit disfranchisement to high-ranking civil and military officials of the confederacy. Cooley's amendment was lost by a single vote. W. Jasper Blackburn suggested that a direct oath be administered to persons proscribed from voting by the federal constitution, but his motion floundered. A small minority of whites and blacks even came within a few votes of winning approval for a motion granting universal amnesty to ex-confederates. On January 28 article 96 was adopted as article 98 of the Louisiana constitution.[60]

A month later Stephen Packard attempted to tighten voting restrictions on ex-confederates. Though his efforts were initially rebuffed, Rufus Waples was successful in convincing the convention that ex-confederates wishing to vote should sign their name to a statement declaring the late rebellion "morally and politically wrong". Packard proposed tagging to the Waples amendment those who aided in the state's reconstruction. It was adopted.[61]

It is clear that black delegates were uneasy about disfranchising large numbers of ex-confederates. They sought to balance their belief in the principle of universal suffrage

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[59] *Official Journal*, 279-281.
[60] Ibid., 175-183.

with their desire to uphold federal laws enshrining their new civil and political status. P.B.S. Pinchback voted against Waples' amendment to article 98 because he believed that "two-thirds of the colored men of this State do not desire disfranchisement to such a great extent." [62] Other black delegates hoped that the voting restrictions would be temporary. P.F. Valfroit, for instance, voted for the amendment despite his misgivings about disfranchisement: "I have voted yes, not with the intention of disfranchising anybody, but to support the 14t[h] amendment of Congress, in expecting to see the disability soon removed by Congress."[63] Yet, the black delegates were also reluctant to enfranchise ex-confederates unwilling to abide by federal laws. Robert Cromwell, in particular, was instrumental in mandating acceptance of the Fourteenth Amendment as a prerequisite to voting rights.[64]

Black politicians were not so reticent about protecting their voting base however. When Rufus Waples proposed to restrict the vote to those who could "read and write", a measure that would have disfranchised large numbers of illiterate ex-slaves, the black delegates moved quickly. They voted as a block to defeat the resolution.[65]

Article 97 of the majority report called for state, parish, and municipal officers to swear to "support the Constitution and laws of the United States." The minority report, however, called for the officers to affirm that they had neither voluntarily borne arms against the United States nor voluntarily supported the confederate government. While the more stringent provisions of the minority report were discarded, Stephen Packard was successful in having the convention adopt a motion that offices accept the civil and political equality of all men.[66]

Table 3 contains a list of black voting on some of the more important issues of the convention. The voting patterns of the black delegates confirm that they were unified on issues of civil, political, public, and educational rights, but were divided on the issue of disfranchisement. The first category pertains to the adoption of article 2 of title 1 of the

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[61] Ibid., 258-259.
[62] Ibid., 259.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 175, 179.
[65] Ibid., 92, 176.
[66] Ibid., 183.

Bill of Rights, which had been amended to include the term "public rights." In this vote, as with most issues pertaining to civil rights, the black delegates voted as a block and were instrumental in the article's adoption. The second category alludes to the voting on article 13 of the constitution, which called for equal rights and privileges while traveling in Louisiana and for all public places to receive patrons free of discrimination. Again, the black delegates voted as a unified bloc, without a single dissension. The third category, that of education, deals with article 97 of the constitution. In this article, delegates were asked to support the principle of integrated schools. Once again not a single black dissented, though twelve white delegates did.

Articles 134 and 98, dealing with disfranchisement, proved more divisive for the black delegates. Article 134 proscribed from voting "those disfranchised by this constitution." Article 98 took the vote away from guerrilla leaders, Confederate officials who had held office at least a year, as well as others, but allowed them to regain their voting rights upon a written acknowledgment of the illegality and immorality of the rebellion. All ex-slaves voted for the proscription, perhaps fueled by the fear that a resurgent ex-confederate class might once again usurp black rights. Prominent *gens de couleur* proved more reluctant than the freedmen to adopt a harsh disfranchisement article. P.B.S. Pinchback did not believe that the majority of blacks in Louisiana would support the measure.

Interestingly enough, Pinchback was the object of substantial praise from the *Daily Picayune*. Perhaps sensing a divide between Pinchback and the *Tribune*, the *Picayune* may have been trying to facilitate a rapprochement between moderate Republicans and the black leader. Clara Campbell has surmised that "compromising" Republicans were appealing to Pinchback in order to enhance their status with the black masses. White Radicals began to praise him through the *Republican,* says Campbell, while the *Tribune* ignored his southern birth and labeled him as an interloper from Ohio.[67]

There is additional evidence that Pinchback and moderate Republicans were forging closer ties – to the chagrin of the *Tribune*. When the requirement for governorship came to the floor, Pinchback was instrumental in moving that the

convention accept twenty-one years as the minimum age permissible for the office. Henry Warmoth, foe of the *Tribune,* was now the darling of a new liberal newspaper, the *New Orleans Republican*, that was challenging the *Tribune's* role as the voice of radicalism in the state. Warmoth would be a strong candidate for governor were it not that he was only twenty-five years of age, too young to become governor of Louisiana under the state constitution of 1864. When Robert Isabelle countered Pinchback's motion and moved to amend the age to twenty-eight years, Pinchback succeeded in getting the amendment tabled.[68]

Shortly thereafter the Republican party met in New Orleans to hold the state nominating convention. Francis Dumas, a *gens de couleur* and favorite of the *Tribune*, was actually leading the balloting after the first round of votes. On the second ballot, Warmoth picked up six more votes than did Dumas and won the nomination forty-five to forty-three. The final tally represented a missed opportunity for the *Tribune* to place one of its own at the head of the Louisiana government and climaxed an estrangement between the paper and the mainstream Republican party. Supporters of the *Tribune* and the *Republican* had been feuding on the convention floor for months. The *Tribune* had been chosen the official printer for the convention early in the proceedings, but supporters of the *Republican* had been attempting to wrestle that status away from Dr. Roudanez`s group. Soon after Warmoth`s victory, the *Tribune* lost its official status as the Republican organ of the state and was shut down by the end of the year.[69]

Aftermath

At the end of the convention, three and one half months later, the delegates had produced a constitution that has been deemed the "most radical" of any of the Reconstruction constitutions and "magnificent" in its liberal principles. The constitution of 1868 laid the foundations upon which most features of basic government in Louisiana are built by stressing human rights principles "of originality and grandeur." It provided for public schools, a state militia, and the collection of taxes; defined the qualifications

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[67] Campbell, "The Political Life of Louisiana Negroes, 1865 – 1890," 64 - 65.
[68] *Official Journal*, 143-144.
[69] F. Wayne Binning, "Carpetbagger's Triumph: The Louisiana State Elections of 1868," *Louisiana History*, 14 (1978), 34.

for voting; and established procedures for impeachment and revising the constitution. The Louisiana constitution of 1868 was the first in the state's history to include a Bill of Rights. It asserted the equality of all men and guaranteed every citizen, irrespective or race or color, "equal rights and privileges" on public transportation and in licensed "places of business, or public resort." It required all public officials to accept by oath, the "civil and political equality of all men," thereby opening new avenues for black political participation, enfranchised male citizens (except disfranchised rebels) over the age of twenty-one, compelled the state to establish public schools open equally to white and black children, and prohibited any segregated state institution of learning. The section on schools and public accommodations was "ahead of its time."[70]

The Bill of Rights was largely a result of the crafting and tenacity of James Ingraham and the civil rights program in general was mainly the achievement of the free blacks. Blacks only held three of the thirteen chairmanships at the convention, yet when the black delegates voted as a bloc, as the T*ribune* had encouraged them to do, they indeed controlled the proceedings. On more divisive issues black unity dissipated and moderates were able to assert their influence.

The *Tribune* and its *gens de couleur* delegates had also made some costly miscalculations. For one, the "help of our Radical friends" would not be so forthcoming. Apart from the visible support of George Wickliffe and a small number of liberal Republicans, too much distrust and friction between "pure" and "compromising" Republicans had been created -- as evidenced by the fighting between supporters of the *Tribune* and the *Republican.* Furthermore, moderate white Republicans had made successful overtures to the more temperate black leaders.

The "pure" radicals simply lacked the political clout to sway all black members of the assembly. Only two blacks recognized as "pure" by the *Tribune* had won election to the constitutional convention. With both Oscar Dunn and Dr. Roudanez on the sidelines, the *gens de couleur* simply did not have their most important leaders at the convention. As for freedmen, few from their community were elected delegates to the convention, so

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[70] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 117 - 118; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 151 - 155; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 319; William E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York,

they could hardly expect that "forty acres and a mule" would become a top legislative priority. Without Dunn, freedmen did not have a persuasive advocate for their causes at the convention. With the loss of the governorship to Warmoth, the emergence of Pinchback as a powerbroker, and the end of official status, the *Tribune*`s influence had fallen considerably.

1935), 467.

CONCLUSION

Radical black leaders found it more difficult to exert much influence in the more normal electoral politics initiated by the Reconstruction acts of 1867. They struggled to win elective office, proving to be better agitators than pragmatic politicians. By 1868, they lost control of the Republican party to a coalition of white carpetbaggers and American black leaders. Since less than 30 percent of the city's population was black from 1860 to 1900, no district had a black majority to provide a secure voting base for their candidates. Furthermore, the large mass of black voters in Louisiana lived outside of New Orleans. Particularly in the south Louisiana sugar parishes, where French-speaking Catholic slaves had been concentrated, a few New Orleans blacks managed to find an electoral base, but not many, it seems, wished to uproot themselves from their urban homes and life-styles to seek office in the isolated countryside. Some black leaders from New Orleans managed to win major statewide positions.[1]

Cooperation in the crusade for black suffrage dissipated as free blacks distrusted the motives of their white partners. Many blacks felt that carpetbaggers were simply using black suffrage as a device to catapult themselves into political power. While some free blacks fell in line, Roudanez and a small group of free blacks chose to contest the carpetbagger ascendancy. The Roudanez faction had become so embittered by white domination of the party and alleged neglect of social and civil equality that they formed an opposition ticket to defeat the regular Republican candidate, Henry Warmoth.[2] Though small in number, the white Unionists were crucial to the future of the Republican party in central and northern Louisiana, and as a group they demonstrated a notable lack of sympathy for such "Radical" notions as the civil rights of blacks. One Republican organizer expressed fear that "The Union men are getting apprehensive that they will be thrown overboard by the negroes."[3]

Outside the walls of the Convention center in 1868 lay a white populace teeming with resentment and anger at the new and elevated position of blacks in Louisiana society. The *Picayune,* and many other Louisiana newspapers, continued to criticize harshly Republicans, and

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[1] Logsdon, and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," 245-246.
[2] Binning, "Carpetbaggers' Triumph: The Louisiana State Election of 1868," 21-22.

local rebel officeholders attempted to derail Radical Reconstruction. Though Congressional resolve to protect blacks appeared formidable -- members were moving to impeach President Johnson -- Congress had no ready solution to the problem of the municipal black codes and the growing antipathy towards Radical Reconstruction. It was not yet evident to the *Tribune* that external obstruction and intimidation, plus internal factionalism, had already diminished the ability of the *gens de couleur* to secure more than just theoretical political and civil equality for members of their race.

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[3] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 129.

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