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An African American discourse community in Black & White: the New Orleans Tribune

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**AN AFRICAN AMERICAN DISCOURSE COMMUNITY
IN BLACK & WHITE:
*THE NEW ORLEANS TRIBUNE***

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by
Kristi Richard Melancon
B.A., University of New Orleans, 2003
August 2011

For my home

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Abstract

In An African American Discourse Community in Black & White: The *New Orleans Tribune*, an archival study of the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States, I argue that the newspaper rhetorically constructed a literate African American discourse community worthy of citizenship and equal political rights within the public sphere of Reconstruction United States. Although contemporaneous media in the South depicted blacks as both unable to read and write and as culturally illiterate, I demonstrate how articles across the lifespan of the *Tribune* represented, as well as encouraged and enabled, multiple literacies within the African American community. I ultimately argue that the newspaper created an identity as citizen for free and emancipated blacks alike through its inclusion of evidence of blacks' education and knowledge of historical texts; black men's economic and agricultural literacies and black women's domestic skills; and the community's understanding of civics. Scholars within periodical studies, who have focused primarily on Victorian Britain, have argued that periodicals provide a unique space for historically oppressed populations to enter public discourse. This project links literacy studies, periodical studies, and African American studies by extending this reasoning to the literacy practices of African Americans and by investigating how the staff of the *New Orleans Tribune* sought entrance to public discourse but also circulated a counterdiscourse that challenged dominant stereotypes of blacks. Simultaneously, this project questions how the lack of scholarly work on the *Tribune*, "the most important Negro newspaper of the Civil War era," continues to remind researchers that the erasure of African American resistance and agency is not unique to Reconstruction, but is replicated through tellings of history and accessibility of archives within the academy today. An African American Discourse Community in Black & White: The *New Orleans Tribune* uses

the newspaper to retell the history of African American literacy in Reconstruction New Orleans as one of agency and oppositionality. Ultimately, I argue that the *Tribune* used self-representations of blacks' literacy practices to rhetorically construct an African American discourse community that was worthy of citizenship and therefore suffrage.

Chapter One

Analyzing Literacy in the African American Periodical Press

No newspaper opens its columns to any discussion of the great questions at issue. No organization exists by means of which concerted action against those who plot the ruin and destruction of popular government can be obtained. No nominations are made in opposition to the powers now in office. The great masses of the people keep steadily aloof from the contest. Despotism fills the air; and such submission, quiet, peaceful, earnest to the whirlwind now sweeping over this Southern country, seems to be the only order of the day. (*New Orleans Tribune*, 27 August 1864)

This quotation from the August 27, 1864 edition of the *New Orleans Tribune*, the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States, speaks to the newspaper's mission to differentiate itself from other newspapers of its time by becoming the voice that would challenge the political environment of the South. On the eve of Reconstruction, the position of New Orleans's black population was ambiguous. A sizeable portion of its African American community had been free before the Civil War, but free blacks' political rights were being increasingly revoked. The freedmen, just emancipated from slavery, were similarly struggling to define their new legal status. In the midst of such uncertainty, the Old South defended itself against change by suppressing the voice of its opponents. The silencing of African American resistance and agency, which the newspaper refused to surrender to, however, is not unique to Reconstruction, but is replicated through tellings of history and accessibility of archives within the academy today.

I can remember the precise moment when the topic of my dissertation chose me. During my second semester of graduate school at Louisiana State University, I took a class entitled History of Education in the South. During one of our meetings, we had a guest speaker who spoke to us about the literacy practices of an order of African American nuns, the Sisters of the Holy Family, in New Orleans. While setting up the literary culture of the city during the nineteenth century, she mentioned that the Crescent City was home to the first black-owned

daily newspaper in the United States, the *New Orleans Tribune*. I was excited to learn something new about the city in which I was born and raised and yet troubled that I did not already know what seemed to be a relatively significant fact about my home's history. Was my lack of knowledge due to my own whiteness or historical positioning in the twenty-first century or was it representative of a greater unawareness? After discovering that Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University had original and microfilm copies of the paper, I began my archival journey. Along the way, I have experienced the emotional highs of holding the physical text from 1864 in my newsprint-covered hands and of discovering unstudied editions of the daily at the Boston Athenæum. Yet, I have also endured occasional bumps in the road: I became frustrated by the library's scanner, which converted microfilm to PDFs and which simply could not work any faster, by the new eyeglasses prescriptions that hours of squinting over barely readable newsprint necessitated, and by the constant reminder that the subject of my work could perish in one flood, fire, or other disaster. These nagging questions propelled me forward: why have few contemporary scholars studied the *Tribune*, "the most important Negro newspaper of the Civil War era," and why is it often overlooked in histories of the periodical press (Rankin, Introduction 58-59)?

The best answer that I have is quite simply that to find something, you have to look for it, to expect that it exists. Unfortunately, the popular narrative that dominates American history describes African American literacy immediately after emancipation as rare or rudimentary at best, therefore giving us no reason to suspect that the publication of a black-owned daily newspaper was possible. In order to expose the ways that this bad history has worked to make the *Tribune* invisible, I ground my theorization of history in the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault juxtaposes two views of history, total history and general history, against one another. The first equates history with truth or "an age-old collective consciousness that made use of

material documents to refresh its memory” (Foucault, *Archaeology* 7). Foucault warns that this categorization has allowed the subject “to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference” (*Archaeology* 12). In other words, the telling of a single or total history sacrifices the unique experiences and voices of individuals to the creation of a coherent, single narrative. On the other hand, for Foucault, history is a discourse, “a linguistic-textual production and representation” (Cormack and Green 226). This poststructural understanding of history allows us to search for multiple and different histories among “the living openness of history” rather than forcing disparate realities into a single, linear schema of progression (Foucault, *Archaeology* 13).

Therefore, when I learned about the *Tribune* and its pages crossed my fingers, I felt an immediate responsibility to publicize this evidence of African American literacy during Reconstruction, to mark the sesquicentennial of the Civil War by telling a different history of African American literacy during Reconstruction. This history casts African Americans as subjects rather than objects, unlike most that “have focused on what happened *to* black communities, not what transpired *within* them” (emphasis in original, Nash qtd. in Bacon 7). I have sought to answer Gary Nash’s call that “alongside a history of discrimination and oppression must be placed the internal history of a people striving to live as fully, as freely, as creatively, and as spiritually rich as their inner resources and external circumstances allowed” (qtd. in Bacon 7). Southern historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall explains why historical memory matters: “Historical memory determines how we think and feel about ourselves and each other and how we interact,” today in the present (291). Also, an understanding of history as discourse propels us to investigate not only *what* historical texts, such as the *Tribune*, signify but *how* they signify: “how [did] African Americans during this period [use] language and to

what ends, to whom [were they] arguing and how [did] that [shape] their discourse, and what factors influenced their persuasive strategies” (Bacon 8)?¹

In this dissertation, grounded in rhetorical and literacy studies, I use the newspaper to retell the history of African American literacy in Reconstruction New Orleans as one of agency and oppositionality. My project is an archival study of the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States, in which I argue that the newspaper rhetorically constructed a literate African American discourse community worthy of citizenship and equal political rights within the public sphere of Reconstruction United States. Although contemporaneous media in the South depicted blacks as both unable to read and write and as culturally illiterate, I demonstrate how articles across the lifespan of the *Tribune* represented, as well as encouraged and enabled, multiple everyday literacies within the African American community. I ultimately contend that the newspaper created an identity as citizen for free and emancipated blacks alike through its assertion of blacks’ education and knowledge of historical texts; black men’s economic and agricultural literacies and black women’s domestic skills; and the community’s understanding of civics. Scholars within periodical studies, focusing primarily on Victorian Britain, have argued that periodicals provide a unique space for historically oppressed populations to enter

¹ I use the term “signify” here to simultaneously refer to the linguistic creation of meaning and to allude to African Americans’ method of language play called “signifying.” Borrowing from the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure who explained that “the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept [signified] and a sound-image [signifier]” (66), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. argues that African Americans, rather than creating a new sign, “disrupt the signifier by displacing its signified” (*Signifying* 51). Therefore, “signifying” has been the term used in studies of African American verbal culture and literate production to describe such “repetition with a signal difference” (Gates, *Signifying* 51). Signifying then employs indirection to make a critique by cloaking this negative commentary in a revision of the addressee’s own words or form. Unlike Saussure, quoted above, who claims that the signifier “is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it” because of the force of convention and argues that “the masses have no voice in the matter” (71), Gates reclaims the agency of the people “to disrupt the signifier by displacing its signified in an intentional act of will” (*Signifying* 51).

public discourse.² This rhetorical analysis bridges periodical studies and African American studies by extending this reasoning to the literacy practices of African Americans and by investigating how the staff of the *New Orleans Tribune* sought entrance to public discourse but also circulated a counterdiscourse that challenged dominant stereotypes of blacks.

Periodical Studies

Periodical studies is still a new field within print culture, forever combating what Jennifer Phegley terms the “fetishization of the book” (11). The dominance of the book as the object of study within literary studies reenacts distinctions between high and low culture, between books and ephemera such as periodicals. Instead, Margaret Beetham calls for more in-depth rhetorical analysis of periodicals specifically when she writes, “Theoretical work on periodicals as popular texts is still relatively undeveloped despite their importance. Where it exists is in cultural and media studies and in relation to late twentieth-century texts” (viii).

Laurel Brake argues that some of the reasons that periodicals are often ignored within literary studies are our inability to credit them to a single author and to position them within a specific time period or literary movement (163). These characteristics of periodicals, however, also create within them a unique space for historically oppressed populations to enter the public discourse. Periodicals are inherently made up of multiple voices and numerous genres; are more accessible and affordable, both to produce and to consume, than traditional literature; and never present an eternal truth because of their periodicity. In her work on early women’s magazines, Beetham observes, “the periodical is above all an ephemeral form, produced for a

² For examples of works on British magazines, see Beetham, Brake, Fraser, Green and Johnston, Pykett (whose study also includes an analysis of the American *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*), and Phegley. Work has also begun on American magazines, including studies by Okker, Garvey, Sedgwick, and Price and Smith.

particular day, week or month. Its claims to truth and importance are always contingent, as is clear from that date which is prominently displayed (sometimes on every page)” (9). She continues to argue that magazines were particularly useful to Victorian women because “those qualities of fluidity and openness to the future which characterize serial forms do make them attractive to the powerless” (Beetham 13-14). I extend this reasoning to the literacy practices of African Americans and to the even greater fluidity and openness inherent within a daily newspaper.

This possibility that oppressed groups can use periodicals to talk or write back to dominant discourses forces us to rethink the ways in which we study periodicals. Context becomes even more necessary to an investigation of a literacy practice when the text being studied is a periodical or a serial form of print rooted in a “historical moment” (Beetham 9). Lyn Pykett describes a shift from studying periodicals as reflective of a culture, meaning that these texts must be mined to gain insight about that same culture, to their investigation as contributors to culture:

Periodicals can no longer be regarded in any simply reflective way as ‘evidence’ (either primary or secondary), as transparent records which give access to, and provide the means of recovering, the culture which they ‘mirror’ . . . the periodicals have come to be seen as a central component of that culture—‘an active and integral part,’ and they can only be read and understood as part of that culture and society, and in the context of other knowledges about them. (102)

Therefore, “The magazine as ‘text’ interacts with the culture which produced it and which it produces. It is a place where meanings are contested and made” (Beetham 5). A periodical becomes a “textual field through which to engage with the production of discourse” (Fraser, Green, and Johnston 16). Others within print culture have termed this reciprocal or dialogic relationship between the “cultural object” and its context a “communications circuit” or a “network” (Fink and Williams 3; Latham and Scholes 519; Darnton 11; Hampton qtd. in Ardis

34). Through a close reading of the *Tribune*, I seek to reconnect the world inside the text to the world outside of it and to understand how this periodical as text did not merely reflect both African American and the larger national cultures, but became an active shaper of those same cultures. Each of the theme-based chapters to follow will conclude with a description of the material change that the newspaper affected through an analysis of Louisiana's 1868 constitution.

Defining Everyday Literacies

I use the work by scholars within New Literacy Studies, including James Gee, Brian Street, and Deborah Brandt, to understand the rhetoric of the daily. I define "literacy," following James Gee, as "*the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse*" (emphasis in original, "Literacies" 529), whereby secondary discourses are those "socially accepted association(s) among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts,' of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network,' or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'" (Gee, *Social Linguistics* 131). Gee distinguishes between discourse, a segment of language, and Discourse, "a sort of 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" ("Literacies" 526). Similarly, Charles Schuster claims that "literacy is the power to be able to make oneself heard and felt, to signify. Literacy is the way in which we make ourselves meaningful not only to others but through others to ourselves" (227). Ultimately both Gee and Schuster propose that literacies are always plural as people continually act out multiple and varied facets of their identities. And although all reading and writing is embedded in particular Discourses, not all Discourses have to include

reading and writing (Gee, “Literacies” 530). James Collins and Richard Blot and Deborah Brandt, too, contest the textualization of literacy. The former write, “‘literacy’ can be and is extended to areas that have no or little connection to text, or at least to processes of decoding entextualized information” (3), while Brandt argues that “contextual perspectives,” such as her own, “have developed in challenge to views that equate literacy only with the technical matters of decoding or encoding of written language, a literacy lodged merely in discrete linguistic and scribal skills such as sounding out, spelling, or semantic fluency” (*Literacy* 3). Literacy is a technical skill, but also a resource by which “identities are made and sustained” (Brandt, *Literacy* 6). Ultimately, I argue that the *New Orleans Tribune* used self-representations of blacks’ literacy practices, both as autonomous skills and as identity performances, to rhetorically construct an African American Discourse community that was worthy of citizenship and therefore suffrage.

Gee’s and Brandt’s definitions of literacy also emphasize the importance of context and social practices to any investigation of literacy, a point that seems especially crucial to an analysis of a newspaper which is “date-stamped” in a way which other publications are not (Beetham qtd. in Dawson, Noakes, and Topham 2). Context provides reading and writing with its “purpose and point” (Brandt, *Literacy* 3). Brandt also observes that such “attention to the situated nature of literacy also has provided avenues for treating the ideological dimensions of literacy” (*Literacy* 3). Literacy is “a social and ideological practice involving fundamental aspects of epistemology, power and politics,” rather than an autonomous, technical skill set, such as the ability to read and write, which one either has or does not and which is politically neutral (Street 435). Proponents of this model focus on the role that literacy practices play in reproducing and challenging power structures. Collins and Blot note that “literacies as communicative practices are inseparable from values, senses of self, and forms of regulation

and power” (xviii). Gee concludes his explanation of Discourse, “Finally, discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society. Control over certain discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society” (“Literacies” 538-39). Gee describes these discourses as dominant. I assert that the nineteenth-century public South used African Americans’ supposed textual and cultural illiteracy as justification for their exclusion from the dominant discourse and the privileges, such as political participation, that its membership guaranteed. However, the staff of the *Tribune* confronted this divisive use of literacy, which separated human from non-human and citizen from non-citizen, and instead painted a portrait of a black community united by shared, multiple everyday literacies.

My additional qualification of the literacy practices contained in the *Tribune* as “everyday” is not to minimize their significance but instead to answer the call of Michel de Certeau to penetrate these “ways of operating” and to articulate their tactical ability to turn the tables on the powerful. De Certeau writes that we must “restore to everyday practices their logical and cultural legitimacy . . . as the fleeting and massive reality of a social activity at play with the order that contains it” (xvi, xxiv).

“Invisible” African American Literacies

Susan Weinstein writes that “[t]here are not ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’; there are, instead *Discourses* of race and ethnicity” (emphasis in original, 4). Although many scholars in literacy studies have investigated the reading and writing practices of African Americans, research on free blacks’ literacies, specifically, is lacking. Throughout this project, I will use the terms “free” and “freed” to distinguish between two segments of the black population, those free before the Civil War and those freed as a result of the war and emancipation. I, therefore,

prioritize differences among African Americans' antebellum legal status, rather than their cultural distinctions, varying shades of skin color, or unique ethnicities. Although Bell and Logsdon warn that "neither group had emerged from the Civil War either all slave or all free" (203) to defend their choice to describe the heterogeneity of New Orleans's black population using cultural differences, I heed the guidance of the *Tribune* itself in choosing to use "free" and "freed." On December 23, 1868, the staff wrote, "We are the organ of the whole colored population. The *Tribune* has always defended the interest of every colored man, without regard as to whether he was free before or since the war." The newspaper, therefore, similarly relied upon antebellum legal status to name the different populations that comprised the city's black community.

One of the few to enter the conversation pertaining to free blacks' literacies, Elizabeth McHenry, admits in *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, "reading practices of free blacks in the antebellum North and the literary activities of black Americans generally after the Civil War have remained largely invisible. . . . the importance and significance of the free black population has been both overlooked and undervalued" (4, 14). She lists at least three contributing factors to this invisibility: a focus, even today, on low standardized test scores as evidence of "the 'traditional' weakness of literacy skills in the black community"; the association of African American culture with the vernacular and oral language practices; and the privileging of slave narratives within the academy as "the founding paradigm of black literary production in the nineteenth century" (McHenry 5-6). McHenry responds to this silence surrounding free people of color's literary practices with her own research on Northern black literary societies; however, much work remains to be done to explore other literacy sponsors in the black community, such as the African American periodical press, and to extend this investigation geographically to the South.

Further, McHenry's study jumps from antebellum literary societies to those reorganized after Reconstruction, omitting the discussion of free blacks' literacies in the years immediately following the Civil War. McHenry cites a decline in literary societies during this time; however, once again, other black literary institutions such as newspapers existed. It is, therefore, especially important that we investigate these other literacy sponsors so that we do not fall prey to the false assumption that no African American literary institutions existed during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

New Orleans historian Mary Niall Mitchell, in *Raising Freedom's Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future After Slavery*, calls attention to the lack of research which has been done on free blacks, especially in the city: "This population [New Orleans's French-speaking free people of color] has been left out of histories of the South, the Civil War, and slave emancipation in the United States because many writers have considered it unrepresentative of the African American population in the South, slave or free" (9). This project seeks to fill these gaps to expand our knowledge of free blacks' literacy practices and to disrupt the current historical narrative, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which falsely creates a monolithic, often deficient, black culture. Throughout this dissertation, but especially in chapter two, I challenge the binary that often separates discussions of middle-class free blacks' and previously enslaved blacks' literacies. I investigate how the *Tribune* strategically represented its mission as catering to both free blacks, primarily French-speaking Catholic Creoles, and ex-slaves, mostly English-speaking Protestant freedmen, in New Orleans.

At the same time that this project contributes to the knowledge of the city's free black population, I acknowledge that an investigation into free blacks' literacy practices demands that we complicate our understanding of resistance:

the current tendency to present the working class as the symbolic representative of an ideal of “authentic blackness” and to view the actions of this segment of black society as the only meaningful forms of resistance is dangerous . . . Against the backdrop of the “authentic” actions of their less-privileged counterparts, the perspectives of the black middle and upper classes, their activities, and their actions have been considered as indicative of one of two things: the desire to assimilate into the white middle class, or the passive acceptance of white domination and accommodation to racial segregation. (McHenry 16-17)

Instead of reading the rhetorical practices of the *Tribune* as assimilation or passive acceptance, I argue that its editor and proprietor constructed what Foucault calls a “‘reverse’ discourse,” or counterdiscourse, in which the African American community “began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 101). Therefore, the staff of the newspaper did not create a new discourse but “[used] the same categories [of the dominant discourse] by which it was . . . disqualified” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 101). The newspaper, in a sense, hyper-performed the norm, claiming that blacks in the city were more educated, harder working, more domestic, and better “people of law” than whites, simultaneously disproving the negative stereotypes of African Americans that circulated in contemporaneous media. Gee points out the ways in which any discourse converses with its opposing discourses: “Discourse-defined positions from which to speak and behave are not, however, just defined as internal to a discourse, but also as standpoints taken up by the discourse in its relation to other, ultimately opposing, discourses” (“Literacies” 538). Black newspapers were tools of resistance: they “brought visibility to black social life and political thought usually ignored by the mainstream press” (Brandt, *Literacy* 133), “serv[ed] as supplements and correctives to mainstream (white-oriented) media” (Brandt, *Literacy* 134), and “chang[ed] the dynamics of audience, allowing writers to address directly African American readers and forc[ed] white readers to read from the cultural margins rather than from the center” (Ernest 27).

Simultaneously, I acknowledge that the black press, and the *Tribune*, can be critiqued for its middle-class and predominantly male rhetoric. But again another characteristic of discourse is that “[a]ny discourse concerns itself with certain objects and puts forward certain concepts, viewpoints, and values at the expense of others. In doing so, it will marginalize viewpoints and values central to other discourses” (Gee, “Literacies” 538). Chapter two will focus on the ways in which I argue that the daily tried to minimize the inevitable schism that existed between blacks of varying social classes in the city.

African American Periodical Press

McHenry’s focus on the antebellum and post-Reconstruction literacy practices of African Americans in the North is mirrored by historians of the black press. First, historians of the African American periodical press such as Penelope Bullock claim that “none of the periodicals initiated before 1865 were still in existence when the Civil War ended, and the publishing of black periodicals did not begin again until the decade of the 1880s” (64).³ This common misunderstanding may be due to limits of the archive. As McHenry points out, “the words African Americans did write were not valued by libraries, museums, archives, or other institutions charged with the responsibility of preserving literary and cultural material” (7). I would add that black newspapers, in particular, were less likely to be preserved because of their characterization as not only African American writing, but also ephemera. Regardless of the reasons for such omissions, claims, such as Bullock’s, reinforce the assumption that Civil War

³ P. Bullock continues to attribute this “hiatus” to “the optimism that pervaded the black population. Negroes anticipated that legal measures taken by the federal government would guarantee first-class citizenship and place them in the mainstream of American life. Thus the periodical, as an agent for the vindication of equal rights, was no longer needed” (64). I would argue that this favorable portrayal of Reconstruction as no longer necessitating an advocate or voice for blacks is disproven in the pages of the *Tribune*.

and Reconstruction black literacy practices, including newspapers, did not exist. Therefore, the approximately 115 African American newspapers that were founded during the Civil War and Reconstruction, according to Charles A. Simmons, remain vastly understudied (15).⁴ The *New Orleans Tribune* is no exception. For example, the *Tribune* is not mentioned in I. Garland Penn's *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, which incorrectly cites Georgia's *Colored American* (1865) as the first black newspaper in the South rather than *L'Union*, the *Tribune*'s predecessor, and describes Illinois's *Cairo Gazette* (1882) as the first African American daily. Frederick Detweiler also ignores the *Tribune* in *The Negro Press in the United States* and makes the same mistakes as Penn.

Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson's *A History of the Black Press* is one of the rare overviews of the African American press which even includes the *Tribune*. Unfortunately, however, its description contains errors, claiming that the paper appeared daily except for Sundays rather than Mondays and naming J. B. Roudanez as the son, not the brother, of Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, the *Tribune*'s proprietor (74). Roland E. Wolseley's *The Black Press, U.S.A.* also only briefly mentions the *Tribune* and mistakenly cites 1896 as its last year of publication (111). In *The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860*, Frankie Hutton analyzes antebellum, Northern black periodicals but does acknowledge in her coda that "of the few other black newspapers published sporadically, *L'Union* and *La Tribune de la Nouvelle Orleans* in Louisiana were the most impressive in the south during the Civil War years and after" (161). However, Hutton provides no further information about the daily. The two bibliographies to include a listing for the *Tribune* and to cite its publication facts correctly are Warren Brown's

⁴ Simmons continues to claim that all of the Confederate states received their first black newspaper during this time (15).

Check List of Negro Newspapers in the United States (1827-1946) and James P. Danky and Maureen E. Hady's *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography*.

The latter is a wonderful, relatively new resource for historians of the black press.

Black newspapers themselves have rarely been the subjects of rhetorical analyses, but instead have been used by historians as tools to recreate a distant past. As previously mentioned, newspapers are commonly discussed merely as “repositories” of historical facts and literary fiction (Beetham 5) or “containers” for the first works of canonical authors (Price qtd. in Latham and Scholes 521). Exceptions include chapters within three anthologies on the American periodical press, James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand's *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed's *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives*, and David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris, Jr.'s *Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press*. All three focus on those populations that are often underrepresented or misrepresented in the mainstream newspaper press and therefore react to their marginalization by creating their own news outlets.⁵ The most comprehensive collection of analyses of the black press is Todd Vogel's *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*. Again, however, the only two essays included in “After the Civil War” discuss the writings of Amelia Johnson in Baptist periodicals in the 1890s and the images of Native Americans in the *Chicago Defender* from 1870-1900 and

⁵ More specifically, Danky and Wiegand include two chapters, Michael Fultz's “‘The Morning Cometh’: African-American Periodicals, Education, and the Black Middle Class, 1900-1930” and Violet Johnson's “Pan-Africanism in Print: The *Boston Chronicle* and the Struggle for Black Liberation and Advancement, 1930-50.” Both focus on twentieth-century Northern periodicals, with the exception of Fultz's analysis of Atlanta's *Voice of the Negro*. Hutton includes “Democratic Idealism in the Black Press” in her and Reed's collection, and Sachsman, Rushing, and Morris devote one part of their study to the African American 19th century press, but focus on individuals, such as William Hamilton, Frederick Douglass, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Ida B. Wells, instead of analyses of the periodicals themselves.

1970-1990.⁶ Writings in the South during Reconstruction are once again ignored. Anthony Williams, Hayward Farrar, and Jacqueline Bacon are the few who have devoted book-length texts to the histories and analyses of particular black newspapers: the *Christian Recorder*, the newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the *Baltimore Afro-American*; and *Freedom's Journal*, the first black newspaper in the United States. These three periodicals, once again, were all begun either before or well after the Civil War, were published in the North, and were not dailies.

Twentieth-century historians celebrated the *Tribune* as “vigorously edited,” “a very dangerous organ of opposition” (Ficklen 142), and “an unusually effective organ” (Du Bois 456); praised it for its “radical notions of reconstruction” (Litwack 529); and stated that “it would be difficult to find a single publication of the Second Reconstruction as clear [as the *Tribune*] in stating Negro aims for complete equality in America or as optimistic about its accomplishment” (McFeely 167-68).⁷ Yet, few contemporary scholars have studied the *Tribune*, and there is no book-length study dedicated to the history and analysis of this pivotal periodical. Historical treatments of the daily include a history thesis by Finnian Patrick Leavens, *L'Union and the New Orleans Tribune and Louisiana Reconstruction*, and David Rankin's translation of editor Jean-Charles Houzeau's memoir, *My Passage at the New*

⁶ Chapter length treatments of the nineteenth-century black newspaper press also include “African Americans, Literature, and the Nineteenth-Century Afro-Protestant Press” by Frances Smith Foster in *Reciprocal Influences* by Fink and Williams. Foster focuses on the *Christian Recorder*, a Philadelphia paper began by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1852. Elizabeth McHenry also dedicates one of her chapters, “Spreading the Word: The Cultural Work of the Black Press,” to a discussion of selected antebellum, Northern, black periodicals.

⁷ James M. McPherson also mentions the daily in *Negro's Civil War* (276, 346), and Joe Gray Taylor claims that “unquestionably the most valuable single newspaper source [for the history of Reconstruction in Louisiana] is the New Orleans *Tribune*” in his chapter “Civil War and Reconstruction” in *A Guide to the History of Louisiana* (45).

Orleans Tribune.⁸ While many Louisiana historians mention the daily within their texts, William P. Connor, one of the few authors to critically write about the *New Orleans Tribune*, concludes, “The *Tribune* has been mentioned often as the first black daily newspaper in the United States. The real importance of the newspaper lies not in this fact, but in its intellectual content” (458).⁹ Unfortunately previous scholars have paid scant attention to the newspaper’s “intellectual content.” The handful of dissertations and theses that have been completed focus on either a particular historical moment within the paper’s publication run, on only the editorials included in the paper, or disproportionately on the newspaper’s plan for economic reform at the expense of the other causes it took up and the other identities it performed.¹⁰ Caryn Cossé Bell, who has perhaps done the most work on the *Tribune*, discusses how whites often strategically exploited the ethnic differences among blacks in New Orleans to silence radical voices such as the *New Orleans Tribune* in “The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900,” a chapter which she co-writes with Joseph Logsdon, and in “War,

⁸ Houzeau wrote “My Passage” in 1870 while in Jamaica. It was published a year and a half later in the *Revue de Belgique* as “Le journal noir, aux États-Unis, de 1863 à 1870” and was supposedly addressed to Houzeau’s former employers (Rankin, Introduction 57-58).

⁹ For examples of Louisiana histories which cite the *Tribune*, see Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes’s *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits*, John W. Blassingame’s *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*, Ted Tunnell’s *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877*, and Charles Rousseve’s *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature*.

¹⁰ Ann Nugent focuses her thesis, *The Attitude of the New Orleans Tribune Towards the Freedmen’s Bureau in Louisiana: 1865-1866*, only on the *Tribune*’s opinion of the Freedmen’s Bureau (1865-1866). Neil O’Brien focuses his thesis, *The New Orleans Tribune and the Genesis of Black Unity in Occupied Louisiana*, on the alliance created between free blacks and the freedmen by projects such as the Louisianan National Equal Rights League, the contract labor system, and the Freedmen’s Aid Association of New Orleans and incorrectly states that J. B. Roudanez, Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez’s brother, was the sole proprietor of the newspaper. In her dissertation, *A Rhetorical Analysis of Editorials in L’Union and the New Orleans Tribune*, Laura Rouzan selects only titled editorials from either the first or second column of the daily’s front page to then cite suffrage, free labor, and the Freedmen’s Aid Association as its major causes and then to analyze how its staff used the rhetorical proofs of logos, pathos, and ethos. Charles Nero also uses editorials only to analyze the rhetoric of “manliness” in Trévigne’s and Houzeau’s editorials in his dissertation *“To Develop Our Manhood”: Free Black Leadership and the Rhetoric of the New Orleans Tribune*.

Reconstruction, and Politics of Radicalism” in her own book *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868*. I am indebted to these secondary sources that do exist, for they have laid the groundwork for my project, even when I occasionally find myself challenging their historical claims based on new evidence. But none of these scholars perform a textual analysis that cuts across all years of the newspaper’s publication and that focuses on the daily as a whole to explore its common themes, rather than relying on editorials alone.

Methods: Stratified Random Sampling

The sheer mass of archival material that is available to a researcher of the *New Orleans Tribune* reinforces my point at the beginning of this chapter that the absence of scholarly work on the daily is the result of researchers not looking for the newspaper because the predominant historical narrative precludes its existence. If researchers looked for it, they would find it. Editions of the *New Orleans Tribune* from the Library of Congress’s microfilm were digitized in Spring 2010, making most of the newspaper’s issues from 1864-1869 accessible online through America’s Historical Newspapers. However, I have discovered amidst this seeming surplus of material a critical “hole” in the archives. What did exist on microfilm from the Library of Congress, and what now has been digitized, is wanting. Most importantly, this existing archive contains no 1868 editions of the paper, causing previous researchers to claim that there are no issues of the daily available from that year.¹¹ However, I have visited the Boston Athenæum, the only archive in the country which houses a handful of unique 1865

¹¹ Rouzan mistakenly claims that no copies of the daily from 1868 exist.

editions (April 20, April 22, and April 23), four months (January-April) of the *Tribune* from 1867, and surviving copies of the daily from 1868.

Contributing once again to the interdisciplinary nature of this project, I have chosen my method, stratified random sampling, from mass communication studies, the field in which most other analyses of daily newspapers exist. I analyze the English sections of all editions of the *Tribune* from its founding year and two reconstructed weeks from each of its available subsequent years.¹² In *Analyzing Media Messages*, Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy, and Frederick G. Fico suggest that stratified sampling which yields two constructed weeks per year (two randomly selected Mondays, two Tuesdays, etc.) is the most efficient means of inferring content from a daily newspaper (112).¹³ Therefore, I first read all of the available issues from 1864 in order to help me become acquainted with the newspaper's mission and to aid in my decision to organize this project around the evolution of particular themes across the life of the daily rather than around important historical moments that the daily covered or the varied genres that the newspaper included. Then, I selected two reconstructed weeks from each available year of the newspaper's publication after 1864, in accordance with the studies mentioned above.

This project then is the result of my analysis of all editions of the *Tribune* from its founding year, 1864, and of twelve issues from each remaining year as available. These twelve issues represent two reconstructed six-day weeks, since the newspaper was not published on

¹² I have been unable to locate any English editions of the *Tribune* from its final year, 1870.

¹³ For sampling efficiency studies that provide similar results, see Stempel, Davis and Turner, Jones and Carter, and, most recently, Riffe, Aust, and Lacy. The latter concluded in "The Effectiveness of Random, Consecutive Day and Constructive Week Samples in Newspaper Content Analysis" that "two constructed weeks would allow reliable estimates of local stories in a year's worth of newspaper . . . issues, a conclusion consistent with Stempel's findings on front-page photographs in a six-day-a-week paper" (qtd. in Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 112).

Mondays. The specific dates that were included were the result of my assigning all available Tuesday issues, for example, from one year a number and then using a random number generator to select two samples. Then, I repeated the process for Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays to create two reconstructed weeks for the year. I duplicated this process for subsequent years. Research on the *New Orleans Tribune* is far from complete. I hope that this dissertation is not the last word on the *Tribune*, but rather that it will excite fresh interest in and stimulate new scholarship on this significant periodical.

Chapter Organization

This first chapter has been an introduction to the project, including the main argument, the literature review, the research method, and the significance of the study. **“The Organ of the Whole Colored Population”**: *The New Orleans Tribune in Its Historical Period*, chapter two of my dissertation, places the newspaper within the context of Reconstruction New Orleans and uses the narrative of the newspaper’s founding to illuminate how African Americans’ literacy practices flourished in the years immediately following the Civil War in New Orleans. The newspaper also claimed that “there is not a single colored man who does not feel that the *Tribune* is the rostrum from which the oppressed and the down-trodden may be heard by the American nation” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 4). Therefore, I investigate how the paper strategically represented its mission of universal male suffrage as catering to both French-speaking Catholic Creoles and English-speaking Protestant freedmen in the city, creating a community which promoted “unity without uniformity” (Blackwell qtd. in Bacon 6). I also attend to the possible reasons for the daily’s demise.

I arrange the remaining chapters thematically, focusing on the newspaper’s representations of schooling, performance of gender, and role as legal advocate. Therefore, this

text does not provide a “traditional” historical narrative, which progresses chronologically. Instead, within each chapter I seek to create an in depth discussion of one of the many literacies encouraged, enabled, and represented by the *New Orleans Tribune* and its editors. Aside from correlating with the proposed requirements for suffrage—education, manhood and property ownership, and citizenship—these themes also address the major legislative debates that resulted in Louisiana’s progressive constitution of 1868. The 1868 constitution integrated the city’s schools, dismantled universal wage systems, and declared African Americans citizens, finally granting universal male suffrage to the state’s residents.

In chapter three, **“We Now Think for Ourselves, and We Shall Act for Ourselves”:** **The Newspaper’s Views on Schooling**, I use editorials on education and advertisements for schools in the daily to problematize the dominant narrative of African American education in the Reconstruction South. Most existing histories have identified the educational mission with Northern philanthropy and governmental sponsorship, in the figures of the Yankee schoolmarm and the Freedmen’s Bureau. I read the newspaper’s promotion of self-help efforts to counter this portrayal of African Americans as recipients and instead to position them as agents, initiating and promoting their own literacy. The *New Orleans Tribune* advocated, “There is, in fact, nothing more important, more conducive to the general welfare and the national progress and grandeur than the imparting of a solid education and sound principles to the rising generation” (10 January 1866).¹⁴ The editors of the newspaper argued for African American control of black education, for integrated schooling, and for a liberal arts curriculum, grounded in history.

¹⁴ Quotations from the *Tribune* will be followed by parenthetical references containing the date on which the cited material appeared, unless the date is mentioned in the text. If the name of another newspaper is not listed, the reader can assume that the quotation is from the *Tribune*. The reader can also assume that the quotation is from the English edition of the daily unless otherwise stated.

Chapter four, **Industrious Men and Noble Women: The Black Home's**

Representation in Print, turns to the newspaper's refusal to conform to the then-popular portrayal (in other newspapers, magazines, and legislation) of black men as vagrants or dependent children and black women as promiscuous savages. Instead, I argue that the *Tribune* informed its wide readership of black men's economic and agricultural literacies and black women's domestic skills. Together, these new self-representations, which adhered to the nineteenth century's separate spheres ideology, to be discussed in more detail in chapter four, asserted the survival of the black home and depicted it as a reflection of the European/white, middle-class, heteropatriarchal family structure. The newspaper's staff argued, "It is well to show the world that there is intelligence, virtue, courage, industry, in the colored man [and] devotion, love, piety, poetry, in the colored woman" (4 February 1866). I argue that the *New Orleans Tribune's* construction of such gender normativity can be reread not as accommodation but as a self-directed strategy to gain political power.

Focusing on the juridical rhetoric of the *New Orleans Tribune*, chapter five, "**Let the Public Know and Judge**": **The Newspaper as an Alternative Court of Law**, borrows from cultural legal studies to argue that the newspaper itself became an alternative court of law where crimes against blacks both on the streets and in the courthouses were tried, or retried, at the bar of public opinion during Reconstruction. The *Tribune* provided a space and audience for otherwise outlawed black testimony about rebel wrongdoings, hence repositioning free people of color and freedmen as witnesses and Southern planters and ex-Confederates as defendants. Using the trope of the trial, the newspaper served as advocate, informing the public, now playing the role of jury, about the facts of the case, while simultaneously increasing its readers' legal literacy by sharing with them pertinent laws and jurisprudence. The *Tribune* drew upon the tradition of popular constitutionalism to encourage its readership, whites and blacks

alike, to supervise the judicial branch of the government and to hold it responsible to the fundamental principles of the *Declaration of Independence* and *Constitution*. Beginning with its first issue, the *New Orleans Tribune* promised to “defend” and “advocate” for blacks in the city, not only turning its pages into a metaphorical courtroom, but also printing the information necessary for blacks to gain recognition as a “people of law” (21 July 1864; Weiner 5).

I see each of these chapters as a conversation in itself as John Ernest explains that within black newspapers “various voices, from all walks of life, are placed in dynamic relation with one another and with the representatives of the white community that influence African American experience” (qtd. in Bacon 4). Therefore, in a sense each of these chapters can be read on its own or in a different order like newspaper articles themselves, which are autonomous yet often interrelated.

The conclusion, “**The Drop of Water That Is Wearing Away the Rock**”: **The Legacy of the *New Orleans Tribune***, problematizes accepted definitions and conceptions of *Reconstruction*, *literacy*, *resistance*, and *ephemera* and examines the *Tribune*’s continued influence beyond Reconstruction. I trace the legacy of the *New Orleans Tribune* to a monthly paper of the same name started in 1985, which, too, claims to be “dedicated to social justice and civil rights for all Louisiana citizens” (“About Us”). This conversation, among texts and across eras, is another way in which the newspaper creates community, molding disparate time periods into a history of shared struggle.

Ultimately, this project responds to the call of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. when he writes that within African American periodicals, “a remarkable account of information about the world’s impact every day upon African-Americans, and their impact upon the world, can be scrutinized by scholars, thus filling in lacunae that even the most subtle intellectual history cannot otherwise address” (Foreword x). The *New Orleans Tribune* is no exception and should

continue to be studied as both an alternative history of black life in New Orleans in the nineteenth century and as a rhetorical tool that used self-representations of blacks' literacy practices to construct an African American discourse community that was worthy of citizenship and suffrage.

Chapter Two

“The Organ of the Whole Colored Population”: The *New Orleans Tribune* in Its Historical Period

Louisiana is in a very peculiar situation. Here, the colored population has a twofold origin. There is an old population, with a history and mementos of their own, warmed by patriotism and partaking of the feelings and education of the white. The only social condition known to these men is that of freedom. . . . There is, on the other hand, a population of freedmen, but recently liberated from the shackles of bondage. All is to be done yet for them. (*New Orleans Tribune*, 27 December 1864)

We are the organ of the whole colored population. The *Tribune* has always defended the interest of every colored man, without regard as to whether he was free before or since the war. The *Tribune*, knowing that the poor, uneducated freedman was more subject to be imposed upon, has made it its duty to watch his interest and expose the wrong practiced upon him. We have taken our brothers who have just emerged from slavery by the hand and have warmed their benumbed limbs, which were loaded with the shackles of slavery. We do not feel ashamed of them; they are of us, and we love them as we do ourselves. We are the organ of the oppressed, without distinction of race or color. (*New Orleans Tribune*, 23 December 1868)

During the spring of 1862, General Benjamin F. Butler wrestled control of New Orleans from Confederate troops (Tunnell 26). The history of Reconstruction in Louisiana that followed is arguably “the most intricate history of any Reconstruction state. At times the tale grows more tangled than the region’s labyrinth of swamps and bayous” (Tunnell 2). Not only was Louisiana the first Confederate state to be reconstructed, an experiment, but New Orleans was also “the greatest port and largest city of the South in 1860” (Rankin, “Origins” 418). In the *Crucible of Reconstruction*, Ted Tunnell divides Reconstruction in Louisiana into three periods: wartime Reconstruction under Lincoln, 1862-1865; presidential Reconstruction under Andrew Johnson, 1865-1867; and Congressional or Radical Reconstruction, 1867-1877 (2). The publication of the *New Orleans Tribune* spanned all three of these phases; however, in many ways its vision anticipated the goals of Radical Reconstruction from its beginning in 1864. First and foremost, the newspaper unequivocally advocated for Congressional Reconstruction. Also, if “Radical meant Negro suffrage and a commitment to a biracial society

based on equality and justice” as Tunnell argues (3), then the newspaper was such. Further, the daily was not merely committed to a “biracial society based on equality and justice,” but acknowledged the tri-partite racial structure that existed in New Orleans, dating back to its origin as a French colony. Although New Orleans’s black population exceeded 24,000 in 1860 and grew to over 50,000 in 1870 (Rankin, “Origins” 418; Blassingame 221), this group was further divided into those free before the Civil War and those emancipated as result of the war. The identification of these two portions of the city’s black population is necessary to understanding the ways in which Reconstruction was a “question of cultural identity” (Tunnell 5) and to comprehending the *Tribune*’s history and goal of universal male suffrage. As discussed in chapter one, throughout this project I will use the terms “free” and “freed” to distinguish these two groups of New Orleans’s blacks, prioritizing the difference in their antebellum legal status rather than distinctions in skin color, culture, or ethnicity, which I will nonetheless attend to below. I understand that in reality human beings resist such simplified categorization.

Free and Freed People of Color in New Orleans

In 1917, Alice Dunbar-Nelson described the need for a history of “People of Color in Louisiana”: “There is no State in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historical importance and yet about whom so comparatively little is known” (78). She continued, “His history is like the Mardi Gras of the city of New Orleans, beautiful and mysterious and wonderful, but with a serious thought underlying it all. May it be better known to the world some day” (Dunbar-Nelson 78). Many scholars have answered Dunbar-Nelson’s call and sought to further describe the largest free black community in the South. In 1860, there were 18,647 free blacks in Louisiana, 10,689 of whom lived in the city of New Orleans (Tunnell 19). Initially referred to

as “gens de couleur libres” in the French Code Noir from 1724 (Desdunes xxiii), this segment of New Orleans’s population was distinguished before the Civil War by what the New Orleans *Picayune* called “the mystic letters—f.m.c.,” free men of color (qtd. in Rankin, “Origins” 421). Not only were these individuals distinguished from slaves by their antebellum legal status, but also by their enjoyment of increased political rights. In 1856, Louisiana’s Supreme Court declared, “in the eyes of Louisiana law, there is . . . all the difference between a free man of color and a slave that there is between a white man and a slave” (qtd. in Tunnell 67; qtd. in Rankin, “Origins” 421). Free blacks were presumed to be free and enjoyed the rights to own and sell real and personal property, to legally marry, to sue and to be sued, to testify against whites, to learn trades and professions, and to participate in music and the arts (Tunnell 67; Rankin, “Origins” 421). They could also make contracts and inherit and transmit property by will, and they were exempt from the testimony of slaves (Rankin, “Free” 406). As the Civil War approached, however, this position of free people of color in New Orleans became threatened. Many began to migrate to rural areas, to the North, and to France and Latin America (Tunnell 67; Logsdon and Bell 208). In 1859, the state legislature charged all free blacks “to choose masters for themselves and remain slaves forever” (qtd. in Reddick 1), and free men, like freedmen, were required to carry a pass with them at all times to prevent their own enslavement or exile from the state (Rankin, “Origins” 419). Free blacks were forbidden to migrate to Louisiana, and other state legislation restricted free blacks’ rights to own property, to gamble, to own billiard tables, to sell alcohol, to shoot fireworks, to play cards and dominoes, to hold balls with slaves, and to publicly assemble (Nero 33, 58). The result of such legislation, which dissolved free and freed blacks into one homogenous mass, caused the free black population in New Orleans to decline from 19,222 in 1840 to 10,939 in 1860 (Reddick 1).

Other distinctions between free and freed blacks often included skin color and culture due to their differing ethnicities. According to Blassingame, in 1860 seventy-seven percent of free blacks were mulattoes or light-skinned and seventy-four percent of slaves were black, yet “Color per se was more apparent than real as the underlying cause of social divisions in the Negro community” (Blassingame 21, 155). Instead, “cultural differences” separated these two groups. “The free mulatto was French in thought, language, and culture while the black freedman was English-speaking and Afro-American in culture” (Blassingame 155). In explaining the cultural duality that existed in post-bellum New Orleans to W. E. B. Du Bois, historian Rodolphe Desdunes, too, relied on cultural distinctions to separate the “Latin Negro” from the “Anglo-Saxon or American Negro” (qtd. in Logsdon and Bell 203). Many free blacks considered themselves Creoles, native-born Louisianians of African and Latin European descent. Typically, Creoles in New Orleans spoke French, were Catholic, and were highly educated and had accumulated property and substantial wealth. For example, 283 free people of color owned \$724, 290 worth of real estate in 1860 (Bell 81), and Leavens estimates that New Orleans’s free black population in 1860 was worth an estimated fifteen million dollars (3). New Orleans historian Edward Tinker (1953) claims that free blacks in New Orleans were also “more highly educated than any of their race in the United States” (qtd. in Leavens 1). The literate culture of New Orleans’s free black population during the second half of the nineteenth century was unique; about eighty percent of the free black community was literate in 1850, compared to a city such as Baltimore where only forty percent of free blacks could read and write (Frazier, *Free Negro* 14). The literacy of New Orleans’s free black population continued to rise, for only 2,000 of approximately 19,000 free blacks remained illiterate in 1860, half the percentage of illiterate black males nationwide (Rousseve 110). Free men of color in the city published poems, stories, fables, and articles in *L’Album littéraire* in 1843 (Rousseve 63); New

Orleanian Armand Lanusse compiled *Les Cenelles*, the first collection of poems written by free men of color in the United States, in 1845 (Gehman 67); and 1,219 free blacks in Louisiana attended school in 1850 (DeBow 144).

Whereas these free people of color made up 6.4% of the population in New Orleans in 1860, slaves represented 8.5% of the city's inhabitants (Logsdon and Bell 206). Although many of these men and women were later freed as a result of the federal occupation of New Orleans and the Emancipation Proclamation by the time that the *Tribune* was published in 1864, they could be distinguished from Creoles because they were generally English-speaking, Protestant, less educated, and employed as contract laborers. Further, Canal Street physically separated free and freed blacks. Most free people of color lived downtown from Canal, whereas freedmen commonly lived uptown.

In the conclusion to his study of 201 black leaders in Reconstruction New Orleans, David Rankin contrasts free and freed blacks:

The black politician of Reconstruction New Orleans thus differed markedly from most of those he sought to lead. At the beginning of the Civil War he was a freeman, not a slave; he was of light, not dark, complexion; he was the son of an old New Orleans family, not an uprooted immigrant from rural Louisiana; he probably spoke beautiful French which whites admired rather than a slave dialect which they could barely understand; he possibly attended mass at St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest Catholic church in Louisiana, instead of Sunday night prayer meetings at St. James Chapel, the first African Methodist Episcopal church in New Orleans; he was literate, perhaps even well-educated, not illiterate and previously denied the most rudimentary education; he was a successful artisan, professional person, or businessman, not an impoverished, unskilled laborer; and finally, he had possibly been a soldier during the Civil War, serving in the Union army, not a runaway slave, struggling to stay alive and searching for family, friends, and food. ("Origins" 435)

The *New Orleans Tribune's* mission was to unite these two segments of the black population in the fight for universal male suffrage. The newspaper argued that it would be "easier to demand the freedom of all in the name of the Laws of Nature than the elevation of a handful of men of

varying lighter shades in the name of expediency. It was necessary to invoke justice, and justice is the same for all men, whatever the shade of their skin” (Houzeau 82). Further, as previously stated, after the Civil War legislation passed which limited the rights of free as well as of freed blacks. After all, antebellum distinctions of legal status became irrelevant when slavery was abolished in Louisiana in May 1864 (Tunnell 57). One journalist observed that before the war, free blacks “held themselves aloof from the slaves, and particularly from the plantation negroes,” but after the war a free black man explained, “We see that our future is indissolubly bound up with that of the negro race in this country; and we have resolved to make common cause, and rise or fall with them. We have no rights which we can reckon safe while the same are denied to the field-hands on the sugar plantations” (Reid qtd. in Tunnell 66-67). Not only did the *Tribune* then serve as an advocate for free and freed blacks based on principle, but on need. Therefore, the newspaper’s editor Houzeau focused on making its English section equal to its French edition, opened special columns to cover news from Protestant churches and fraternal organizations, and hired a non-Creole assistant editor, Moses Avery, to appeal to the freedmen in the city (Logsdon and Bell 237). The newspaper declared that it was “the organ of the oppressed, whether black, yellow or white” (6 December 1864).

Democrats and some white Republicans during the Reconstruction era responded by “exploit[ing] the ethnic differences among black New Orleanians and made it more difficult for them to achieve political unity,” according to Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell in “The Americanization of Black New Orleans” (204). Proponents of General Nathaniel Banks, who replaced Butler as Commander of the Gulf in December 1862, spread such divisive rhetoric. For example, Major B. Rush Plumly reminded the freedmen in 1864 that many free blacks had been slaveholders (12 October 1864) and alleged Confederates: “Indeed, there are not more decided Confederates to be found in the South than may be found among the free colored

Creoles of Louisiana. This rebel party is not large, but it is rich, aristocratic, exclusive, and bitterly hostile to the black, except as a slave” (6 December 1864). The producers of such rhetoric sought to divide and conquer the black population in New Orleans, for Blassingame admits that “white newspapers highlighted racial exclusiveness in the Negro community in order to divide and nullify its political strength” (153). These men used such division to forward their conservative goals of gradual Reconstruction and limited suffrage.

In April 1865, Plumly and Thomas Conway, who controlled the freedmen’s schools and Banks’s labor program respectively, urged American or freed blacks to respond to the *Tribune* with their own publication, the *Black Republican*. Conway explained the need for the paper: “‘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’” (qtd. in Logsdon and Bell 238). Therefore, the *Black Republican* was printed in English, “the tongue that brought us freedom,” and claimed to “be the true organ of the American colored people of Louisiana” (qtd. in Blassingame 156).

The *Tribune*, however, continued “to fully represent[s] the colored population in spite of all the efforts that some white men have made to divide them” and defended itself against the rhetoric of Plumly and his cohort: “The Major shall always find the *Tribune* as watchful for the rights of the freedmen as for those of the richest among the colored population. . . . Every effort of their enemies to divide them will be useless. Our real friends will not play in the hands of our foes, to sow the germs of discord among us” (6 December 1864). Logsdon and Bell draw a similar conclusion:

Despite their unscrupulous and damaging plots to divide the New Orleans black community, Banks and his cohorts 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. And no black leader appeared to take a more radical position than the *Tribune*. (240)

The remainder of this chapter will first briefly discuss the beginnings of the black press and the origin of the first African American newspaper in the South, *L'Union*. Then it will retell the history of the *Tribune* before returning to a further description of its ultimate goal, universal male suffrage, and the ways in which it again sought to unify free and freed blacks in the city. Simultaneously, I will acknowledge some of the newspaper's contradictions.

The Black Press in the South

The first black-owned newspaper in the United States was New York's *Freedom's Journal* in 1827. Edited by John B. Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish, the weekly paper announced its objective, "We wish to plead our cause. Too long have others spoken for us" (qtd. in Suggs 3). Between 1827 and 1862, another thirty black newspapers were published in the North, but not until the end of the Civil War was the first black newspaper in the South finally published (Suggs 3). In its first issue on September 27, 1862, *L'Union* claimed, "We inaugurate today a new era in the destiny of the South." The semi-weekly published in New Orleans would become the predecessor to many black newspapers in the South, including the *New Orleans Tribune*. Other members of the nineteenth-century black press in New Orleans eventually included the aforementioned *Black Republican* in 1865, the *Louisianian* in 1870, and the *Crusader* in 1889 (T. Davis 157-63). In "Republican Newspapers and Freedom of the Press in the Reconstruction South, 1865-1877," Richard H. Abbott emphasizes the importance of newspapers in the South: they were the only medium available to influence public opinion since the South lacked the publishing houses, magazines, lyceums, libraries, and schools of the North (474).

Eighty-three percent of the South's newspapers in 1860 also reported a political affiliation (Abbott 474). Abbott estimates that close to four hundred Republican papers existed

in the ex-Confederate states during Reconstruction, whereas 970 Democratic sheets were published, making Republican periodicals twenty-nine percent of the total (473). With sixty-three, Louisiana did have the highest number of Republican papers (Abbott 480). Brayton Harris distinguishes these two discourses from each other, “It is not an exaggeration to say that, as a rule, where the Republican press celebrated the rustic wisdom and sweet humanity of blacks, the Democratic press portrayed them as degraded and inferior beings, unfit for participation in a society as complex as that of the United States” (17). The *Tribune* and *L’Union*, its predecessor, spoke out against the Democratic faction both through their editorials and by direct responses to and critiques of such newspapers.

“We inaugurate today a new era in the destiny of the South!”: *L’Union*

L’Union, the first black paper in the South, began on September 27, 1862, after New Orleans was captured by federal troops: “The hour has sounded for the fight of great humanitarian principles against a vile and sordid interest which breeds pride, ambition, and hypocrisy [sic]” (Figure 1). A board of directors, whom the shareholders elected from the free black population every six months, managed the newspaper along with its editor, free black Paul Trévigne (Rankin, Introduction 19).¹⁵ *L’Union* was first printed as a bi-weekly on

¹⁵ Simmons and O’Brien claim that *L’Union* was first printed and edited by Frank F. Barclay until November 15, 1862 and then printed by L. Dutuit until June 4, 1863. Only then did the newspaper’s management fall to the described board of directors (Simmons 14; O’Brien 28-29). Members of the board of directors included Francis E. Dumas, who the *Tribune* would later support as lieutenant governor in the 1868 gubernatorial election; Louis T. Delassize, who became city recorder of conveyances and administrator of public works; Bernard A. Soulie, a commission merchant; Blanc F. Joubert, future United States assessor for the IRS and commissioner of the New Orleans metropolitan police; John Racquet Clay, future member of the city’s school board; and Oscar J. Dunn, later Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana (Rouzan 39).

L'UNION

No. 1. NOUVEAU-ORLÉANS, SAMEDI 21 SEPTEMBRE 1842. 2^e Année.

AN PUBLIS.

Des articles de nos écrivains, nous nous proposons de les publier dans nos colonnes. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public.

Vous êtes peut-être étonné de voir dans ce journal des articles qui traitent de la liberté de la presse. Mais nous sommes persuadés que la liberté de la presse est une chose qui est de la plus grande importance pour un peuple libre.

Aux Étrangers.

Les étrangers de notre pays ont une grande influence sur le public. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public.

Vous êtes peut-être étonné de voir dans ce journal des articles qui traitent de la liberté de la presse. Mais nous sommes persuadés que la liberté de la presse est une chose qui est de la plus grande importance pour un peuple libre.

POURQUOI ?

C'est pourquoi que nous nous proposons de publier dans nos colonnes. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public.

L'ÉBULLIAGE.

Il y a une grande ébullition dans le public. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public.

Vous êtes peut-être étonné de voir dans ce journal des articles qui traitent de la liberté de la presse. Mais nous sommes persuadés que la liberté de la presse est une chose qui est de la plus grande importance pour un peuple libre.

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Mérite Plus ou Moins en Région.

Le mérite plus ou moins en région. Nous sommes persuadés que les opinions exprimées dans ces articles, qui sont publiées dans ce journal, ont une grande influence sur le public.

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Figure 1: L'Union's Inaugural Issue; Courtesy NewsBank-Readex

Wednesdays and Saturdays in a two-page layout with five columns on each page. By Christmas, the paper became a tri-weekly and reduced its text eventually to three columns (Houzeau 71, footnote 5; T. Davis 153-55).¹⁶ *L'Union*, written mostly in French, was short-lived, dissolving in the summer of 1864 (Leavens 52; Connor 446-47). Some of the paper's shortcomings, according to Leavens, included its categorization as an "intra-caste journal," referencing its increased sympathy with the free black elite despite its support of the abolishment of slavery (39). The paper often limited its support of black suffrage to those blacks that were well educated and of the middle class. *L'Union* was insulted that free blacks, "a class which by its industry and education possesses all the qualifications necessary to exercise the right of suffrage in an intelligent manner," were disenfranchised because they belonged to the same race as freedmen (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 35). *L'Union* continued, "All those who . . . have lived in New Orleans long enough to be familiar with the [free] colored population of this city and appreciate its worth are in favor of endowing this population with the elective franchise"; this population worthy of suffrage did not include freedmen (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 35). Secondly, the paper was primarily printed in French, limiting its readership even in Louisiana. Once again, its language was a symbol of the Creole community and of its distinction from the growing mass of freedmen in the city. Although attempts beginning in July of 1863 were made to create an English edition, its French counterpart remained twice as long (Nero 91). Nero claims that "the French edition surpassed the English one to such a degree that the two language editions have been described as 'sister' newspapers instead of replicas of each other" (91). The French edition typically included more literature (such as poetry and serialized novels) and more advertisements than its English counterpart.

¹⁶ *L'Union* became a tri-weekly on December 23, 1862 (Rankin, Introduction 20, footnote 24; Nero 90).

Finally, the newspaper itself blamed its failure on “the poverty, timidity, and apathy of potential subscribers; the opposition of pro-Confederate Catholic priests; and the indifference of Union soldiers” (Rankin, Introduction 22-23). Numerous threats were made to burn the paper’s office and to kill its editor, Trévigne, whenever the slightest progress was made (Nero 96-97), and Bell and Logsdon also claim that the paper’s financial difficulties escalated when the subsidy that it had received from the army for printing public notices was cut off (229).

“Pariahs of the Proslavery Society”: The Founding of the *New Orleans Tribune*

Only two days after the closure of *L’Union*, one of its founders, a Paris-educated Creole named Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, purchased the paper’s printing equipment and launched the *New Orleans Tribune* (Nero 97; Rankin, Introduction 23; Bell 253; Rouzan iii).¹⁷

Roudanez was born in St. James Parish, Louisiana, on June 12, 1823, the son of a French merchant and a free woman of color (Figure 2).¹⁸ Although his baptismal record suggests that his parents may have attempted to pass him off as white (Rankin, Introduction 27; Leavens 13), Roudanez spent his adult life as a black man. He went to school in New Orleans where he eventually accumulated a small fortune through his investment in bonds. He then traveled to France at the age of twenty-one to study medicine under Phillipe Ricord at the University of Paris’s Faculty of Medicine (Rankin, Introduction 27; Connor 446; Leavens 14) and “took to the barricades in the 1848 revolution” (Bell 228).

¹⁷ O’Brien (35), Connor (448), Tunnell (79), and Leavens (52) mistakenly write that *L’Union* ceased publication on July 9, 1864 and, therefore, that twelve days lapsed before the founding of the *Tribune*. *L’Union*’s last publication was actually dated July 19, 1864.

¹⁸ Nugent (1), Du Bois (456), and Shugg (215) mistakenly claim that Roudanez was Santo Domingan.

Upon graduating with honors in 1853, Roudanez returned to the United States to earn a second medical degree from Dartmouth College. He established a successful medical practice, serving both blacks and whites, when he eventually returned to New Orleans in 1857 (Leavens 15;



Figure 2: Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, Proprietor of the *New Orleans Tribune*

Connor 446; Rousseve 119). Once the city was captured by federal troops, Roudanez joined other black men in establishing *L'Union* and then became the proprietor of the *New Orleans Tribune*, which would become the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States.

The *Tribune* was first issued on July 21, 1864 from 21 Conti Street between Chartres and Levee (Figure 3 and Figure 4):

Under the above title we publish now a paper devoted to the principles heretofore defended by the *Union*. Convinced that a newspaper, under the present circumstances, representing the principles and interest which we propose to defend and advocate was much needed in New Orleans, we shall spare no means at our command to render the *Tribune* worthy of public confidence and respect, and these were the reasons which prompted us to its publication. Satisfied that we shall meet with encouragement from every friend of progress and civilization, we have purchased the interest and material of the *Union*—a paper which we acknowledge to have well-filled its mission, however humble may have been this organ of an oppressed class, during the past three years of our social change and reform. The *New Orleans Tribune* shall temporarily be a tri-weekly, and of this present size, until we shall receive a new press and a complete assortment of material from New York, necessary for the publication of a daily, when it shall appear daily like the other city papers. The former subscribers to the *Union* shall be supplied with the *Tribune* under the same terms and conditions as they received the *Union*.¹⁹

In the beginning of its existence, the *Tribune* shared many of the qualities of its predecessor. It was a four-page tri-weekly, produced on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturday mornings, and assumed the subscription lists and prices of *L'Union* (Leavens 52). The paper soon became a daily, Mondays excepted, on October 4th of that same year, after the arrival of a new printing press. Much of the staff remained the same as well, including the editor, Paul Trévigne. Contrastingly, the *Tribune* was bilingual, produced in both French and English. Further, the slogan of the *L'Union*, “Memorial, Politique, Littéraire, et Progressiste,” was altered to

¹⁹ In November 1866, the *Tribune*'s office moved to No. 122 and 124 Exchange Alley between Conti and St. Louis streets (Rankin, Introduction 31).

New Orleans Tribune.

A TRI-WEEKLY PAPER.

FIRST YEAR.

NEW ORLEANS, THURSDAY, JULY 21st, 1864.

VOL. 1—No. 1.

OFFICE.
No. 100 N. Poydras Street, New Orleans, La.
TERMS.
Per Annum, in Advance, \$10.00
Per Month, \$1.00
Per Copy, 25 Cts.
Foreign, \$15.00
Single Copies, 5 Cts.
Printed and Published by
J. M. WICK,
No. 100 N. Poydras Street, New Orleans, La.

The New Orleans Tribune

The above was published a few days before the Tribune was first issued. It is a copy of the original, and is a very interesting document. It contains a list of the names of the subscribers to the Tribune, and a list of the names of the contributors to the Tribune. It also contains a list of the names of the subscribers to the Tribune, and a list of the names of the contributors to the Tribune. It is a very interesting document, and is a very valuable one.

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They are arranged by legislative action. The first step was to work in New England, which was done with the same industry which had produced thousands of thousands of men for the army and the navy. It was a very interesting and valuable paper, and it was a very valuable one.

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1864

Figure 3: The New Orleans Tribune's Inaugural Issue; Courtesy NewsBank-Readex

THE NEW ORLEANS TRIBUNE

Friday, Thursday & Saturday Always

New Orleans, Thursday, July 11th, 1868.

Captain of the Electric Spark.

New Orleans, July 11th.—The leading afternoon newspaper...

The meeting on Monday night was a grand success...

OFFICIAL.

Deputy of New Orleans. On the 11th of July...

Mr. Bellows on Reconstruction.

We do not desire to see the Reconstruction...

Mr. Bellows on Reconstruction. We do not desire to see...

Mr. Bellows on Reconstruction. We do not desire to see...

Mr. Bellows on Reconstruction. We do not desire to see...

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...to be in the hands of the Reconstruction...

Figure 4: The New Orleans Tribune, Back Page of Inaugural Issue; Courtesy NewsBank-Readex

“Political, Progressive, and Commercial” (Leavens 52). Above all, the *Tribune* arguably promoted the rights of all blacks, not just those of high socioeconomic standing or previously free men. Roudanez also recruited Jean-Charles Houzeau, a Belgian scientist, who arrived in New Orleans and took control of the paper as its editor on November 14, 1864 (Leavens 22, 26; Houzeau 78). He strengthened both the paper’s English section and the universality of its mission to elevate all blacks, associating the paper with the New Orleans Negro Party. Under Houzeau, the paper became “the rallying point for Louisiana radicalism” (Leavens iv) and increasingly influential, gaining national and even international recognition.

“Men of Words”: The Editors and Staff²⁰

The paper’s first editor and later associate editor, Paul Trévigne, was a native New Orleanian and Creole of modest means. He taught in a New Orleans private black school, the Société Catholique pour l’Instruction des Orphelins dans l’Indigence, for over forty years (Connor 446; Houzeau 71, footnote 6; Reinders 139; Nero 93; Desdunes 66-68). Trévigne spoke several languages and was “highly educated and endowed with keen intellect,” according to free man of color and historian Rodolphe Desdunes (67). Houzeau described Trévigne as “a gay spirit with literary tastes . . . who descended from a Spanish father . . . and had a little of the pride (the good kind) of a Castillian character” (qtd. in Rouzan 43). Some have blamed the caste prejudices associated with *L’Union* on Trévigne, for under his editorship, the *Tribune* still made comments such as, “while we [free blacks] are of the same race as the unfortunate sons of Africa who have trembled until now under the bondage of a cruel and brutalizing slavery, one

²⁰ Leavens describes both Roudanez and Houzeau as “men of words” or propagandists: “This type of person usually functions on paving the way for the fanatics who are capable of making seemingly impossible breakthroughs in the status quo” (76).

cannot, without being unfair, confuse the newly freed people with our intelligent population” (4 August 1864, French edition). Others, however, praise him: “our people therefore owe him a place among the immortals. Trévigne always cherished the respect and the trust we placed in him” (Desdunes 68).

When his successor, Jean-Charles Houzeau, took over the newspaper’s editorship on November 14, 1864, as previously mentioned, Trévigne continued as associate editor (Connor 448). Unlike Trévigne, Houzeau was an outsider and, although white (which will be discussed later in this section), did not qualify to vote based on his ancestry. He was a Belgian scientist, journalist, and utopian socialist born on October 7, 1820 in Mons, Belgium to an aristocratic family (Figure 5). After attending the College of Mons and the University of Brussels, Houzeau failed his university exams and decided to tour Europe from 1840-1845 (Rankin, Introduction 2-4). He visited Paris during the lead up to the French Revolution of 1848 and found its ideologies and support of republican government influential on his own worldview and future work. He was appointed assistant astronomer of the Royal Observatory when he returned to Brussels but was eventually removed from his position because of his membership in the Phalange, a secret society dedicated to democratic principles (Rankin, Introduction 6). After traveling to New Orleans in 1857, he settled in Texas where he helped blacks and white abolitionists flee to Mexico. Houzeau, eventually forced to leave Texas himself, then moved to Philadelphia, by way of New Orleans, and began writing articles for *L’Union* under the pseudonyms “Cham” and “Northern Correspondent” (Connor 447; Rankin, Introduction 22). After completing a 220-page book of abolitionist arguments, *Question de L’Esclavage*, Houzeau accepted Roudanez’s plea to return to New Orleans and to serve as



Figure 5: Jean-Charles Houzeau, Editor of the *New Orleans Tribune*

editor of the *Tribune* as “Dalloz” (Leavens 22-26).²¹ Again, Houzeau expanded the English section of the paper, for the newspaper’s reliance on French “kept these colored men from the general life of the country . . . 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” (Houzeau 80). He also acknowledged the pragmatic necessity of uniting Creoles in the city with the freedmen, wrote approximately twenty editorials each week, and “transform[ed] a local newspaper into a newspaper of national importance” by sending it to Congressmen, chief Northern newspapers, and many European subscribers (Houzeau 151, 79).

One cannot ignore the irony, however, that the editor of the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States was himself white. Houzeau’s dark complexion and insistence that the *Tribune* was “edited by men of color” and not “controlled by any white man” aided Houzeau’s “passage” at the *New Orleans Tribune* for three and a half years (10 September 1864; 6 September 1864). He admitted that he “never sought to deny the rumor that I had African blood in my veins” (Houzeau 84). Houzeau’s identification with blacks in New Orleans, however, was one of contradiction. For example, by signing his initial editorials to the *L’Union* “Cham,” a reference to the biblical father of the black race, Houzeau demonstrated paternalistic tendencies. While simultaneously, he wrote in 1867, “For myself, who knew how to make myself a proletarian in Europe, it had not been difficult to make myself black in the United States. I think and I feel that which a freedman must think and feel. I do not consider

²¹ According to David C. Rankin, editor of Houzeau’s memoir, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*, “Dallosz” may have referenced an incorrect pronunciation of the editor’s own last name, a French publishing house then in existence, or the nineteenth-century, French Dallosz family of progressive lawyers, journalists, and politicians (Introduction 69, footnote 1).

things from the point of view of a protector, but as they have told me a hundred times, I really am one of them” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 42). Further, Houzeau described his forfeiture of his “Caucasian character” as an act of defiance, for “it was generally agreed—and all the whites in New Orleans held it on the best faith—that blacks or whites ‘lowly enough to associate with blacks’ were intrinsically worthless,” yet he chose to use the pronoun “we” when referring to African Americans in the city (83). Houzeau argued for increased political rights for African Americans in the city as part of a broader case for natural rights of all people throughout the world:

The cause that the “Negro newspaper” defended was after all but a chapter in the great universal cause of the oppressed of all colors and all nations. Whether the victim is called serf in Russia, peasant in Austria, Jew in Prussia, proletarian in France, pariah in India, Negro in the United States, at the heart it is the same denial of justice. I understood the situation of colored men in New Orleans; I easily identified myself with them, because for even though the individuals were different, the cause was nothing new or strange to me: on the one hand I found an unjust and privileged ruling class, and on the other an oppressed class that had been trampled under foot and had no role in society. (Houzeau 75-76)

But Houzeau considered his status as an outsider, and therefore independence, to be even more important to his success than either his empathy or understanding of oppression. He wrote to a friend, “It is the absences in me of personal designs which has made my independence, and which has made me a ‘sure man,’ identified with the cause of the elevation of the black” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 42).

The remainder of the staff at the newspaper was “an extraordinary group of black, brown, and white workers” (Rankin, Introduction 29), but by the end of 1865 almost one-quarter of the *Tribune*’s staff was white (Rankin, Introduction 25, footnote 33).²² In an effort to bridge the American blacks and Creoles in the city, Houzeau hired a black American assistant

²² O’Brien cites Houzeau as the only white man on the *Tribune*’s staff (26).

editor, Moses Avery. Avery had served as secretary of the National Union Brotherhood Association in New Orleans (Bell and Logsdon 237). Other staff members included J. Clovis Laizer, the son of a free woman of color and Swiss immigrant, whom Houzeau hired to contribute to the English edition of the newspaper. Laizer was trilingual, able to speak English, French, and Spanish. Other unnamed employees included a Frenchman from the South of France who was also trilingual, “a young mulatto who ran the night shift, a light-colored man who studied at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, a man whom Houzeau described as ‘a black with very frizzy hair,’ and a number of printers who had served as officers in the Union army” (Rankin, Introduction 29).

O’Brien and Rouzan list additional possible contributors from the city’s free black literati. O’Brien claims that Joanni Questy acted as the *Tribune* correspondent from Mexico until his return to New Orleans when he then acted as associate editor from 1865-1869 under the pseudonym “Chronicler” (26; Desdunes 28). Questy was a native of New Orleans, fluent in French and Spanish, and known for his poetry (Desdunes 25-28; Rouzan 18). Armand Lanusse was also possibly a staff writer and editor of the newspaper until his death in 1868, and Adolphe Duhart, Dr. Joseph Chaumette, and Lucien Mansion sent literary material to the paper (O’Brien 26; Rousseve 115-17). Lanusse, like Trévigne, was a teacher and then principal at the Société Catholique pour l’Instruction des Orphelins dans l’Indigence, a poet, and the publisher of *Les Cenelles*, the first book of poetry by free men of color in the United States (Rouzan 18).²³ However, the absence of bylines in the newspaper and the lack of attention granted to these individuals in Houzeau’s journal make it difficult to define with certainty their actual role

²³ *Les Cenelles* contained the poetry of seventeen Louisiana Creoles of color over a length of 210 pages. The title of the collection referred to the fruit or small berry produced by a hawthorn bush. Desdunes draws a connection between the two when he writes, “The hawthorn, ‘a thorny bush with both white and pink flowers,’ expressed, I believe, the trials of these men who were laboring in an environment so alien to their poetic talents” (11).

at the *Tribune*, despite their location in the middle of New Orleans's radical movement, which the paper advocated.

The Material Text

Although the *Tribune* began as a tri-weekly like its predecessor, *L'Union*, it soon became a daily. The following announcement forecasted the newspaper's transition into a daily paper: "We shall spare no means to make the *Tribune* a first-class paper, containing Editorial Matters, Local Intelligence, Court Reports, the Latest News of the Day, Monetary and Commercial Reports, Marine News, Etc." (24 September 1864). This list included the main news items contained in the *Tribune*. Since the newspaper was also bilingual, it contained two pages in French and two pages in English. The order of these editions changed throughout the paper's life. The paper expanded to five columns on November 1, 1864 to allow more space for advertisements, to six columns on August 29, 1865 after it became the official organ of the Friends of Universal Suffrage and then the Republican Party of Louisiana, and to seven columns when it received the patronage of the United States government. The paper returned to only six columns when it lost its patronage after the gubernatorial election of 1868.

The *Tribune*'s nameplate also listed the date and city of publication, an edition's volume number, the newspaper's publication schedule, and later the office's location. Also, on the newspaper's first page, the colophon listed the *Tribune*'s subscription and advertising rates, which will be discussed more below. The back of the newspaper's English front page, included a masthead that contained ever-changing mottos: "Practical Results of Secession. The Rebellion Crushed. The Slaves Free"; "Universal Suffrage Is the Only Safe and the Only Just Basis of Reconstruction"; "To Every Citizen His Rights: Universal Suffrage. Equality Before the Law. To Every Laborer His Due: An Equitable Salary and Weekly Payments. Eight Hours

a Legal Day's Work"; and "Proposed Amendment to the United States Constitution. No state shall make any distinction in civil rights and privileges among the naturalized citizens of the United States residing within its limits, or among persons born on its soil of parents permanently resident there, on account of race, color, or descent."

"A Financial Failure"

Jean Baptiste Roudanez, the older brother of Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, was often listed as the *Tribune's* publisher.²⁴ Born in 1815, J. B. Roudanez was born, educated, and lived in New Orleans throughout his entire life. He was a "kettle setter," an industrial worker in sugar refineries, before the war. When *L'Union* transformed into the *New Orleans Tribune*, J. B. Roudanez became one of its publishers (Rouzan 56-57). O'Brien mistakenly claims that J. B. Roudanez was the proprietor, editor, and "man in charge" of the *Tribune* (25, 27, 34, 53).

As a four-column tri-weekly published on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the *Tribune* cost six dollars for a year's subscription. The newspaper raised its costs once it became a daily. A daily issue of the *New Orleans Tribune* sold for five cents, and a yearly subscription twelve dollars, payable in advance.²⁵ Once the *Tribune* started to receive the Associated Press wire service on September 28, 1866, its staff increased the price of the daily for the last time to ten cents and raised the cost of a yearly subscription to sixteen dollars (Figure 6). Starting January 6, 1866, the *Tribune* issued an additional weekly edition "at the request of many of the friends of our cause, especially of those living in the country parishes,"

²⁴ Desdunes (30, footnote 6) and Pride and Wilson (74) mistakenly introduce J. B. Roudanez as Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez's son.

²⁵ On September 5, 1864, the staff temporarily increased the newspaper's subscription to eight dollars and ten cents for a single issue because of the rising cost of paper.

which was issued on Saturdays and included “all the important leading articles published in the daily edition during the week, together with the latest political news, and literary contributions or extracts” (23 December 1865). The weekly edition initially cost \$2.25 for a year’s subscription and only five cents a piece and later four dollars and ten cents, respectively. The staff of the newspaper reasoned that “one large issue a week could be mailed to six times as many sources at the same expense of sending each daily” (Leavens 65). This “compendium of the events of the week” offered the *Tribune* a chance to save money without decreasing the breadth of its circulation.

The New Orleans Tribune.

Terms of Subscription.
PAYABLE INVARIABLY IN ADVANCE

Daily Edition.

One year..... \$ 15 00
 Six months..... 8 00
 Three months..... 4 00
 One copy..... 10 cts.

RATES OF ADVERTISING.

Squares.	1 month net.	2 mos. net.	3 mos. net.	6 mos. net.	12 mos net.
One.....	\$ 12	\$ 24	\$ 30	\$ 50	\$ 75
Two.....	24	48	60	100	150
Three.....	36	72	90	150	225
Four.....	48	96	120	200	300
Five.....	60	120	150	250	375
Six.....	72	144	180	300	450
Seven.....	84	168	210	350	525
Eight.....	96	192	240	400	600
Nine.....	108	216	270	450	675
Ten.....	120	240	300	500	750
Eleven.....	132	264	330	550	825
Twelve.....	144	288	360	600	900
Thirteen.....	156	312	390	650	975
Fourteen.....	168	336	420	700	1050
Fifteen.....	180	360	450	750	1125
Twenty-six.....	312	624	780	1300	1950

All transient advertisements, first insertion, per square \$1 50; each subsequent insertion, 75 cents.
 Advertisements inserted at intervals to be charged as new each time.
 All business notices of advertisements to be charged 75 cents per line, each insertion.

Figure 6: Subscription and Advertising Rates for the *New Orleans Tribune*, 1869; Courtesy NewsBank-Readex

From its beginning, the staff of the *New Orleans Tribune* realized that advertising was the “the great secret of successful business,” or the key to financial solvency:

It has been said with a good deal of truth, and it is generally admitted, that the great secret of successful business lies in a judicious outlay for advertisements. Now we pray our readers to bear in mind that the field opened to trade by advertising in the *N. O. Tribune* is a new one, almost unexplored yet, and that it is a large and rich field. (4 February 1866)

Initially, advertisements cost one dollar per square of ten lines for the first insertion, but once a daily, the *Tribune* increased the rate for advertisers to \$1.50 per square for the first insertion and \$0.75 for each subsequent insertion. Advertisements published at intervals were charged as a new insertion each time. On November 1, 1864, the newspaper announced that it would have to expand to five columns to meet the demands of advertisers: “In order to give place to our advertisements without deminishing [sic] the room for our usual amount of news matter, we have enlarged our paper making five long columns on each page, instead of four short ones as heretofore.”

Aside from subscription and advertising rates printed in the paper, little is known about the day-to-day finances of the paper, with the exception of Houzeau’s report that his salary was increased from 6,000 francs in 1864 to 14,000 francs by the end of 1866 (Rankin, Introduction 41). As a matter of fact, Rousseve describes the *New Orleans Tribune* as a “financial failure,” for Roudanez spent \$35,000 of his own money on it (119). If it had not been for his successful medical practice and dealings in real estate, Roudanez would have been unable to financially sustain the newspaper for the six years that it existed (Nero 20). Warnings to subscribers in the paper that their newspapers would be stopped if their bills remained unpaid suggest one

possibility for the paper's dismal finances.²⁶ The *Tribune* pleaded, "All who wish the success of our cause are invited to subscribe to the *Tribune*, and to patronize us with advertisements of all kind" (10 December 1864), and offered commissions to solicitors and newspaper dealers who sold new subscriptions or advertising space.

Fortunately, in April 1867, it was designated the "Official Organ of the United States Government."²⁷ Usually such a right was granted to only two papers in each state to publish federal laws, judicial decisions, and official announcements. In Louisiana, the contest was fierce since the designation included a cash subsidy of up to one thousand dollars per month (Abbott 479; Leavens 70; Connor 457). Possible candidates included the *Republican*, which was founded in 1867 and critiqued by the *Tribune* as "full of prejudice against the colored man" (4 May 1867); the country paper the *Iliad*, whose owner William Jasper Blackburn had opposed the desegregation of public schools; and the *Tribune*, "a veteran surrounded by mere draftees" (Houzeau 140). Both white newspapers fought to exclude the *Tribune* from the competition; however, Houzeau posed this question to Congress, "With such credentials as we have, I said, if we are rejected, it will only be because we are black. Is this the first signal that Congress will give our country the day after proclaiming the equality of rights?" (Houzeau 140). General Butler responded by demanding that the *Tribune* be included; therefore, Congress amended the law to allow for three official newspapers in the state of Louisiana. "Thus the two white newspapers were satisfied, and the audacity of having chosen a colored newspaper was, so to speak, excused" (Houzeau 141). Abbott emphasizes how important patronage was to Republican papers in the South: "In the case of the Reconstruction South,

²⁶ For examples of such warnings, see the *Tribune* on November 10, 1864 or August 22, 1865.

²⁷ Nero writes that the *Tribune* was the "Official Organ of the United States government" from 1865-1868 (5).

antagonism toward the Republican party was so strong that most of its newspapers could not obtain enough subscriptions or advertising to survive, and hence they became dependent on printing contracts provided by federal, state, and local governments” (473). The importance of patronage to the financial solvency of the *Tribune* is underscored by its eventual demise in 1870, after the federal government removed its subsidy.

“A Veritable ‘Tribune’”: Readership and Distribution

On February 10, 1866 the *Tribune* boasted that it had a “better circulation than any other paper in the city.” It cited a circulation of 3,000 papers per day (21 May 1865). I acknowledge the limitations of relying on the newspaper itself and on Houzeau’s journal to predict the daily’s circulation since they may have exaggerated the *Tribune*’s influence to gain readers and advertisers. However, little other information is available, for “Houzeau’s memoir stands alone as the only insider’s account of the nation’s first black daily” (Rankin, Introduction 60). Therefore, I have tried to use statistics or assertions that are consistent between the two and to supplement them whenever possible with the research of the few others who have studied the daily.

Aside from purchasing a subscription, the costs of which were described in the previous section of this chapter, New Orleanians could buy a single copy of the *New Orleans Tribune* from various stores and restaurants in the city and nearby localities. The paper listed the following locations as places where the *Tribune* was sold in New Orleans: B. Dupont’s grocery store, R. Aberton’s grocery store, P. Glaudin’s cigar store, A. Simon’s book-store, J. F. Winston’s book-store, G. Thomas’s book-store, C. G. Holle’s News Depot, and Ellis’s News Depot. Outside of the city, interested parties could find the *Tribune* for sale at W. H. Bryant’s restaurant on Front Street in Mobile, Alabama, at Mr. Henry Shrote’s stationery store on

Peterson Street in Algiers, Louisiana, and at W. G. Wilkinson's News Depot in Donaldsonville, Louisiana.

The majority of the paper's subscribers were Creoles living in the city: "The *Tribune* having the largest circulation of all the papers published in French in New Orleans, has been awarded, as will be seen by the following, the official publication of the French list of uncalled for letters" (26 January 1868). But the *Tribune* also circulated among white New Orleanians. In 1864, the paper boasted a very large circulation in the Army, and then on February 21, 1866, it reported that "[a]ll Union men, all families coming from the North . . . read the *N. O. Tribune*." However, the *Tribune*'s intended audience was not white ex-Confederates, for Houzeau clearly stated, "We do not write for you; we have a better educated and more elevated public" (87). But the *Tribune* was read "by a sizable number of white radicals" (McPherson 346).

The newspaper's staff also made great strides to provide those living in the rural parishes with access to the *Tribune*, for as they declared, "Let the friends of union and liberty see that our paper circulate all over the land and among the oppressed" (2 December 1864). To meet this goal, the *Tribune* hired agents in nearby parishes to collect subscriptions, to sell advertisements, and to handle any problems concerning the receipt of the newspaper in their assigned areas. The following men were listed as such agents for the *New Orleans Tribune*: Louis Francois, Baton Rouge; J. Landraud, Hermitage Landing; Gustave Donato, Opelousas and St. Landry; Charles Muller and Alexander R. Fancois, St. Martinsville and Attakapas; J. J. Guerineau, Marksville and Avoyelles; Emerson Bentley, St. Mary; Paul Guidry, Terrebonne; Louis Comeaux, Houma; and Emile Bonnefoi, Pointe Coupee. The paper also named Linden Bentley as the General Agent for Circulation. Nugent claims that copies of the *Tribune* were

sent to all the parishes in Louisiana (2), and the *Tribune* compared its country readership to that of one of its contemporaries, the Democratic *New Orleans Times*:

In every country place where the *Times* or any other paper goes, the *Tribune* goes also; and where the *Times* has one or two readers only, every number of the *Tribune* is read by twenty or thirty different persons, of all status in life and all conditions. From the banker to the journeyman, from the rich planter to the country laborer, all read the *Tribune* as the organ of the party that will soon hold the helm of power. (4 February 1866)

The newspaper emphasized its unique circulation among the freedmen, then mostly plantation laborers: “But planters could not advertise for laborers, in any paper, with more advantage than in the *Tribune*. Plantation hands do not read the *Times*, while most of them are used to read or hear the reading of the newspaper that defends the rights of the oppressed and the humble” (24 October 1865). The paper defended itself against the claims of its contemporaries, such as the *New Orleans Bee*, that it was solely “the organ of that portion of our population formerly known as free colored people” (23 December 1868). This mission, however, made the *Tribune* unpopular with ex-Confederates in the country parishes. According to the newspaper, “Numbers of the *Tribune* are frequently ‘confiscated’ on the roads” (14 December 1865), and someone filed a complaint with the postmaster about “(s)ome individual who either rob (sic) the papers or destroy them to prevent them from reaching their destination” (26 January 1868).

In addition to the newspaper’s Southern correspondents, “Civis” in Donaldsonville; “Veritas” in Shreveport; “J.A.C.” in Shreveport, Alexandria, Baton Rouge, and Plaquemine; and “Alpha,” “Alabama,” “Mobile,” and “Liberty” in Mobile, the *Tribune* had correspondents in Northern cities like Boston and Washington and in Paris as well. They usually wrote under the corresponding pseudonyms “G. J. H.,” “Viator,” “A.” or “L.,” and “Domingo” and were “the best posted and careful correspondents,” providing the *Tribune* with timely news from beyond the city before its contemporaries (10 May 1865). The newspaper also exchanged news

with the North via numerous Northern newspapers. On December 17, 1865, the daily included an article “The Northern Press and the *N. O. Tribune*,” which listed some examples:

Within a week we received a large number of Northern papers, with the customary demand of exchange. We are glad to see that the republican editors of the North have their eyes open to the necessity of having a source of information which will tell them the truth. Nothing can better illustrate the *ex parte* character and the insufficiency of the rebel press of the South.

Among these new exchanges we remark the Valparaiso (Ind.) Republic, which is very severe upon the administration of Gov. Wells and the persecutions inflicted upon Union men; the Milwaukie (Wis.) Sentinel, the New York Sun, the Brooklyn Union, the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Journal, the Cincinnati Commercial, the Cincinnati Gazette, the Missouri State Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Philadelphia New Era, the Burlington (Vt.) Bulletin, the Boston Transcript, the Pittsburg Freiheits Freund (or Friend of Freedom, in German), the Columbia (Ga.) Sun, the Savannah Herald, the Houston (Texas) Telegraph, and three weekly papers edited by colored gentlemen, viz: the Charleston South Carolina Leader, the Hampton (Va.) True Southerner, and the Baltimore True Communicator.

However, for the *Tribune*'s message to reach this Northern audience and the increased number of influential elected officials who would eventually use the paper to correspond with the public, Houzeau reasoned that its English section would have to be expanded:

On the contrary, it needed to become a veritable ‘tribune,’ from which one spoke to the government and to the country. . . . Hereafter, 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. (81)

Once these changes were put in place, Houzeau sent hundreds of copies of the daily regularly to members of Congress to provide testimony to blacks' condition in Louisiana during Reconstruction (Rankin, Introduction 34). Rouseve even claims that “copies were sent to every member of Congress” (120). On July 24, 1865, Houzeau wrote to General O. O. Howard, commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, “From this day forward the *N. O. Tribune* will be sent to you. I take the liberty to state that the *Tribune* takes a particular interest in the

welfare of the freedmen, and is the only paper in Louisiana that exposes the wrongs perpetuated against them” (1 February 1866). Charles Sumner, William Kelley, George Julian, Lyman Trumbull, George Boutwell, Jacob Howard, and Richard Yates were among the Congressmen who frequently corresponded with the daily (Rankin, Introduction 40; Leavens 59). The newspaper itself claimed that “there is not a single colored man who does not feel that the *Tribune* is the rostrum from which the oppressed and the down-trodden may be heard by the American nation” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 4), and Desdunes wrote that the leaders of the *Tribune* “acquired a prestige that made them as powerful in Washington as in New Orleans” (133).

The *Tribune* was quite elated when fellow newspaperman and advocate for universal suffrage Frederick Douglass addressed the daily and confirmed that he was familiar with it and approved of its mission. Douglass wrote to J. B. Roudanez: “Absence from home on a lecturing tour is my apology for not sooner sending you a line in answer to your inquiry whether I ever see the ‘Tribune.’ I have to say, that I not only see it some times, but that I see it and read it with very great pleasure. I am proud that a press so true and wise is devoted to the interests of liberty and equality in your Southern latitude” (27 October 1865). Douglass further endorsed the *Tribune*’s goal of universal suffrage: “Keep your little sheet on the breeze. Hold up this one grand idea without compromise or qualification and we shall come out right in the end” (27 October 1865).

The paper’s continuance of its French edition, however, did aid its circulation in Europe. As already mentioned, the *Tribune* had a Paris correspondent, “Domingo.” But French liberals, including Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, Victor Schoelcher, Armand Barbès, and Adolphe Crémieux, also started a fund for freedmen in the United States (Leavens 58-59) and contributed to organizations such as the Freedmen’s Aid Association,

which were supported by the *Tribune* (Rankin, Introduction 33). The Convention of Colored Men in Louisiana recognized the daily for “its influence with the leading men of America and Europe, and its advantage of being published in French and English” (20 January 1865).

Similarly, Rousseve writes that within the columns of the *Tribune* “friends of the Negro’s cause both in the North and in Europe found a weapon with which to fight the battle for the black man in the state” (120).

“The First Advocate of Liberty in Louisiana”: The *Tribune*’s Civic Participation

Organizations such as the Freedmen’s Aid Association, the Louisiana chapter of the National Equal Rights League, and the Friends of Universal Suffrage grew out of the *Tribune* and helped to increase the newspaper’s circulation. Both Houzeau and J. B. Roudanez were members of the Freedmen’s Aid Association’s board of directors (13 April 1865).²⁸ Created in February 1865, the Freedmen’s Aid Association afforded blacks land, loans, agricultural equipment, and legal counsel and proposed the creation of “labor colonies” or agricultural partnerships between free and freed blacks. The association’s strategy for economic reform will be discussed further in chapter four.

The National Equal Rights League was founded in October of 1864 in Syracuse, New York, during a meeting of 144 black delegates from eighteen states, including Louisiana. A Louisiana chapter was organized in 1865 and named the *Tribune* as its official organ. The main impetus of the National Equal Rights League was to lobby for black voting rights nation-wide (Bell 256). The organization also created a bridge between free and freed blacks in the city under the leadership of Captain J. H. Ingraham, for “[t]he League . . . is to be composed of

²⁸ Houzeau also acted as vice-president for the Louisiana Homestead Association, which helped freedmen to acquire land under the Southern Homestead Act of 1866 (Rankin, Introduction 43).

every person who belongs to our race, without distinction of sex or color” (27 December 1864).

The *Tribune* described the Louisiana Equal Rights League’s convention:

There, were seated side by side the rich and the poor, the literate and educated man, and the country laborer, hardly released from bondage, distinguished only by the natural gifts of the mind. There, the rich landowner, the opulent tradesman, seconded motions offered by humble mechanics and freedmen. . . . all the classes of society were represented, and united in a common thought: the actual liberation from social and political bondage. (15 January 1865)

The Equal Rights League not only united people of all social classes, but was also one of the few organizations that opened its doors to women.

Organized around a similar goal, the Friends of Universal Suffrage, an interracial coalition of Louisiana radicals created on June 10, 1865, also named the *Tribune* as its official organ (30 June 1865). This organization sought to “deprecate any discrimination founded upon origin or birth” and advocated for unqualified black male suffrage. According to Houzeau, the Friends of Universal Suffrage “demanded, in the broadest terms, the total assimilation of the proscribed race into the body of the nation”:

Suffrage was merely the culmination, the crowning achievement, which would reveal that the work of raising this people up was complete, that nothing remained to be accomplished. . . . to demand suffrage for the black and the colored man implied a simultaneous demand for all the civil and political rights guaranteed to other citizens. (111)

Only months after its creation, the Friends of Universal Suffrage merged with an interracial group of moderates in the city, the National Union Republican Club, to form the Republican Party of Louisiana. Initially, the *Tribune* and Houzeau, who held an elected position within the Friends of Universal Suffrage, opposed this union, arguing, “Let us be the allies of the republicans, not their tools; let us retain our individuality, our banner, and our name” (Rankin, Introduction 43; 26 September 1865). However, once the Republican Party of Louisiana announced the *Tribune* as its official organ, Houzeau was quick to recognize that “[t]his unity

between a party and a newspaper added authority to the publication so designated. . . . From that moment on we had the sympathy and support of the masses. Our standard became theirs” (115). This standard was evidenced in the newspaper’s masthead, “Official Organ of the Republican Party of Louisiana. Universal Suffrage. Equal Rights Before the Law” (28 September 1865). The newspaper’s association with the Republican Party increased its circulation:

The rapid strides of the Republican Party in Louisiana, of which the *Tribune* is the organ, have increased our circulation to an extent which permits us to add some new improvements to our paper. The sacred task for which the press has been established has often been turned into the pursuit of money-making without regard to principles, truth, or justice; but the *Tribune*, the first advocate of Liberty in Louisiana, has never sought any other aim than the triumph of the political creed which it has so arduously sustained, and which to our great satisfaction is making so rapid progress. The friends of the *Tribune* will ever find us ready to spare no means at our command to make the journal worthy of their patronage, and the support of all true Republicans. Owing to the reason above mentioned we have enlarged our paper in breadth and length in order, not only to fulfill our duty as the organ of the party, but to promise and advance its interest. (21 November 1865)

Again, the *Tribune* increased its size to six columns when it became the official organ of the Republican Party of Louisiana. Chapter five will further discuss how the newspaper, with the Republican Party, held a voluntary election for a territorial delegate to Washington in late 1865. However, the *Tribune*’s association with the Republican Party of Louisiana, too, came to an end.

“Too French in America”: The End of the *New Orleans Tribune*

The national presence of the paper lasted for about four years. During the race for governor in 1868, Louisiana’s Republican Party stood divided. The “compromisers,” mostly carpetbaggers, chose to nominate Henry Clay Warmoth, a native of Illinois, as governor and

Oscar James Dunn, the English-speaking son of an ex-slave, as his running mate.²⁹ Warmoth had served in the Union army and as judge of the provost court in New Orleans (Tunnell 151). On the other hand, Roudanez, leader of the “pure Radicals,” disagreed with the party’s choice of candidates and instead supported James Govan Taliaferro, a white Louisianian and Unionist, as governor and Francis Ernest Dumas, a wealthy Creole and captain of the first black regiment, as his running mate.³⁰ Both of the men supported by Roudanez had been large plantation owners, had held slaves, and were therefore “tainted by Southernism,” according to Houzeau (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 49). Taliaferro had previously voiced his opposition to black suffrage and at first opposed the Thirteenth Amendment, and Dumas was a free black but spoke only limited English (Rankin, Introduction 47-48). Against the advice of Houzeau, Roudanez refused to support the party’s nominations, causing Houzeau to resign from the *Tribune* on January 18, 1868 (Nero 105; Leavens 73; Rankin, Introduction 50; Houzeau 151): “My colored friends and I could only walk together if we chose the same road. It was not my place to force on them, despite themselves, a plan of action for the defense of their own cause” (Houzeau 151).³¹ Roudanez’s and other Creoles’ dislike of Warmoth and similar “Yankee adventurers arriving in the baggage of the federal army” who “regarded the colored race as a simple instrument . . . for profit and advancement,” although understandable, was “illogical, misplaced, and unfortunate,” according to Houzeau (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 48-49).

²⁹ Some historians have confused Dunn’s status with his parents’ and stated that he was an ex-slave himself (Du Bois 469-70; Rousseve 108).

³⁰ F. Wayne Binning names the two factions of the Louisiana Republican Party “compromisers” and “pure Radicals” in his chapter “Carpetbaggers’ Triumph: The Louisiana State Election of 1868” (259). The *Tribune* originally named Thomas J. Durant as its candidate for governor; however, Durant declined the newspaper’s endorsement and admitted that his proposed candidacy was without his consent (29 December 1867; Binning 265). The newspaper began running a banner endorsing Taliaferro and Dumas on January 28, 1868.

³¹ Rouzan writes that Houzeau resigned on January 16, 1868 (23).

Instead, Houzeau reasoned that “one ought to be American before being Louisianian,” making it “necessary to introduce this new [northern] element if one wants to break the Southern spirit” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 49). Houzeau warned Roudanez that undermining the Republican Party’s nomination by proposing an independent ticket of previous slaveowners would “reopen the gap between the free born mulattoes and the black freedmen” that he had “worked three years to make disappear” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 49-50). Free blacks’ “spirit of independence” led them to be offended by white Yankees’ philanthropy, which in contrast had done much to aid the Protestant freedmen (Houzeau qtd. in Bell and Logsdon 237). Roudanez simply refused to support the election of a carpetbagger; however, snubbing Warmoth once again divided the black population of New Orleans and alienated a large part of the paper’s constituency.

The effect on the paper was enormous. The *Tribune* lost its contract with the Republican Party to the *New Orleans Republican*, and the United States government replaced it with the *St. Landry Progress*, both pro-Warmoth newspapers (Rankin, Introduction 51; Binning 266; Connor 458; Bell 274). Warmoth won the election, and the *Tribune* failed to appear for seven months after April 27, 1868. Although a brief attempt to revive the paper was made in protest of Warmoth’s veto of two civil rights bills, the *Tribune* became a weekly in March 1869 and the last edition of the paper appeared in 1870 (Rouzan 23; Leavens 73; Binning 268; Connor 458).³² Leavens relates the demise of the *Tribune* to Roudanez’s position as a free black, his membership in the Creole community, and his own political philosophy:

³² Warmoth was eventually impeached in December 1872, and William Pitt Kellogg became governor of Louisiana (Tunnell 171). Tunnell inaccurately cites the last year of the *Tribune*’s publication as 1869 (75), and Rankin claims that the paper actually lasted until 1871 (Introduction 56).

He [Roudanez] was too refined for the class he tried to lead. His social analogue was more the white aristocrats than either the Negro or white Republican leaders . . . The paradox was that he was a colored man with upper-class white ideals who was forced by race to identify with the Negro cause . . . He wanted both races to share in the state's administration, but the chiefs had to be taken from among the educated elite. (18-19)

Roudanez's contemporaries named him "a monarchist who preferred France to the United States" (Binning 268), and Houzeau described him as "too French in America" (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 50). Without the balance that was once provided by Houzeau, the *New Orleans Tribune* could no longer resist the criticisms of those such as Plumly, discussed above, that identified it as an intra-caste journal similar to its predecessor *L'Union*. The newspaper's own paternalism, which occasionally found its way onto its pages, eventually destroyed it:

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. (29 December 1864)

One cannot deny, however, that for the four years spanning 1864-1868, *the New Orleans Tribune* was influential in shaping the political ideologies and realities of New Orleans and in sharing free blacks' literacies to secure its goal, universal male suffrage.

The Mission of the *New Orleans Tribune*: Universal Male Suffrage

In early 1864, the black leaders of *L'Union* sent two delegates to Washington, armed with a petition signed by one thousand free black property owners, thirty-seven black veterans of the War of 1812, and twenty-two white radicals (Logsdon and Bell 224). The petition requested that President Lincoln extend voting rights to those black men who had been free before the war. However, the two delegates, none other than Jean Baptiste Roudanez and E. Arnold Bertonneau, a wine merchant, chose to add a memorial to the original petition in which

they demanded “also the extension of this privilege to those born slaves, with such qualifications as shall affect equally the white and colored citizen.” They continued, “this is required not only by justice, but also by expediency, which demands that full effect should be given to all Union feeling in the rebel States, in order to secure the permanence of the free institutions and loyal governments now organized therein” (qtd. in Logsdon and Bell 225-26). Roudanez and Bertonneau’s change of heart probably resulted from their meetings with free black leaders in the North and Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner and Representative William D. Kelley of Pennsylvania. Upon receipt of the petition and his meeting with Roudanez and Bertonneau, Lincoln wrote to Michael Hahn, governor of Louisiana, suggesting that “some of the colored people . . . as, for instance, the very intelligent, and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks” be made voters (qtd. in 28 June 1865).

Unfortunately, however, Lincoln’s advice met with little practical success during the conservative convention of 1864 in Louisiana. Article 15 gave the legislature power to extend suffrage to others who were qualified as citizens due to military service, property ownership, or intelligence; however, earlier during the same convention delegates agreed that Negroes would never be allowed to vote (9 December 1864). The new state constitution was ratified in September of 1864 (Memelo 5-6), but its allowance of limited black suffrage remained a “vague and hollow promise” (Ripley qtd. in Tunnell 41).

The *Tribune*, however, continued the fight for suffrage, arguing in the name of justice, while explaining that without black suffrage control of Louisiana would soon return to pardoned rebels. The newspaper’s criticism of the Smith bill during its early existence also proved its dedication to universal male suffrage, securing the vote for free and freed blacks alike. The bill, named after its creator Senator Charles Smith of St. Mary Parish, initially sought to enfranchise only quadroon men, men “having no more than one-fourth negro blood,”

by legally labeling them as white (10 November 1864). After meeting with defeat in the Senate, Smith returned with a plan that mimicked the 1864 constitution: blacks who met certain requirements of “intellectual fitness,” had served a year in the army, or had paid thirty dollars a year in taxes be granted the right to vote (16 November 1864). On November 12, 1864, the *Tribune* critiqued the Smith bill by arguing, “It must be borne in mind that while that bill is an advantage to some, it is the grossest injustice to others. At this moment of turmoil when all the sons of the land should be linked together in an unbroken column to front the common foe, no such dissevering element ought to be thrown into the ranks. . . . let it be known that ‘United we Stand, Divided we Fall.’” It continued, “it would have created dissensions, and formed three casts [sic], (white, white-washed and black) when it is bad enough to have two (white and colored)” (16 November 1864). More specifically, the newspaper used its critique of the Smith bill as “clear proof that colored people are not ‘divided into castes’” as Plumly and his associates suggested, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter (6 December 1864). The Senate ultimately rejected the bill, and the *Tribune* named itself the “cause of the defeat of the bill” (6 December 1864).

The *Tribune*’s foremost belief that “freedom without equality before the law and at the ballot box is impossible” (15 November 1864) demanded that it continue its battle for universal male suffrage. In the chapters that follow, I rhetorically analyze various editions across the lifespan of the daily to investigate specifically how the *Tribune* encouraged, enabled, and represented multiple literacy practices within the African American community. These literacy practices mirrored the proposed qualifications for suffrage: intellectual fitness, manhood and property ownership, and an understanding of civics. I ultimately argue that the newspaper created an identity as citizen for free and emancipated blacks alike. Although New Orleans was “the first Confederate city to experience the humiliation of invasion and the ordeal of

Reconstruction,” the Crescent City was also home to “the earliest and the longest equal-rights campaign of the Reconstruction era” (Rankin, “Origins” 418). Within this campaign, the *New Orleans Tribune* represented the voices of free and freed blacks.

Chapter Three

“We Now Think for Ourselves, and We Shall Act for Ourselves”: The Newspaper’s Views on Schooling

There is no man in the world so perfectly identified with our own interest as to understand it better than we do ourselves. . . . At the first step—not very material in itself—that we attempt to make, we find tutors around us, who take upon themselves to redress our conduct, and try to prescribe what we have to do. We have asserted our manhood, and we will do it again. We need friends, it is true; but we do not need tutors. The age of guardianship is past forever. We now think for ourselves, and we shall act for ourselves. (*New Orleans Tribune*, 20 January 1865)

Throughout its lifetime, the *New Orleans Tribune* demonstrated its suspicion of “guardianship,” or philanthropy from beyond the city’s black community, through its editorials, such as the one quoted above. First, African Americans could best understand what they themselves needed, for “With us the burden is a reality and no abstraction” (4 February 1869). Secondly, such “tutors” were often oppressors; therefore, their own motives were often at odds with the best interest of the oppressed, in this case New Orleans’s African American population. The *Tribune*’s staff used the example of England and America to illustrate that it was a “ridiculous and rather insulting proposition that the oppressor is the best friend of the oppressed, and the oppressed the enemy to himself”: “Who would dare say that the English is the best friend to the American, and that the American does not know what is better for his own interest and is an enemy to himself?” (29 December 1867). The daily’s warning against such “tutelage” was especially poignant when it came to African American schooling. The newspaper instead demanded African American control of blacks’ education. In doing so, the newspaper situated itself within a long tradition of blacks’ self-help and educational agency,

which have only recently begun to be described by scholars such as James D. Anderson and Heather Andrea Williams.³³

In *Literacy in American Lives*, Deborah Brandt characterizes literacy as a resource, explaining “not only why individuals labor to attain literacy but also to appreciate why, as with any resource of value, organized economic and political interests work so persistently to conscript and ration the powers of literacy for their own competitive advantage” (5). On the one hand, African Americans during slavery often viewed literacy as a means of proving their humanity and of securing the possibility of escape. Immediately after the Civil War, blacks generally viewed literacy, and schooling, as a potential site of literacy learning, as vital to their future social mobility. The right kinds of schools, those which sought to educate rather than to control blacks, could help them to attain literacies, the ability to read and write but also to understand history and the democratic ideals that it promised, for instance. In *Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future After Slavery*, Mary Niall Mitchell argues, “Freedpeople, formerly free people, and their allies viewed education as fundamental to the political and economic future of all people of color after emancipation. . . . [S]chools . . . challenged the professed superiority of the white race” (191). African Americans’ literacy would also help them to meet one of the proposed requirements for suffrage: intellectual fitness.

³³ Anderson’s *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* seeks to describe the ideologies underlying the educational institutions developed by and for blacks in the South during this period of time and describes the structure and curriculum of common schools, normal schools, high schools, and institutions of higher education for African Americans. In *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, H. Williams asks, “What did ordinary African Americans in the South do to provide education for themselves during slavery and when slavery ended?” (3). She further argues that it was only through the self-determination of blacks that a system of public education was developed for the benefit of both races.

On the other hand, one of the dominant ideologies of the nineteenth century, “scientific” racism, classified humans into discrete species that were then characterized as either superior or inferior to each other based on “scientific evidence.” Sir Francis Galton, the father of eugenics, wrote in *Hereditary Genius* in 1869, “The average intellectual standard of the Negro race is some two grades below our own” (qtd. in Watkins 38).³⁴ Louis Agassiz also placed African Americans at the bottom level of his racial hierarchy, and physicians such as Dr. John H. van Evrie and Dr. Samuel Cartwright described the brains of African Americans as underdeveloped and small (Watkins 29, 31). Subscribers to this ideology used literacy as a “weapon” against blacks first to prevent slaves from reading or writing their way to freedom and later to justify their exclusion from political participation and from public schooling (Brandt, *Literacy* 106). While literacy is often rhetorically constructed as liberatory, in the nineteenth century, literacy—or the claim that blacks were unable to become literate—was also used as a means of oppression. If African Americans were intellectually inferior because of their genetic makeup, schools could do nothing to improve their situation. Intelligence was fixed and hereditary, not capable of being developed in schools. William Watkins explains that such discourse “provided a powerful rationalization for slavery and the subsequent apartheid system in the southern United States” (33).

These competing discourses, from within and without the African American community, during Reconstruction resulted in unique models of literacy sponsorship. Brandt defines “sponsors” as “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support,

³⁴ Sir Francis Galton created a hierarchy of race as well. He positioned races in the following order: ancient Greeks, first; Anglo-Saxons and other Europeans, second; Africans, third; and Australian aborigines, last (Watkins 36).

teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (*Literacy* 19). The Northern missionary societies, which I will describe in the next section of this chapter, sought to evangelize blacks and to gain new members for their churches, while the Freedmen’s Bureau benefitted from sponsoring a school curriculum which would keep blacks in their place, a place separated from whites.

Alternatively, in this chapter, I argue that the *New Orleans Tribune* sought to increase blacks’ access to literacy in order to challenge the social hierarchy of the Reconstruction South and to argue for the right of suffrage. The daily published evidence of blacks’ self-help efforts and praised their control over private schools, advocated for integrated schooling, and supported blacks’ learning of history through its sharing of its staff’s historical literacy with its readers and subsequent argument for a history curriculum in the city’s schools. Therefore, I contend that the city’s African Americans’ own educational vision predated, but also contrasted, the efforts of white organizations such as Northern missionary and religious societies and the Freedmen’s Bureau, despite the fact that the dominant historical narrative has identified the educational mission with the latter.³⁵ I first describe the multiple and varied sponsors of black education in New Orleans before analyzing the newspaper’s commentary on schooling.

³⁵ Examples of histories which credit missionary teachers or the government with educating African Americans during Reconstruction, hence eliminating the agency of blacks themselves, include Henry Lee Swint’s *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870*, Robert C. Morris’s *Reading, Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870*, and Ronald E. Butchart’s *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen’s Education, 1862-1875*. Swint excuses Southern opposition to black education by claiming that its impetus was Southern whites’ dislike of Northern teachers meddling in the South’s business rather than of blacks being educated. Morris observes, “Black education was a cooperative venture involving the Freedmen’s Bureau, benevolent societies, and a corps of teachers that by July 1870 numbered 3,500” (xi); participants in Morris’s “cooperative venture” do not include blacks. Finally, Butchart argues that African American education was initiated by missionary societies as a “safe” alternative to land ownership: “They [Afro-Americans] needed land, protection, and a stake in society. They needed and demanded meaningful power. They were given a school” (9).

African American Schooling in New Orleans

Mitchell observes that “it was in southern Louisiana, and specifically New Orleans, that opposing interests in the struggle over freedpeople’s education voiced the most expansive ideas about the racial future of the South and nation” (191). Arguably these “expansive ideas” were due to the large population of highly educated and wealthy free blacks in the city, as discussed in the previous chapter, and to them politically organizing through institutions such as the Republican Party of Louisiana and the *New Orleans Tribune*.³⁶ The staff of the *Tribune* envisioned change in the South’s social order, but a prerequisite to their revolution was education: “Afro-Creole intellectuals [in the 1840s and 1850s] advocated education as a means to counteract the damaging effects of an increasingly oppressive social and political order” (Bell 133). The staff of the daily had profited themselves from the opportunities for education in antebellum New Orleans and were, therefore, well aware of the importance not only of basic literacy, the ability to read and write, but also of the power of learning history and the democratic ideals that it promised.

In *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, H. Williams asks, “What did ordinary African Americans in the South do to provide education for themselves during slavery and when slavery ended?” (1). To answer this question, she suggests that we “must cut across traditional constructs of periodization . . . to observe the visions of enslaved

³⁶ New Orleans historian Edward Tinker (1953) claims that free blacks in New Orleans were “more highly educated than any of their race in the United States” (qtd. in Leavens 1). The literate culture of New Orleans’s free black population during the second half of the nineteenth century was unique; about eighty percent of the free black community was literate in 1850, compared to a city such as Baltimore where only forty percent of free blacks could read and write (Frazier, *Free Negro* 14). The literacy of New Orleans’s free black population continued to rise, for only 2,000 of approximately 19,000 free blacks remained illiterate in 1860, half the percentage of illiterate black males nationwide (Rousseve 110). As for property ownership, 283 free people of color owned \$724, 290 worth of real estate in 1860 (Bell 81), and Leavens estimates that New Orleans’s free black population in 1860 was worth an estimated fifteen million dollars (3).

people emerge into plans and actions once they escaped slavery” (H. Williams 1). Similarly, this section of this chapter first explores the modes of education that were available to blacks, both free and freed, before the Civil War, in order to then understand how the educational vision of the *New Orleans Tribune* and its staff developed and to appreciate the other discourses on education that the daily was in conversation with.

Although New Orleans’s public school system, developed in 1841, admitted only white students, blacks in the city found alternative means to education long before the Civil War. Most African Americans in antebellum New Orleans who were educated received their instruction in private schools or from private tutors (Desdunes 106). The Catholic Church contributed to blacks’ education as early as 1727 when an order of French nuns, the Ursulines, arrived in the city determined to educate its female population. The Ursuline Sisters accepted whites, Native Americans, slaves, and free women and girls of color as boarders and as day pupils: in 1728 Marie Hachard wrote, “Our little community is increasing from day to day. . . . We have, also, seven slave boarders to teach and prepare for baptism and First Communion. Besides, we have a large number of day pupils and Negresses and Indians who come two hours every day to be instructed” (qtd. in Dawdy 58). In addition to religious education, the Ursulines instructed their enslaved African and Native American students in reading, writing, and sewing (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 37). Dawdy describes the Ursulines’ mission: it “included a directive to educate Indian and slave women not only to be good Christians but also to be functional literates” (59). In “‘Whatever Diversity of Shade May Appear’: Catholic Women Religious Educators in Louisiana, 1727-1862,” Donna Porche-Frilot and Petra Munro Hendry point out that “while being female was the only criterion for admission to the convent school, class distinctions were strictly upheld” (37). Therefore, free girls of color may have received additional instruction in French, Latin, geography, and arithmetic, like their white

counterparts, if their families could have afforded the tuition of boarders (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 39). Ultimately, the Ursulines offered black women in New Orleans a rare “*relatively* integrated educational experience” and access to at least basic literacy (emphasis added, Dawdy 59).³⁷

Nearly a century later, the Ursulines left the French Quarter to move downriver from the city. Rather than abandoning the education of African American girls, who would no longer be able to attend instruction at the Ursuline convent, the nuns recruited Sister Marthe Fontière, a member of the Ladies of Charity from France, to open a school in New Orleans, which offered classes for enslaved and free blacks (Bell 128; Deggs xxx).³⁸ Opened in 1823, this “first known Catholic school for girls of color” enrolled eighty students of color in 1824 and ninety in 1839 (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 46). Control over the school, which later became known as the St. Claude School, remained within the “Ursulines’ circle of influence” until 1838 (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 46). One of the St. Claude School’s students, Henriette Delille, a free woman of color, founded the city’s first order of African American nuns, the Sisters of the Holy Family, in 1842. Despite the 1830 Louisiana state law which made teaching slaves to read and write a crime, the Sisters of the Holy Family’s first priority was “the teaching of the poor slave children, and a great deal was accomplished,” according to Bell (131).³⁹ The Sisters of the Holy Family established “the first black Catholic convent school” and began sponsoring

³⁷ See Emily Clark’s *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* for more information on the Ursulines and their mission of female education.

³⁸ Bell lists the foundress’s name as Fortière.

³⁹ The 1830 Louisiana law stated, “That all persons who shall teach, or permit or cause to be taught, any slave in this state, to read or write, shall, on conviction thereof . . . be imprisoned not less than one month nor more than twelve months” (qtd. in H. Williams 205). In addition, according to the same law, “whosoever shall write, print, publish or distribute any thing having a tendency to produce discontent among the free coloured population of the state, or insubordination among the slaves therein” could be punished by death or life imprisonment (qtd. in H. Williams 14).

formal education for free girls of color as early as 1842 (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 52). The order's Bayou Road Convent School for Colored Girls, opened ten years later, provided boarders and day and evening students a French classical curriculum, but "[r]eligious instruction was the focal point of the Holy Family curriculum" (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 54). The Sisters of the Holy Family opened eight more schools before the end of the nineteenth century (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 57). The Oblate Sisters of Providence, another order of black nuns from Baltimore, also began a school in New Orleans in 1866, but, unlike the Sisters of the Holy Family, their efforts were short-lived (Nolan 44).

Finally, many of New Orleans's African Americans received their education from the Couvent School. Madame Marie Couvent, a free woman of color in New Orleans, bequeathed to the Catholic Church the money necessary to open a school in 1848 (Devore and Logsdon 42; Desdunes 22).⁴⁰ Operated solely by free blacks, the Société Catholique pour l'Instruction des Orphelins dans l'Indigence, or the Catholic Institute for Indigent Colored Youth, was called an orphans' school to curtail Southern white opposition, but it has been described as "the nursery for revolution in Louisiana" (Devore and Logsdon 42). Although under the guidance of the Catholic Church, "the institution admitted children of any religious denomination and remained largely a secular institution" (Mitchell 17). The school, which instructed its pupils in both French and English, eventually enrolled 250 co-eds in its day school (Devore and Logsdon 42). Parents who could afford tuition paid a monthly fee to sustain the school, and philanthropists within the black community such as Thomy Lafon and Aristide Mary donated funds (Desdunes

⁴⁰ Marie Couvent was originally from West Africa where she was enslaved as a child and sent to Saint Domingue. She escaped to New Orleans during the Haitian Revolution and eventually married Bernard Couvent, a free black carpenter in the city (Neidenbach).

102, footnote 3).⁴¹ Men of the *Tribune*, Armand Lanusse, Joanni Questy, and Paul Trévigne, all served as teachers and principals of the school (Desdunes 22, 104). Desdunes commends the success of the school, later called Holy Redeemer School: “Under such direction the school prospered and became famous for the quality of the students it graduated. . . . The program of studies at the Institute provided a solid education for all our people” (22, 102, footnote 3).

In 1855, many private free black schools were forced to close when the Louisiana legislature essentially banned all charitable, scientific, literary, or religious societies organized by free people of color through revisions of corporate law. The number of students attending such institutions decreased from 1,008 in 1850 to merely 275 in 1860 (Bell 126). In addition, an 1852 law allowed police to search free black schools for slaves, who were forbidden access to education (Bell 126). Due to these increased restrictions, most of the private black schools that survived the antebellum period were those protected by the Church, such as the schools discussed above. The enslaved also continued to be educated in clandestine schools, which convened after dark and on the Sabbath, and in “pit schools,” which were housed underground in the woods and covered by vines and bushes (H. Williams 13, 20-21).⁴² Many free blacks who had the resources chose to send their children outside of Louisiana to Europe, primarily France, to receive a continental education and to escape the harsh political climate of the state. Approximately two thousand of the city’s free blacks were either educated in Europe or in other parts of the United States besides the South during the antebellum period (Blassingame 11). Free blacks in the Crescent City spared no means to secure an education for themselves

⁴¹ The Catholic Institute also received money from the city and the state. It is “notable for being the first black-run school in the state of Louisiana to garner both state and city appropriations” (Porche-Frilot and Hendry 47).

⁴² Additional information about these schools for the enslaved is lacking. The survival of the details of their existence in archival sources was curtailed by the necessity that they remain hidden due to their prohibition.

and their enslaved brethren, fostering a tradition of self-help even before the Civil War through their sponsorship of literacy in private schools, in clandestine schools, and in Europe.

Not only does Mitchell claim that black residents of New Orleans voiced “the most expansive ideas about the racial future of the South and the nation,” but she also writes that the city was home to many “opposing interests” that “struggle[d] over freedpeople’s education” (191). Debates between these “opposing interests” became especially evident immediately after the Civil War. H. Williams cites Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith to explain, “Education and power are terms of an indissoluble couplet. It is at times of social upheaval that this relationship between education and power becomes most visible” (5). Three of the many literacy sponsors of African American education, which emerged during Reconstruction, included 1) Northern benevolent and religious societies, such as the American Missionary Association; 2) the Freedmen’s Bureau; and 3) African Americans’ own organizations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Each sponsor produced a unique discourse, providing its own reason for supporting black instruction and vision of what that education should look like. Therefore, answers to the questions about who would control black schools, whether or not these schools would be integrated, and what these schools would ultimately teach were highly contested.

The dominant narrative of African American education often begins with the relief efforts of Northern benevolent and religious societies. In *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*, Ronald Butchart estimates that in 1866, 1,405 teachers paid by Northern societies taught in 975 schools and that fifty-one societies sponsored freedmen’s education from 1862-1875 (5). One example of such an organization in New Orleans was the American

Missionary Association (AMA), who organized at the demand of the Union Army.⁴³ Receiving its funding primarily from Congregationalists, the AMA established its first school for freedmen in 1861 (Leavell 31).⁴⁴ In “The American Missionary Association and Black Education in Louisiana, 1862-1878,” Joe M. Richardson describes the first AMA school in New Orleans. The school was opened by Isaac G. Hubbs in January 1864 and enrolled sixty adults ages twenty to seventy who desired to be teachers. Other AMA schools in the city included one organized by Charles and Lydia Strong for black soldiers and the later School for Liberty which taught some 508 boys and girls.⁴⁵ Smaller schools existed in New Orleans, Goodrich Landing, Baton Rouge, and Port Hudson (Richardson 205). Blassingame estimates that by December 1864 the AMA supported seven teachers and six hundred students and a Sunday school with 950 students in Louisiana (110). Between 1865 and 1869, however, the AMA’s work in the state virtually ceased due to General Banks’s dismissal of Northern teachers who refused to sever their ties with the AMA (Richardson 209).⁴⁶ Banks believed that “local teachers would generate less hostility than Northern ones and also make subordination of

⁴³ General Sherman’s words from South Carolina are representative of many as he sought “a highly favored and philanthropic people” and explained that “to relieve the government of a burden that may hereafter become unsupportable, and to enable the blacks to support and govern themselves in the absence of their disloyal guardians, a suitable system of cultivation and instruction must be combined with one providing for physical wants” (qtd. in H. Bullock 19).

⁴⁴ According to Henry Bullock in *A History of Negro Education in the South*, the AMA was originally incorporated in 1849 (19), whereas Richardson traces its beginning to 1846 (205). Although originally organized as an interdenominational relief society, by 1860 almost all of its funding was raised within Congregational churches and almost all of its leadership was Congregational. Butchart argues, “The AMA insisted on calling itself interdenominational, hoping thereby to monopolize the evangelical wing of the freedmen’s aid work. Few were convinced, however” (6). Congregationalists were a family of Protestant churches in which each congregation was run autonomously.

⁴⁵ According to the December 24, 1864 edition of the *Tribune*, the School of Liberty was under the control of Principal Mr. John C. Tucker, with the assistance of Mr. Thomas A. McMaster and Miss M. J. Nelson.

⁴⁶ Only three AMA schools existed in Louisiana during this time period, according to the AMA’s records: these schools were located at Goodrich Landing, Bullit’s Bayou, and New Carthage (Richardson 209).

the black population easier” (Richardson 208). In addition, Banks ultimately wanted to curtail the impact of the AMA, since the organization refused to endorse his labor program and instead advocated for plantation schools (Richardson 208).

One of the criticisms of religious societies in general is that they taught freedmen only the basic literacy skills or even just the rote memorization which would be needed to read and quote the Bible, rather than helping them to rise above their position as laborers on the bottom-rung of society. For example, the AMA made clear that “*its object is chiefly religious—to convert and save the soul*” (emphasis in original, qtd. in Butchart 37), emphasizing that the priority of most religious societies was to mold the freedmen into obedient Christians.⁴⁷ Secondly, the access to schooling which missionary societies provided is often exaggerated; James McPherson claims, “At no time were more than 10 percent of the freedmen of school age attending the [missionary] societies’ schools” (qtd. in Anderson 13). Finally, the AMA’s paternalism denied blacks control of the operations of their schools.⁴⁸

In addition to Northern missionary and benevolent societies like the AMA, the federal government sponsored black education during Reconstruction under the supervision of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Public schooling for blacks in the city was legislatively mandated by Louisiana’s 1864 constitution (Leavens 56). Article 141, “the first constitutional provision ever

⁴⁷ Many authors exempt the Quakers from this critique. For example, Butchart writes, “Only the Quakers resisted the tendency to subordinate the freedmen and their schooling to the dictates of denominational imperialism” (41), and H. Williams agrees, “Whereas many AMA ministers predicated their commitment to abolition on a perception of African Americans as lowly beings whom the ministers would raise up, Quaker missionaries were more likely to see that African Americans were capable of functioning on their own” (94-95). The Quakers and African Americans’ relationship more closely resembled a mutual partnership.

⁴⁸ H. Williams observes that “representatives of northern benevolent associations . . . arrived in the South certain that their education, experience, northern-ness, and whiteness ordained them to control freedpeople’s educational experiences” (83). To illustrate her point, H. Williams shares the story of Margaret Adams in New Orleans. Adams and other black parents disagreed with the AMA’s hiring choices (H. Williams 83-87). H. Williams concludes, “freedpeople’s reliance on outside help subjected them to the AMA’s judgment of who would teach them and their children” (87).

made for the education of Negroes in Louisiana,” stated, “The Legislature shall provide for the education of all children of the State, between the ages of six and eighteen years, by maintenance of free public schools by taxation and otherwise” (qtd. in Memelo 4-5).

Immediately after the war in 1864, General Banks charged three military men with creating a Sunday school system “for the purpose of giving greater care, industry, and intelligence to the laboring classes of freedmen, and inspiring them with a higher sense of their obligations to society, to their race, *and to all rightful authority*” (emphasis in original, qtd. in Mitchell 129), and by the end of 1865, 14,000 black students were attending 150 of such schools.⁴⁹ These schools, however, were soon subsumed under the control of the Bureau.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the Bureau was not originally given a budget but was instead to operate solely on the funds raised from the rents of abandoned lands, which were drastically curtailed by President Johnson’s later pardon of ex-Confederates in 1865 (Butchart 99). Therefore, on December 27, 1865, Bureau officials closed all black schools in New Orleans under their charge per Circular No. 34, resulting in the transformation of former Bureau schools once again into local, private schools run by the black community (Anderson 9-10). On January 30, 1866, the *Tribune* observed, “Some schools have been shut up: others have exacted a fee, and a rather heavy one (\$1.50 per month) from the pupils.” Therefore, less than a dozen Bureau schools survived in

⁴⁹ Devore and Logsdon claim that seven schools were already teaching fourteen hundred students even before Banks appointed his Board of Education in March of 1864 (57).

⁵⁰ In 1865 President Lincoln created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands under the authority of the War Department and the leadership of General O. O. Howard (Cimbala and Miller xv). The Freedmen’s Bureau was to manage “all abandoned land, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states . . . under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the head of the bureau and approved by the President” (qtd. in Cimbala and Miller xv). Although the Bureau’s role within education remained unmentioned in the law, a revision which budgeted one-half million dollars for the “repair and rental” of school property survived President Andrew Johnson’s veto in 1866 (Butchart 99). Howard agreed that education was the “talisman of power” for the freedmen (qtd. in Cimbala and Miller xxvii) and eventually spent \$5 million dollars of the Bureau’s budget on the raw materials for constructing school buildings for the freedmen and for the transportation of Northern teachers to the South (Cimbala and Miller xxvii).

New Orleans in 1867 (Devore and Logsdon 66). More black students attended private schools than Bureau schools in the Crescent City; in January 1867, 2,967 students attended sixty-five private schools, whereas only 2,527 students attended fifty-six Bureau schools (Anderson 10). The newspaper also critiqued the Bureau because “it automatically segregated the black from the white, and second, the system of tutorage automatically kept the freedmen in a dependency state” (Nugent 24).

Blacks’ sponsorship of their own education both predated and existed alongside Northern missionaries’ and the government’s efforts. African Americans in the United States raised approximately \$25 million for their own schools from 1865-1915 (Anderson and Moss 36). Blacks’ own religious organizations such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, and black Baptists formed “Sabbath” schools throughout the South. In 1869, John Alvord, reporting to the Freedmen’s Bureau, estimated that 1,512 Sabbath schools with 6,146 teachers and 107,109 students existed; the AME’s schools alone enrolled 40,000 pupils in 1868 (Anderson 13).⁵¹ In conjunction with these African American denominations, the African Civilization Society (ACS) remained an advocate for black education until 1875 (Anderson and Moss 17). The educational efforts of some of these black organizations, however, faced similar critiques as those above. For example, the AME supported separate schools, rather than the integrated schools advocated for by the *Tribune*. The AME reasoned that black teachers could provide the best role models for black students and feared that integration would cause these teachers to lose their jobs (G. Williams 77-78).

⁵¹ The large involvement of the Methodists and Baptists is most likely because of their large constituencies among the black population; in 1890, 53% of African Americans who were members of a church were Baptists and 44% were Methodists (Anderson and Moss 17).

Herbert Gutnam contends that New Orleans's blacks' education depended on "'much more than either Yankee benevolence or federal largesse.' The 'communal values' freedpeople had developed under the system of slavery made the education of their children possible" (qtd. in Mitchell 199). In the remainder of this chapter, I use editorials on education and advertisements for schools in the *New Orleans Tribune* to problematize the dominant narrative of African American education in the Reconstruction South. As Gutnam explains, most existing histories have identified the educational mission with Northern philanthropy and religious instruction and governmental sponsorship, whether in the figure of the Yankee schoolmarm or the Freedmen's Bureau. The problem with this version of African American education is that African Americans themselves are cast in the roles of recipients who are acted upon by others, as opposed to active agents capable of initiating education within their own communities. I read the newspaper's promotion of schooling to counter this portrayal of African Americans as recipients and instead to position them as agents, facilitating and sponsoring their own literacy. Ultimately, the *New Orleans Tribune* emphasized blacks' own literacy sponsorship and determination to be educated: "That education is desirable we acknowledge from the fact that we have never failed to advocate education at the proper time and on the proper occasion" (12 January 1866). African Americans created their own schools for literacy learning as well as used alternative institutions, such as the newspaper, to educate blacks when traditional educational institutions were not available to them. Blassingame describes black New Orleanians' quest for education: "By establishing private schools, fighting successfully first for admission to the public schools and then for integrated education, and by supporting the establishment of three colleges, Negroes in New Orleans inaugurated their long campaign to eradicate illiteracy from the black community" (107). This chapter will address each of these three prongs of black New Orleanians' educational mission, using the *Tribune* as evidence for

African Americans' literacy sponsorship. I will focus on the newspaper's 1) support of schools controlled from within the black community, 2) argument for integrated schooling, and 3) advocacy for a history curriculum and higher education for black students.

Whose Schools?: A Critique of Philanthropy and Support of Black Private Schooling

The *Tribune* and its staff demonstrated a general distrust of “professional philanthropists and reformers” from beyond the city’s black community and the organizations that they represented and instead dedicated much time, space, and money to supporting private schools controlled by blacks (4 February 1869). Brandt argues that since “sponsors deliver the ideological freight that must be borne for access to what they have” (*Literacy* 20), “access to the right kinds of literacy sponsors is so crucial for political and economic well-being” (“Sponsors” 559). The newspaper recognized that schooling could serve as a mechanism for social control and, therefore, was cautious of educational philanthropy. It distinguished itself from “theorists”: “We are not in the condition of professional philanthropists and reformers, who from a comfortable distance look off upon the real or imaginary evils of society, and descant in splendid rhetoric upon ‘equality’ and ‘fraternity’, and the rights of colored men in particular” (4 February 1869). Instead, the daily argued that “we plead for equality and fraternity; but not as philosophers in their closets write beautiful essays about abstract principles. We are seeking to throw off a tremendous load which has been our inheritance for centuries. With us the burden is a reality and no abstraction” (4 February 1869). Unlike the education sponsored from those beyond the black community, African Americans’ own educational agenda was in their own self-interest, which would arguably make their vision of education unique.

Within its pages, the *Tribune* commented on the ways in which literacy sponsorship, in particular, could become misguided when its recipients were not seen as equals in the eyes of their donors or “friends.” The paper’s May 6, 1865 edition read, “it is truly regrettable, it is painful to see, that the vaunted philanthropy of certain men is but hypocrisy.” In the preceding day’s paper, the editors of the *Tribune* announced the anniversary of the Common Street Colored Sunday School, an institution supported by the National Freedmen’s Relief Association under the supervision of Mr. William Harmount, and shared their gratitude for an invitation to the corresponding exhibition and soiree.⁵² Although approximately fifteen hundred black children attended the school, the *Tribune*’s editors learned upon their arrival at the event that the complimentary cards they had been sent entitled them to seats “for colored people only” (6 May 1865). Therefore, the editors decided to leave the event and to publicly critique the organization in the next day’s edition of the paper in “A Word About a Complimentary Card.” The article specifically commented on one of the speaker’s remarks: “At the same time, in the same building, before that classified audience, where the white was too good to be seated side by side with us, the following words fell from the lips of one of the speakers: ‘Who, among us, would refuse his hand to a worthy black man?’” (6 May 1865). The daily responded with the words of St. Matthew: “Woe unto you, hypocrite!” (6 May 1865). The members of the National Freedmen’s Relief Association had refused their hands to the men of the *Tribune* and provided evidence that although they sought to educate blacks they did not yet see them as their equals.

⁵² Blassingame claims that the National Freedmen’s Relief Association financed six teachers and “spent thousands of dollars for books, supplies, clothing, Sabbath schools, and orphanages” in Louisiana between 1865 and 1866 (110).

Religious educational philanthropy unfortunately suffered from some of the same limitations as that of secular organizations such as the National Freedmen's Relief Association. Although three "well-attended Catholic schools for children of African descent were functioning in New Orleans" in the 1860s (Nolan 32), these schools were segregated.⁵³ The newspaper called attention to the Catholic Church's practice of segregated schooling and attempted to get it to fulfill its empty promise of integration by creating a competition between it and the city's Protestant churches in "The Progress of Light." The church which ultimately practiced what it preached by integrating its schools would benefit from increased black parishioners, a soon to be "numerous integral part of the body politic" (23 December 1868). The article began, "Last week, we called attention to the liberal action of the Medical School of the University of Philadelphia, in throwing open its doors to all students of whatever color. Subsequently, notice was taken of the endorsement of this action by the *Propagateur Catholique*, of this city, and of the purpose of establishing in New Orleans a Commercial, Industrial and Professional College, for all, without distinction" (23 December 1868). The newspaper set up a contest for souls between New Orleans's Catholic and Protestant churches:

We trust that our Protestant friends will not be behind in this good cause. Protestantism is numerously represented in this State, especially among the colored population, and ought not to suffer itself to be outdone by any other body of Christians. . . . whatever church shall most fully demonstrate, in practical ways, a kindly and generous spirit towards our people, taking them by the hand as the children of one common Father, and welcoming them to an equal participation in the privileges of learning and religion, will certainly have the strongest hold upon the affections of the colored population. To such

⁵³ In *Jim Crow Comes to Church*, Dolores Egger Labbé explains that while most Louisiana Catholic parishes were integrated and blacks and whites attended mass at the same churches, "Traditionally other institutions such as schools, hospitals and homes for the aged were segregated. The parishes were almost the only integrated units in the archdiocese" (5, footnote 1). Such generalizations, however, are difficult to prove since each school was run by a different order of priests, brothers, or nuns. By the end of World War I in 1918, segregated parishes had also become "normal and permanent" (Labbé 4). The first parish designated for African Americans in the city was St. Katharine's in 1895 (Nolan 53).

an honorable rivalry in well-doing, we earnestly recommend our Catholic and Protestant friends. (23 December 1868)

Further, the *Tribune*'s staff demanded immediate action, simultaneously pointing out the current system of segregation that existed within the city's Catholic schools: "In conclusion, we would suggest to the distinguished representative of the Catholic church who has proposed the new college, that while the plan is maturing and taking shape, one or more of the already well-endowed and ably conducted schools and colleges of the church, in the city or vicinity, be thrown open to the colored persons" (23 December 1868). Therefore, although the Catholic Church, like the National Freedmen's Relief Association, educated African Americans in the city, its sponsorship was limited by its refusal to integrate its educational institutions, enacting a continued belief that blacks were not the equals of whites but instead inferior.⁵⁴

Like the AMA, the Catholic Church faced an additional limitation: their mission was evangelization; therefore, the only education necessary was that which would save blacks' souls. On September 23, 1866, the *Tribune* shared a statement from the Catholic Church with its readers. The Church "*wish[ed] the colored race to be admitted and invited to the benefits of Catholic schools and Catholic education*" (emphasis in original, 23 September 1866).

However, they admitted that "we wish to impart to the colored race education connected with religion . . . *We wish to do everything in our power to rescue from the bondage of sin and*

⁵⁴ As previously discussed, the Ursulines have been praised for the integrated educational experience that they provided for the enslaved and free girls of color in New Orleans during the eighteenth century. However, "The Ursulines' failure to attend sufficiently to proper differentiation between white and black, master class and slave, was insupportable in early antebellum New Orleans" (Clark 255). Class differentiations slowly gave way to race as a means of creating a social hierarchy as Louisiana passed from French to Spanish rule and then again as a result of Americanization in 1803. Therefore, when the nuns opened their new convent in 1824, "they appear to have abandoned the education of free girls of color" (Clark 258). Clark concludes that despite their early advocacy of integrated schooling for females in the city, "the Ursulines' apparent capitulation to racial segregation belies one of their lasting legacies" (256). The Ursulines, however, most likely continued to admit light-skinned Creole girls.

darkness of ignorance those who have been freed and delivered from domestic and civil fetters” (emphasis in original, 23 September 1866). The Church’s prayer was that “*the fathers of the Council may receive light and grace from the invisible Head of the Church, to procure the speedy and efficacious evangelization of the Arican [sic] race*” (emphasis in original, 23 September 1866). Therefore, although the Catholic Church offered education for freedpeople, evangelization, not education, was the goal of the Church.

On the other hand, the *Tribune* devoted much space and favorable commentary to educational efforts by African Americans for members of their own race. The paper spearheaded and ran advertisements for the Fair for the Benefit of the Orphans of Freedmen every day of the month leading up to the event and every day during the fair, which lasted from May 26 to June 6, 1865.⁵⁵ The institution which the fair benefited, the Orphans’ Industrial and Educational Home for the Children of Freedmen at the Soule Mansion in New Orleans, was run by Louise de Mortie, a free woman of color born in Virginia and known for her public lectures delivered throughout Boston (Smith 173). On March 28, 1865, Major General Hurlbut assigned the “Soule Mansion” as an “Orphan’s Home” and “placed [it] in charge of Mrs. Louise de Mortie” (5 April 1865). The school, which provided young orphans “the blessings of education,” also provided day classes, according to the *Tribune*’s July 14, 1865 edition, and offered lessons in both French and English, according to the paper’s July 22, 1865 edition. Although some educational histories have attempted to credit General Nathaniel Banks with commissioning the institution in 1863, Louise de Mortie is to be praised for the school’s success. She participated in lectures and performed at local concerts, also advertised in the

⁵⁵ On April 5, 1865, the newspaper gave credit to its own staff for conceiving of the fair as a means to raise money for the orphans’ home: “As the proposition of holding such a Fair in our city emanate from the *Tribune*, we feel particularly interested in the success of that move.”

newspaper, to raise money for the school and constantly battled opposition in the city. She wrote to the editors of the *Tribune* a little over a month after the fair, “The Freedmen’s Orphans’ Educational and Industrial Home is now open. I would have opened the Institution some weeks ago had I not met with some difficulties, which I have not yet conquered. As these interruptions are but another scheme of the enemies to defeat the education of colored children, I defy them, and commence my work.”⁵⁶ According to Special Order No. 84, the school would only “continue as long as said Orphan’s Home is kept up without charge to the Government” (5 April 1865). Therefore, the school was instead funded by the Louisiana Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans, whose members included Dr. Roudanez, owner of the *Tribune*, and his wife, who served as treasurer, until 1867 when the school was divided into the Providence Asylum in New Orleans and the Gilbert Academy and Agricultural College in Bayou Teche shortly before de Mortie’s death (Smith 175). According to Blassingame, Roudanez himself provided the money for the foundation of the building for the Providence Asylum (171).⁵⁷

The newspaper’s support of the Freedmen’s Orphans’ Educational and Industrial Home is just one example of its advocacy for black private schools. It also publicized the Pioneer School of Freedom in New Orleans in the *Tribune*’s list of participants in the 1865 Fourth of July celebration at New Orleans’s City Park. The School of Progress, Dr. Randolph’s, Miss Buckley’s school, Miss QuaiFFE’s school, Miss Hall’s school, and Mr. A. P. Williams’s school

⁵⁶ For examples of advertisements for de Mortie’s lectures and concerts to benefit the orphans’ home, see the April 5, 1865 edition of the *Tribune*.

⁵⁷ I will specifically discuss the gendered rhetoric surrounding de Mortie’s characterization by the daily in the next chapter.

were also mentioned. Also, one should not forget that many of the men that wrote for the *Tribune* taught at the Catholic Institute. “One of the first acts of the negroes when they found themselves free was to establish schools at their own expense” (American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission qtd. in H. Williams 36). Houzeau wrote, “Black[s] must save themselves, if they may be saved at all” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 19). The *Tribune*’s publicity of schools in the city was unique in that it prioritized African Americans’ self-help efforts and often challenged the philanthropy of Northern benevolent societies and religious organizations.

Mixed Schools?: A Rebuttal of Scientific Racism and a Call for Integration

The *Tribune* extended its critique of charitable and religious societies’ failure to integrate their schools to the Freedmen’s Bureau. The Bureau’s General Superintendent, O. O. Howard, recommended unequal taxation as the solution to the Bureau’s financial crisis, but the daily posed integration as the answer. General Howard proposed that a five percent tax, in addition to the state school tax already in place, be paid by blacks laboring on the plantations and that property taxes, “already paid by most of the colored property-owners, but flatly refused by the whites (whose schools are sustained by all property holders, without distinction of color),” be more strictly enforced (30 January 1866). The newspaper answered, “let the Freedmen’s Bureau go down,” for despite these additional revenues “still many (the great number colored) teachers have not received their pay for a long time, and the people of color are called upon to sustain part if not all of their schools” (14 December 1865; 30 January 1866). The *Tribune* joined forces with *True Delta* editor, T. W. C., in opposition to legislation which “separates the races in the process of education, and obliges each race to bear its own burdens” because blacks had paid taxes which only supported white schools: “This is, in a degree, worse than formerly; for in the dismal days of slavery, the colored people were taxed with the whites

for the support of the sort of *public* (?) schools of those times. If the money paid by these people at *that* time, to educate those who are now fighting against the Union, were returned to them, they would be well able to bear this burden” (emphasis in original, 28 December 1864). The newspaper argued, too, against Mr. Wiley, Secretary of the Freedmen’s Schools, “We can’t see why it is that more should be extracted from native blacks than from imported whites” (12 January 1866).

The *Tribune*’s ultimate solution to the Freedmen’s Bureau’s inability to financially support black schools was integration:

We hold that the question of the schools will only be settled when all children, without discrimination on account of race or color, will be admitted to sit together on the same benches and receive from the same teachers the light of knowledge. At that time there will only be one set of schools and all the energies of the State, all the talent of the teachers, will be directed to one end and one aim—the promotion of public education for the greatest good of all. Being one nation, we want to see the young generation raised as one people, and we want the State to take care of educating all her children. (30 January 1866)

The daily advocated, “Let us all pay an equitable school tax, in common with all other citizens in the State, according to a common basis; and let the money be managed in the ordinary way, and be spent for the benefit of all” (30 January 1866). It continued, “Should the present State school tax of \$1.50 per thousand, be not sufficient, let it be made one-half per cent, which would be more than three times larger; and then carry out a system of general schools, like those of Massachusetts” (30 January 1866). In contrast to Major Plumly’s suggestion that the then-present system of separate schools be continued but without the maladministration of the Bureau and instead under the private control of an all black board, the *Tribune* responded, “For us, the question is not how to sustain and conduct separate schools, but how to bring about a fusion of schools” (30 January 1866).

Not surprisingly, the newspaper met with much opposition when it came to the issue of school integration. But it named its greatest obstacle: prejudice. And “Nothing in the world is stronger than prejudice” (*Times* qtd. in 10 January 1869). On December 9, 1865, the *Tribune* critiqued its contemporary the *Times*. Four days earlier, the latter explained its justification for segregated schools:

Though the negro has been freed, God has set a mark of inferiority upon him which has always been regarded as well by blacks as whites as an unmistakable sign of inferiority. Only when puffed up by demagogues and fanatical humanitarians does the negro pretend to be white man’s equal, and though our people entertain no deep-seated prejudices on the subject, yet the two races can never stand on the same social level, either practically or theoretically, and different schools will have to be provided for their children and their children’s children for all time to come.

The *Tribune* responded, “If there is anybody who did not learn . . . it is, we believe, the editor who utters such a language” (9 December 1865). Voicing its opposition to a school bill which passed the House of Representatives in 1865 and demanded that “white and colored children shall not be taught in the same school,” the daily exposed the Democratic legislature’s prejudice: according to these Democrats, “free and freed persons of color are not . . . real and complete men, made in the image of their Creator. They are held as a kind of bastard race, half-way between man and ape, a race that the law has to protect in some form, but that men of Caucasian, and particularly of Anglo-Saxon descent, can only look upon with disdain” (17 February 1865). It concluded, “If we have done [away] with slavery, not so with the aristocracy of color” (17 February 1865).

Many of the critiques of integration that the newspaper battled were similarly veiled in the rhetoric of scientific racism. The daily’s editor, however, was well versed in articulating his opposition. Houzeau had begun work on a book exploring the mental faculties of men and animals before beginning his post at the *New Orleans Tribune* and had been influenced by

Alexander von Humboldt who wrote, “Whilst we maintain the unity of the human species, we at the same time repel the depressing assumption of superior and inferior races of men. . . . All are in like degree designed for freedom” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 13, footnote 14). In *Études sur les facultés mentales des animaux comparées à celles de l’homme*, which was finally published in 1872, Houzeau argued that “humanity progresses without interruption” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 12) and “that environment, not heredity, determined intellectual and moral development” (Rankin, Introduction 12). He voiced his opposition to eugenicists like Sir Francis Galton, who claimed that intellectual capacities were influenced primarily by heredity, when he wrote, “But if one wants to speak of dynasties of intelligence, succession is not from father to son; it passes from master to disciple. It is not by genealogies but by schools that knowledge is transmitted” (Houzeau qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 12). His own experiences as a teacher in Jamaican schools only confirmed his fundamental belief that he could “see nothing—at least nothing clearly and unmistakably discernible—that can be referred to the differences of race” (Houzeau qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 12). Houzeau’s scholarly work influenced the rhetoric of the *Tribune*. For example, the newspaper similarly challenged scientific racism:

But this matter of “instinct,” this innate “sense of superiority” is not conceded by us to have its foundation in fact. That there are varieties in the different branches of the human family, natural and super-induced, is true. . . . No one race combines in itself all the separate excellencies of the rest. Differences are also very largely the result of circumstances, and will in time vanish or be materially modified. (10 February 1869)

Houzeau gained much attention, albeit critical, from Alfred R. Wallace, Charles Darwin’s colleague. Wallace criticized Houzeau for challenging Galton, but Darwin cited Houzeau several times in *The Descent of Man* and sent him a personal copy of his text, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Rankin, Introduction 13-14).

The daily, therefore, refused to accept scientific racism or biological determinism as justification for segregated schooling. The “prejudices” of their opponents “seem[ed] to be like the case of Doctor Fell ‘I do not like you, Doctor Fell; but the reason only I cannot tell’” (6 October 1864). Instead, it sought to defeat prejudice, which it claimed was based in “the medium of feeling instead of reason,” with rationality and logic (10 January 1869). It fought scientific racism with scientific reasoning. The newspaper wrote, “It [prejudice] closes the eye of reason . . . And our enlightened neighbors, in the enlightened and progressive age, ought to cease fostering and fomenting the prejudices which enslave them or warp their judgments, and to listen to the voice of reason” (10 January 1869). “He is a true man who conquers prejudice, or who, despite of lingering feelings which he condemns but cannot quite overcome, compels his conduct to conform to reason and right” (10 January 1869). Additionally, in “Talking and Acting” on October 29, 1867, the daily critiqued the *Picayune* for saying that “the black ‘should recollect that it is quite enough for them to have their children educated at the expense of the white people.’” The *Tribune* pointed out its contemporary’s ignorance: “the fact is that up to the year of our Lord, 1867, the white had their children educated at the expense of the colored people. For over thirty years, the colored residents of New Orleans have paid taxes upon fifteen millions of assessed property; they have paid the school tax among others, and never was this tax used but to the exclusive benefit of white children” (29 October 1867). As mentioned above, the newspaper pointed out the double standard that blacks had paid taxes to support white schools so why should whites not pay taxes to support black schools. The newspaper concluded, however, that such rationality was silenced by prejudice: “There is nothing like sound sense or calm reasoning in their opposition; all is whim, prejudice and mania” (29 October 1867).

The *Tribune*'s appeals to its audience's reason did not stop with taxation but laid the foundation for its advocacy of integration. For example on April 26, 1867, it protested against an ordinance passed by the Board of Assistant Aldermen to organize "colored schools" in "No Separate Schools." First, the staff of the newspaper objected to the ordinance on the ground of its illegality; it was in "direct opposition" to the Civil Rights Bill of April 1866. Secondly, the daily opposed the ordinance "on the ground of security, for there can be no true and practical equality, in protection and in law, for the black and colored men, before the practice of equal rights and equal privileges is well established in the customs and manners of this community" (26 April 1867). Specifically, the paper argued against the proposed placement of blacks' schools under the control of a half-white, half-black board: "Why is the administration of the white schools all white? And why that of the colored schools, one half white and one half colored? Where is the logic, the reason of such difference? On what principle is this kind of management based? Is it on the 'superiority' of the white race?" (26 April 1867).⁵⁸ Again, the *Tribune*'s staff, led by Houzeau, questioned the legitimacy of a claim based on scientific racism rather than logic. It also fought the claim that "it is too soon" to integrate schooling: "This has for four years been the language of those who acted, as far as our interests were concerned, with our bitterest enemies. . . . We need no 'too soon men' at this time. We need men of action, boldness and sincerity," and arguably reason (26 April 1867).

Similarly, the editor again made a case for common schools on January 18, 1868: "As to the right of children of African descent to receive education, there is, and there can be no doubt. No *sensible* man refuses them to-day the privilege of schools . . . But the question is,

⁵⁸ According to the May 25, 1867 edition of the newspaper, Dr. Goldman's proposition to make the board half-black was later dismissed. Instead, the board "passed one granting money and power to the present White Board," as suggested by Mr. Sambola.

‘What schools will they have?’” (emphasis added). He then used the ruling of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts as a precedent for integration:

Now, from the point of view of their rights, we answer, that the colored children are entitled to be admitted in the common public schools of the State, as well as any other children. So was it decided by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, some thirty years ago, upon an argument of Chas. Sumner, the most important part of which we recently reprinted. So is it pointed out by good sense and sound reason; for our cardinal principle is that rights are independent of color. Therefore, in accordance with that principle, the trustees, directors of schools or teachers have no authority whatever to inquire into the origin and race of pupils, and these pupils have to be admitted into any public school they choose to attend. (18 January 1868)

“Good sense and sound reason” demanded that African American students be granted access to the public schools in New Orleans just as they had been in Boston. The *Tribune* posed Massachusetts’s Supreme Court ruling as an example to be followed again in “Separate, or Mixed Schools” on January 22, 1869:

Twenty-five years ago the good city of Boston began to be excited over the question whether colored children should be admitted into its public schools without distinction. There were at that time two colored schools . . . The controversy went on in this way till the year 1849, when it reached the highest tribunal in the State, the Supreme Court, where it was finally settled on the principle, which now governs the action of Boston as to her public schools, that no discrimination on account of color or race could be made.

The *Tribune* quoted Sumner’s argument to the Supreme Court, “*The whites themselves are injured by the separation*. Who can doubt this? With the law as their monitor, they are taught to regard a portion of the human family, children of God, created in his image, coequals in his love, as a separate and degraded class—they are taught practically to deny the grand revelation of Christianity—THE BROTHERHOOD OF MANKIND” (emphasis in original, 24 January 1869). The newspaper drew its own conclusion, “There must be agitation and irritation so long as we attempt to build on prejudice, policy, caste, and not on principle” (24 January 1869). Integration was not only based on sound logical principles, rather than prejudice, but was in the best interest of blacks and whites.

Further, the newspaper reasoned that “the rights of colored children to education in common schools” was “paramount” to “the national interest” (18 January 1868). The only way to end prejudice was to enforce integrated schooling. It continued:

The integrity of a nation is her first interest for it is key to her preservation. Let the nation be ONE, so that she could live and be perpetuated. The result of rebellion was an attempt to [dissolve] the unity of our country. Where had that rebellion been taught? In the white schools of the South . . . As long as we do not touch these schools, we allow the same spirit to be perpetuated among the rising generation. (18 January 1868)

Practically, integration was necessary for equal education among blacks and whites to be a reality. The newspaper anticipated the separate but equal ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and contested its rationality:

But it is said that separate colored schools may be made as available, as efficient, as the white ones. This is in no way evident. The white schools, that are of long standing, are provided with ample material, and with experienced teachers. As long as they will remain affected to the children of a privileged class they will be privileged schools, and as such they will be better cared for and better conducted than any other set of schools devoted to what is called an ‘inferior race.’ There is no guaranty and no probability that ‘star schools’ be, for a long period of time, the object of a solicitude equal to that bestowed upon the schools of the old citizens. But should the ‘star schools’ be even a real equivalent, and remain so, we still question the right of the civil authority to appropriate such schools to the education of colored children; for these children are intitled [sic] not to an equivalent of the public school, but to the public schools themselves. (18 January 1868)

Rural areas posed another challenge to segregated schooling. The daily questioned, “And how are separate schools to be maintained in the parishes, where the population is often sparse, and there are not children enough for two schools in a neighborhood?” (22 January 1869).

Finally, opponents of integration were mistaken when it came to their causal reasoning. The newspaper denied the opposition’s claims that integration would lead to white flight to private schools: “The father of four or five children will not pay three dollars a month, for each of them, for private schools, when he can get them educated freely in the public school—be it even along side of colored children. Prejudices are not allowed to affect the pocket as readily

as they affect the brain” (29 October 1867). It concluded, “We judge from the past; and we do not believe in the threat of withdrawing white children from common schools—at least as a permanent thing” (29 October 1867). Again, whites would come to their senses and eventually let go of their prejudices, particularly when they began to affect their finances.

In retrospect, perhaps the *Tribune* overestimated the rationality of its opponents. Watkins points out the importance of scientific racism within segregationist discourse: “Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the eugenic views on Blacks was its application to segregation. So-called scientific data provided a rationale for containment and segregation. The notion of human difference undergirded the segregationist argument. The differences were beyond skin color; they were about mental characteristics” (39). The *Tribune*, however, sought to undercut this argument with its own appeals to reason and logic in its advocacy for integrated schooling, “proof that the system of Jim Crow that eventually claimed the South was far from inevitable” (Mitchell 193). Some approximate that between five hundred and one thousand students attended integrated schools in New Orleans during Reconstruction before the city’s Democratic school board resegregated its schools in 1877 (Mitchell 222; Blassingame 121).

Which Curriculum?: “God is in History”⁵⁹

Alongside debates about who would attend which schools, questions about what should be taught to black students, in other words the curriculum, were disputed. African American organizations such as the AME, AMEZ, and CME provided blacks with a liberal arts education and funded colleges to provide African Americans higher education (Anderson and Moss 18,

⁵⁹ This quotation is from John MacNair, State Superintendent of Education for Louisiana, cited in the *New Orleans Tribune* on October 23, 1864.

37; Anderson 67).⁶⁰ Meanwhile their adversaries, represented by New York's *Nation* in the *Tribune*'s January 10, 1869 edition, argued, "To make an honest population every boy and girl should be taught practically the elements of agriculture, gardening and the mechanical arts. No school should be considered complete without the necessary facilities for imparting such needful instruction. The farce of classical studies would not then demoralize our youth." Instead, the *New Orleans Tribune* defended a classical curriculum for blacks and sponsored access to it within its pages. The daily simultaneously redefined what such a curriculum would include and what its purpose was by demanding the preeminence of history. It commonly shared history lessons with its black and white readers to enact a critical public pedagogy that would use "the evidence of history against the attitudes and arguments of the present" (Ernest 291). John Ernest argues in *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*, "the papers [the black periodical press] themselves were collective agents of history, reframing not only the events but also the discourse of the past to create a historically (in)formed community of readers" (294). Although Ernest speaks specifically of American history, the *New Orleans Tribune* can also be considered as upholding this tradition, urging its readers to heed the lessons of world history, but also modeling the ideal school curriculum. Houzeau explained his use of this editorial practice:

The more the press of the "superior race" resorted to empty rhetoric, the more I myself desired to sustain not only a dignified tone but a high level of thought for "the Negro newspaper" . . . I cited historical narratives, often taken word-for-word from famous

⁶⁰ The AME established Allen University, Morris Brown College, Wilberforce College, Paul Quinn College, Edward Waters College, Kittrell College, and Shorter College; the AMEZ only funded Livingstone College. The CME supported Lane, Paine, Texas, and Miles Memorial, while the black Baptists founded Arkansas Baptist College, Selma University, and Virginia College and Seminary (Anderson 240). For an account of the AME's educational mission, see Gilbert Anthony Williams's "Education and the AME Church" in *The Christian Recorder, Newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854-1902*.

books, in order to refute the blunders that they had made. . . . Often, I drew parallels between historical events and the current political situation: for example, there were striking similarities between the southern planters and the French *émigrés* of 1792. . . . Indeed, there were numerous other historical situations from the last two centuries that furnished illuminating insights into the events at hand. I had made a detailed study of the great states, France, England, and the United States, during the preceding one hundred fifty years; and I repeatedly found occasion to cite curious and instructive incidents. (89-90)

Indeed, the impact of the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 upon the thinking of the newspaper's staff was evident in many of its editorials, both as a warning of despotism and a model of revolution. One of the *Tribune*'s adversaries, the *Advocate*, even "emphasized that 'the very nomenclature of the *Tribune* is foreign, and its illustrations, even in its English editorials, are from French history and not American'" in an attempt to once again widen the gap between the "Americanism" of freedmen and the Creole culture of free blacks (Rankin, Introduction 53). But the newspaper used the historical examples of France and other countries to argue for the "extension of equal rights and privileges to *all* men, irrespective of color and race" (emphasis added, 28 November 1867). In other words, the newspaper demanded the teaching of history as a means of making its vision of social justice a reality.

Therefore, the *Tribune* shared history lessons with its readers not only to grant them access to historical facts, but to the "principles beyond the facts" (Ernest 322). Unlike H. Williams, who argues that the ability to read and write provided slaves a "language of liberation," a means of "articulat[ing] intellectual objections to the very existence of slavery" (23-24), the newspaper assumed its readers' basic literacy and instead posed history as a "language of liberation." For example, the daily pointed to France as a warning against granting a country's executive too much power on January 26, 1868. After citing the "catastrophe[s]" of France's Charles X, Louis Philippe, and Louis Napoleon, the *Tribune*'s Washington correspondent, "A," wrote, "No man can control his self-esteem enough to prevent

its bordering all the time on insanity . . . We are in the hands of intellectual jugglers, who fancy they can do anything with impunity. They drink of the spirit of power until they are drunk, and then fancy themselves Gods, and sober people fools to be handled about at pleasure . . .” (26 January 1868). He demanded that the United States Congress, and not President Johnson, take the lead in reconstructing the Union. Charging the executive branch of the federal government with such a responsibility placed too much power in the hands of one man.

Threatened by despotism, France also proved the inevitability of war. The newspaper pointed to the example of France, and England, to prove the necessity of the Civil War on August 25, 1864. Although New Orleanians may have wondered “for what has so much blood been spilt?,” the daily argued, “War seems to be a necessary evil; it has existed in every age; it has purified nations and rid them of the licentiousness and crime to which they have been prone.” The Civil War would rid America of its crime, slavery, just as war had absolved France and England despite the devastation that it caused. First, the writer directed his reader’s attention to France: “What has Napoleon gained by the many sieges, battles, and conquests which he has achieved, and the glorious accessions which he added to the Empire of France? Virtually nothing but the reduction of the French nation to her previous territorial limits, and his own exile and death upon the Isle of St. Helena. Still it seems as if war was preordained by an invisible power, for a penance for the sins of nations” (25 August 1864). Then, he turned to England: “Look at England, a hundred years ago, and look at her to-day. Then, she was the terror of any nation . . . But what a change has taken place. . . . This time war and its attendant heresies may prove her downfall and utter ruin. She seems to understand this perfectly, but for some unseen reason war must exist” (25 August 1864). In conclusion, he described the state of America and its current situation: “America, once poor and numerically weak, became rich and mighty by the perfect harmony and brotherly love that existed in the minds of our countrymen.

But by some means, after the expiration of scarcely three quarters of a century, dissatisfaction and rebellion agitates the minds of sectional parties, which results in a terrible civil war” (25 August 1864). Although the Civil War was “terrible,” it was necessary and the newspaper’s readers, particularly the black community, would reap its benefits, for “[w]e must remember that the darkest hour is before daylight . . . Although, we cannot as yet see the final result of this war, still, we can rest assured that our nation will become purified by the sacrifices that are now being offered upon the high-ways, mountaintops, and fertile valleys of the Southern States, and will finally result in the liberty of the bondsman and the future welfare of humanity” (25 August 1864).

Further, if the United States followed the model of France, this “daylight” would include universal suffrage. When the French abolished slavery, they simultaneously granted suffrage in the French West Indies to “all men, [who] without distinction of colour, domiciled in the colonies, are French citizens and enjoy all the rights assured under the Constitution” (28 January 1865). Therefore, “Edicts issued by officials of the Second Republic in 1848 not only ended slavery in the French West Indies but also gave full political rights to all black inhabitants of these islands” (Bell and Logsdon 209). During its campaign for the ratification of Louisiana’s 1868 constitution, the newspaper used the examples of France and other countries to argue for the “extension of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of color and race” (28 November 1867). The editor made the point that “[t]hat man only is a true Radical who is not satisfied by saying ‘equal rights,’ but who carries the principle into effect,” as the countries of Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Russia had:

In Spain, the citizens of Arabian descent, who had been excluded from the benefits of common law, were finally admitted to civil and political equality. In England, the Catholics have been finally granted all the rights and immunities that belong to Protestants. In Ireland, the natives, who had been deprived of certain rights have at last been placed on the same footing with the conquering Anglo-Saxon. In Germany, the

Jews that had for a long period been kept under exceptional legislation, have been, in almost every German State, admitted to the enjoyment of all rights political and civil. (28 November 1867)

The daily continued, “It [the practical enforcement of equality] is one of the features of an advanced civilization. As soon as a nation comes out of the state of barbarism to enter the path of civilization, the exclusion drawn against certain classes of citizens is removed” (28 November 1867).

Therefore, according to the world history lessons taught by the *Tribune*, universal suffrage was a prerequisite to civilization. It alluded to Brazil, too, on December 10, 1864 to celebrate the country’s release of men and women who had been sold into servitude for twenty-five years after only eleven years. The newspaper wrote, “It will convince once more every reflecting mind, that the world moves, and moves in the right direction. . . . If we fail at home, we can only accuse our apathy and our own carelessness and inability” (10 December 1864). And then again on January 10, 1869, the staff commended Brazil’s treatment of blacks as political equals: “Brazil, which has a large colored population, and where, notwithstanding slavery, the prejudice of color is unknown. Colored men there occupy high positions in the government and in society. The court of Pedro does not refuse them admittance, and yet the Emperor is one of the most intellectual and cultivated monarchs in the world.”

In addition to prioritizing the teaching of history to its black readers in order to provide them a “language of liberation” and perhaps reteaching white readers their own history from a different perspective, the daily monumentalized those men who succeeded in gaining for themselves such an education. The newspaper, therefore, simultaneously wrote a new history of the black community “to establish a path of African American success,” success founded on a classical and higher education (Ernest 309). For example, the March 17, 1866 edition of the daily included an article from the *N. Y. Independent* entitled, “A Colored Man in Harvard

University,” which shared with the reader the story of Mr. Richard Greener, who was admitted to Harvard after “passing a very rigid examination.” The *Tribune*, too, praised Harvard, “the oldest and wealthiest college in the United States,” for integrating and for providing blacks access to a liberal arts curriculum: “Hereafter, we presume, there will be no insurmountable difficulty in the way of any colored man, of suitable qualifications, who may aspire to a classical education” (17 March 1866). The obstacle, of course, which remained was geographical distance as “some of us seek for our children an education at college or in a professional school. But to obtain it, they must be sent away from their native State, where their fathers are taxed to support home institutions, to a distant part of the country or to a foreign land, where the highest as well as the lowest seminaries of learning are open to all without distinction of race or color” (4 February 1869).⁶¹ The daily similarly shared the success of “Colored Pupils in the Boston Schools”; Elizabeth Norton was honored with a Franklin Medal (25 August 1864). Reverend Samuel Crowther, Bishop of Niger, was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity from Oxford University after having preached there (20 September

⁶¹ Michael Fultz in “‘The Morning Cometh’: African-American Periodicals, Education, and the Black Middle Class, 1900-1930” argues, “The essentially middle-class orientation of the periodical literature in 1900-1930 can perhaps most clearly be observed by contrasting the journals’ discussions of African-American common schools with their treatment of higher education” (135). He continues, “None of the periodicals surveyed publicized the plight of black common schools with any degree of consistency” and writes instead that they prioritized higher education and the mission of W. E. B. Du Bois (Fultz 134). Contrastingly, the *Tribune* argues for both perhaps due to its earlier date of publication, for again Fultz’s study focuses on early twentieth-century publications: *The Colored American*, *The Voice of the Negro*, *Alexander’s Magazine*, *The Horizon*, *The Crisis*, *Half-Century Magazine*, the *Messenger*, the *Competitor*, and *Opportunity*.

The only colleges that were available to blacks in New Orleans during Reconstruction were Leland (1869), Straight (1869), and New Orleans University (1873). All three institutions of higher education were funded by religious organizations, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists, respectively. Further, according to Blassingame, they each “initially offered little more than a high school education,” suffered from relatively low enrollments, and offered blacks few roles in their administration (124, 128). Straight may have proven the exception as its 1869-1870 requirements for the collegiate department included “grammar of Latin and Greek languages, Virgil, Cicero, Salust or Caesar, Arnold’s Latin prose Composition, Xenophon’s Anabasis, Homer’s Iliad, Higher Arithmetic, Algebra, and Ancient History” (qtd. in Blassingame 127), and African Americans, such as the newspaper’s own Dr. Roudanez, served on its Examining Committee (Blassingame 128).

1864), and Benjamin Boardly, “once a slave in Maryland,” “construct[ed] a miniature steam-engine of about six fly power” and was put in charge “of the philosophical apparatus of the Naval Academy at Annapolis” (22 September 1864).

Black historians were particularly praised by the *Tribune*. The newspaper celebrated black historian William C. Nell of the *Boston Liberator* and the second edition of his text in 1864 in “Colored Patriots of the American Revolution.” Nell’s history served as “a record of facts portraying the patriotism and bravery exhibited by colored Americans, on land and sea, in every war on this continent, embracing the old French war of ‘55, the Revolution of ‘76, and the struggle of 1812 augmented by the brilliant chapter of services rendered throughout the present slaveholders’ rebellion” (17 November 1864). According to the daily, it was also “the only full and *authentic* history of Crispus Attucks, the first martyr of the American Revolution,” making it “a history of the colored American in his laudable effort to attain equality before the law” (emphasis added, 17 November 1864). Similarly, on February 5, 1869 the *Tribune* referenced an article from the *Methodist Quarterly* describing the work of “a *full-blooded African negro*, Professor E. W. Blyden” (emphasis in original). Blyden’s historical account of the “Negro in Ancient History” “quote[d] Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, and Arabic, and German, and Italian; it show[ed] a very wide range of reading in both ancient and modern literature; it [was] able and shrewd, as well as erudite” (5 February 1869). Drawing attention to historians such as Nell and Blyden and their work cast doubt on the dominant discourse’s claim to writing history, especially the only history or the “authentic” history. Also, analyzing the writing of history by African Americans within the pages of *Freedom’s Journal*, Bacon argues, “To write their own history was an act of resistance, allowing them to determine how they were to be represented and to challenge the narrow identities white society

provided for them” (115). Therefore, historiography was yet another way in which blacks could challenge the representations of them by the white public.

The *New Orleans Tribune* modeled the teaching of a classical curriculum to black youth, paying specific attention to history. “Educational reform would amount to” not only a teaching of history, but also “a revision of history” (Ernest 319). Finally, if Louisiana followed the educational example of the newspaper, it could make history:

The task, therefore, of developing and establishing a new and untried enterprise in the history of the world, is laid upon her legislators: that is, to provide for the systematic and free education of the people but recently, by that immortal instrument, delivered from the lash of the taskmaster. In this, the great philanthropy of the age, Louisiana stands first among States. . . . And now, let there be “no steps backward.” May her efforts be steadily continued in the noble course so worthily begun; and if, throughout all her borders, universal education shall go hand and hand with universal freedom, then indeed we may emphatically say, in the words of him whose name, for all time to come, is linked with the history of Louisiana, “HER VOICE IS LIBERTY.” (MacNair qtd. in 23 October 1864)

This outlook to the future again is characteristic of “periodical history,” for as Ernest emphasizes, “It is not at all unusual, of course, to think of newspapers as histories always in progress” (278). It was precisely their “service” to a “historical vision that looked necessarily to the future” which made them attractive to historically oppressed populations, such as African Americans.

Why Education?: Intellectual Fitness as a Prerequisite to Suffrage

Practically speaking, one of the motivations for the newspaper’s educational advocacy was its desire to meet one of the proposed requirements for suffrage: intellectual fitness. In the nineteenth century, African American literacy was firmly connected to social activism and political causes, such as “citizenship duty” (Brandt, *Literacy* 144). Article 15 of the 1864 constitution granted suffrage to “such other persons, citizens of the United States as by military

service, by taxation to support the government, or *by intellectual fitness*” (emphasis added, qtd. in Memelo 5). The only way in which the daily would even accept this last requirement was if it was equally applicable to all. For example, in “The *Era* and the Right of Suffrage” on November 18, 1864, the *Tribune* critiqued the *Era*, another New Orleans newspaper, to say that “[w]e are willing that the qualifications about age, residence and education, be applicable to us as well as to any other class of citizens. But we must confess that we cannot perceive the propriety or justice of exacting a higher intellectual status from a negro than from a white man.”⁶² It continued:

Is a white voter required to know how to read and write? . . . Not in the least. A naturalized citizen, as well as a native American, is considered competent by the laws of our State, to go to the ballot-box without any qualifications as to education and intelligence. He enjoys his political rights simply because he is a man and a citizen. He may be utterly ignorant of the principles of the Constitution of the United States; he may be a fool or a brute; he may be—and unfortunately he is sometimes—entirely illiterate, and marks a rough and huge cross when called to subscribe his name; and still he is a voter and nobody pretends to disenfranchise him. (18 November 1864)

To prove that whites had not yet been subjected to literacy tests, the newspaper cited statistics comparing the literacy rates of black and white voters. In a May 29, 1867 letter to the editor, “Looker-On” in Abbeville, Louisiana, wrote, “ignorance is almost universal, and about equally divided between the whites and the colored: for example, out of one hundred whites registered, only six could write, and out of thirty colored only two were able to do the same, which would seem to give the colored people the advantage in the average.” Likewise, the *Tribune* critiqued its contemporary the *Crescent* who claimed, “Nearly all of the negroes who are registered to vote on the new Constitution can neither read, write, nor spell” (14 April 1868). It pointed to “the census of 1850 [to] reveal[s] [the illiteracy] of the native whites in three Southern States—

⁶² The *Era* succeeded the *Daily Delta* on February 15, 1863. It was edited by two Northerners, A. C. Hill and A. G. Hill (Houzeau 70, footnote 4).

226,111, who could not read and write, as follows: in Virginia, 75,868; in Tennessee, 77,017; in North Carolina, 73,226” (14 April 1868). It pronounced shame upon whites, for after all they had had the opportunity for education, as opposed to blacks: “Shame indeed, on these more than two hundred thousand ‘Caucasians,’ who preferred ignorance to education when no laws forbade them schools, and who, when registered, could ‘neither read, write nor spell.’ Give our people a chance for education, and see whether they will remain in ignorance” (14 April 1868). African Americans, such as those writing for the *Tribune*, were doing all that they could to educate themselves and the black community to prove their worthiness of suffrage.

Conclusion

Carter G. Woodson differentiates between education sponsored from without and from within a people: “Philosophers have long conceded, however, that every man has two educations: ‘that which is given to him, and the other that which he gives himself. Of the two kinds the latter is by far the more desirable’” (126). This tension played out in the Reconstruction South as African Americans’ own attempts to be self-sufficient, to integrate the city’s public schools, and to teach a history-centered curriculum often contrasted the evangelization and segregated education sponsored by Northern white missionary and religious societies and the Freedmen’s Bureau. While African Americans looked to education and “freedom as meaning self-determination, not subordination to paternalism” (H. Williams 95), Northern whites sought “reform without revolt” (Watkins 15). While the newspaper’s educational vision may have been unique to its middle-class staff and different from that of other blacks in the city, especially the enslaved, much of freed blacks’ educational agenda and

efforts remain concealed in what James Scott terms the “hidden transcripts” of the black community due to the historical prohibition of teaching slaves to read and write.⁶³

Similarly to how Fultz describes early twentieth-century black magazines’ educational campaigns, the *Tribune*’s discourse on education was one of celebration and agitation (143). The newspaper itself served as proof that black men were not only literate but also trained in a global and historical curriculum through the examples of its staff and other black men applauded by the newspaper. In 1904, J. Max Berber of the *Voice of the Negro* explained, “To the casual observer there is nothing new in the launching of a Negro magazine; but to the philosopher of history, to him who is a reader of the signs of the times it means much. It means that culture is taking a deep hold upon our people. It is an indication that our people are becoming educated, a reading people, and that is a thing of which to be proud” (qtd. in Fultz 129). However, the daily also agitated for change by demanding integrated public schooling and access to a liberal arts curriculum and higher education for blacks in the city. In his history of the black press, Detweiler writes, “Instead of merely reflecting ‘life,’ the newspapers, in setting themes for discussion and suggesting the foci of attention, help powerfully to create that life” (268). The *New Orleans Tribune* advocated, “There is, in fact, nothing more important, more conducive to the general welfare and the national progress and grandeur than the imparting of a solid education and sound principles to the rising generation” (10 January 1866). And it helped to “create that life.”

The staff of the *Tribune* met with progress in the creation of Louisiana’s 1868 constitution, “the first biracially written constitution in the history of Louisiana” (Vincent 76).

⁶³ In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, James C. Scott describes “hidden transcripts” of the powerless as representing “a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (xii).

Half of the ninety-eight delegates who met on September 27, 1867 to draft the document were black (Memelo 43). Article 135 related specifically to the integration of education, “all children of this State between the ages of six (6) and twenty-one (21) shall be admitted to the public schools or other institutions of learning sustained or established by the State in common without distinction of race, color, or previous condition.” Sharing his support of James Ingraham, who proposed the article, African American Victor Lange wrote:

Gentlemen, please allow me a small space in your official journal to record my vote on the adoption of the constitution as a whole. I vote *yes*, and shall give my reason why: Title I, Bill of Rights . . . follows the free school system, secures to my child and to all children throughout the state their education which their forefathers have been deprived of for two hundred and fifty years, and I shall sign the Constitution without any hesitation. (qtd. in Vincent 78-79)

In addition to supporting integrated schooling, Article 142 of the 1868 constitution established an integrated university in New Orleans. This university was to contain “a law, a medical, and a collegiate department, each with appropriate facilities” and would be maintained by the state as long as “all departments of this institution of learning shall be open in common to all students capable of matriculating.” Further, the 1868 constitution did not make education or literacy a requirement for suffrage. The constitution was ratified on April 16 and 17, 1868 (Vincent 130). It returned Louisiana to its place within the Union and promised to enlighten the “rising generation” of New Orleans’s black community.

However, many of these legal advances in education were retracted when federal troops left New Orleans in 1877. These educational debates also resurfaced in the twentieth century as Northern industrialists, such as Peabody, Slater, and Rosenwald, sponsored black education but subscribed to the industrial curriculums of Hampton and Tuskegee under the administration of Samuel C. Armstrong and Booker T. Washington respectively and opposed the classical, liberal arts curriculum advocated by W. E. B. Du Bois. Anderson argues, “Northern white

industrialists . . . saw universal schooling in much the same way as did southern white industrialists—as a means to make black southerners an efficient laboring force of the South and to prepare them for a fairly definite caste system” (280). The education of black youth, sponsored by the *Tribune*, instead challenged the social hierarchy in the South and was “a threat to [whites’] own mastery of the economy” (Mitchell 202). I will now turn to black men’s economic and agricultural literacies and black women’s domestic skills, as represented in the *Tribune*.

Chapter Four

Industrious Men and Noble Women: The Black Home's Representation in Print

The shanty is black within and without through age and weather, but more through dirt and grime; and the decaying floor is filthier than the ground outside, though that is a sink. There is no chair or stool—nothing to sit upon but the wreck of a bedstead, which holds a nest of what was once straw, a feather pillow which trots of itself, and rags of wool and cotton which are equally smutty and frisky. The only bit of furniture beside a small table, and three children are rubbing off the slime of it with potato skins left yesterday—for they get a meal some days—and these parings furnish their only today. Under the table is a battered wash-dish in which they stir their hoeecake, when they get any, and a broken skillet in which to bake it; but wood is scarce to them, and only now and then can they steal a bit. A black woman sits on a log, with half-a-dozen small specimens of humanity about her, and of all shades of black, brown, and yellow. She has eight children, and was married once, but only two of the children belonged to her husband. “Where is your husband?” “Is he living?” you ask. “Dunno, missis, don’t care; he may go to de debbil fur all I knows and cares.” (Emery qtd. in Frazier, *Negro Family* 342)

This quotation from E. B. Emery’s *Letters from the South, on the Social, Intellectual and Moral Condition of the Colored People* in 1880 is characteristic of many nineteenth-century descriptions of the African American home. The physical space failed to meet the most basic needs of its inhabitants, and the family who resided within it was comprised of a multitude of illegitimate children, “specimens” of the mother/wife’s promiscuity and immorality; this unchaste female who was unsuccessful in keeping a tidy home; and an absent father/husband who failed to provide for the economic well-being of his family. This description contrasts with the contemporaneous portrayals of the African American family in the *New Orleans Tribune*. Instead, the daily not only advocated for the survival of the black home after slavery, but also depicted it as a reflection of the Euro-white, middle-class, heteropatriarchal family structure to prove blacks’ humanity and worthiness of equal political rights within the public sphere.

During the nineteenth century, within the African American community there was an “emergence of a racialized network of power that [spoke] in anticipation of a humanity and citizenship that [was] secured by performing sexual and gender normativity” (Ferguson 96). In this chapter, I argue that the *New Orleans Tribune* claimed membership within this “racialized network of power” through its establishment of the black home, both materially and discursively, and its rhetorical construction of gender (Ferguson 96). The newspaper’s inclusion of black males’ and females’ everyday literacies initiated changes in the representation of free blacks after the Civil War. Refusing to conform to the then-popular portrayal of black males as vagrants or dependent children and black females as promiscuous savages, the *Tribune* informed its wide readership of black men’s economic and agricultural literacies and black women’s domestic literacies. Together, these new self-representations performed blacks’ sexual and gender normativity for the newspaper’s readers, including whites, as black men provided for their families and black women modeled the domestic propriety of Southern ladies. Simultaneously, the newspaper proved an additional literacy: its understanding of the nineteenth century’s discourse of gender, especially its separate spheres ideology, which positioned men within the public sphere and women within the domestic or private sphere. I argue that the *New Orleans Tribune*’s construction of such gender normativity and its representation of the black home can be reread not as accommodation but as a self-directed strategy to gain political power.

Sexual and Gender Normativity as a Discourse of Power

In “A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States,” Bruce Dorsey writes, “recently scholarly initiatives have encouraged historians to pursue histories that view gender as a whole . . . as well as how gender has signified power

relationships throughout human history, as indispensable subjects for historical inquiry” (77). I argue that the *Tribune* used a gendered rhetoric, which depicted the black home as similar to the Euro-white, middle-class, heteropatriarchal family, as a tactic to gain power in the nineteenth century. Black feminists, such as Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Evelyn Hammonds, and bell hooks articulate how black women during the nineteenth century evoked “strategies” such as a “politics of silence,” characterized by their public silence on matters of sexuality and their shared history of rape, “to counter negative stereotypes of their sexuality which had been used as justifications for the rape, lynching, and other abuses of black women by whites” (Hammonds 174). Black women historically were described in opposition to white women. Whereas white women were to uphold the Cult of True Womanhood and to be pure, pious, submissive and domestic, black women were stereotyped as impure, immoral and promiscuous “Jezebels” during the nineteenth century (Welter 152). Sexualized images of black women in European travelogues of Africa, on the auction block in literature, and in popular iconography such as that of Sarah Bartmann, the “Hottentot Venus,” acted as justification for their enslavement and sexual abuse by white, Southern planters (Hammonds 173). In “Black Bodies, White Bodies,” Sander L. Gilman argues, “The black female thus comes to serve as an icon for black sexuality in general. . . . the black occupied the antithetical position to the white on the scale of humanity. . . . The antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty is embodied in the black, and the essential black . . . is the Hottentot” (212). The black woman’s supposed hypersexuality was repeatedly depicted by her unique physiognomy, enlarged sexual organs and buttocks (Gilman 213). Evelyn Hammonds explains that “this binary opposition,” in which “the black female embodied the notion of uncontrolled sexuality” and the white woman chastity, “seemed to lock black women forever outside the ideology of womanhood” (172-73).

“To effect their inclusion in the category of protected womanhood” (Hammonds 174), black women in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century began to invoke a “politics of silence” or a “culture of dissemblance” (Higginbotham 266, Hine qtd. in Higginbotham 261). In “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham argues that nineteenth-century black women, specifically middle-class African American women, “reconstructed and represented their sexuality through its absence—through silence, secrecy, and invisibility. In so doing, they sought to combat the pervasive negative images and stereotypes,” such as those described by Gilman above (266). Similarly, bell hooks writes, “Naked with shame on auction blocks, Black female slaves watched the world that was our body change. Nakedness that cannot be covered must be forgotten, shrouded in cloaks of modesty, Victorian Puritanism, religion without flesh” (“naked without shame” 65). Nineteenth-century black women resorted to silence on all matters of sexuality in defiance of the eighteenth century’s pathologization of the black female body. Hooks continues to describe this strategic change in black women’s representation of their femininity:

Nineteenth-century black female obsessions with bodily cleanliness, exaggerated displays of modesty, repression of the erotic, denial of sexual presence and desire, were all efforts made to counter notions that black females were inherently licentious, driven by animalistic sexual cravings which could not be controlled. . . . black women in slavery and in freedom worked to regain status and value by embodying the norms of femininity set by the white colonizing imagination. (“naked without shame” 69)

In other words, these women latched onto the image of the Victorian woman and represented adherence to it in their everyday lives to make a place for themselves and their families in the post-slavery world. Frankie Hutton describes the black press’s role in changing the public perception of black women: “The image of the immoral black female was quite pervasive during the mid-nineteenth century; it required the astute mutualism of the editors and women

working together to wage war against it . . . the black press worked skillfully, not to oppress women, but to dispel that nagging charge” (*Early Black Press* 58). Later in this chapter, I will demonstrate how the *Tribune*, in particular, located nineteenth-century black women within the home to prove their immorality a lie.

These stereotypes of black women’s hypersexuality also had immediate political consequences: “racial difference was linked to sexual difference in order to maintain white male supremacy” as African Americans, men and women, were deemed “unworthy of citizenship” (Hammonds 173). Replacing stereotypes with representations of sexual and gender normativity was “crucial to the attainment of respect, justice, and opportunity for all black Americans” (Higginbotham 266). In “Of Our Normative Strivings: African American Studies and the Histories of Sexuality,” Roderick Ferguson places black feminist thought and Foucault’s archaeology of sexuality in dialogue in order to posit nineteenth-century, African American intellectual history as a discourse of sexuality. He examines how “the production of African American sexual normativity provided the grammar and logic for racialized strategies of governmentality within the United States” (Ferguson 89). In his lecture “Governmentality,” Foucault states that the art of government is characterized by a continuity between “the art of self-government, connected with morality; *the art of properly governing a family, which belongs to economy*; and finally the science of ruling the state, which concerns politics” (emphasis added, 134). Therefore, “Upwards continuity means that a person who wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods and his patrimony” (Foucault, “Governmentality”134). Ferguson explains, “Foucault suggests that the tactics of governmentality have their genesis in the strategies needed to maintain the heteropatriarchal family” (90). To prove his ability to govern the state, therefore, a black man, specifically, had to first succeed at managing individuals, goods, and wealth within his family. After all,

manhood and property ownership were two proposed prerequisites for suffrage after the Civil War.

This resulting nineteenth-century discourse of African American sexuality, which Higginbotham, Hammonds, hooks, and Ferguson describe, was “a domain punctuated with notions of gender and sexual propriety, morality, domestic health and education, virile manhood, and genteel femininity” and had the power to “draft African Americans into citizenship and humanity” (Ferguson 95, 96). Foucault clearly equates this “domestic model of governmentality” with patriarchy, as did the *Tribune*, and I will return to this limitation at the end of this chapter (Ferguson 90). But first I will focus on how the daily advocated for African Americans’ right to a home as a physical space through its organization of the Freedmen’s Aid Association and then on the productive ways in which the newspaper used evidence of black men and women’s everyday literacies to gain access to political rights.

“To Obtain for Him Self a *HOME*”: The Freedmen’s Aid Association

According to Mitchell, “The organizing principle of the antebellum South—in social, legal, and political terms—was the white patriarchal household” (147). African Americans in Reconstruction New Orleans, especially the staff of the *Tribune*, fought against this “organizing principle” by advocating for their own homes, their own land. Simultaneously, these blacks ruptured the image of the antebellum white household, which had included the presence of dependent African American slaves. The black home was the place where children could be socialized into Ferguson’s “gender normativity,” where black men could put their economic and agricultural literacies to work to become independent, and where black women could use their domestic skills to cultivate “a nursery of virtue.” Arguments over blacks’ right to land “straddled the most fundamental institutions of southern society: the household and the market.

. . . [They] fused the language of family and contract, of domestic relations and the marketplace” (Mitchell 147).⁶⁴ The *Tribune* recognized this importance of the home as both a place of gender socialization and a security against economic dependence in its January 8, 1869 edition:

[W]e may be a free but we are a homeless people . . . It is in the homes of a people that their strength is matured, that a true manhood and womanhood is developed, that civilization is advanced. The home is the nursery of virtue, the place where principles are to be imbibed and a character to be formed that shall give efficiency, usefulness and dignity to life. It is the homes of England and America that constitute their glory. But without the power to purchase or rent land, our people must be very largely a roving people, driven or drawn hither and thither by the caprice of planters or by the promise of higher wages. Under such circumstances the family relations are unstable. . . . They cannot be independent freemen. . . . They must be servants to others . . . Without homes, without any right in the soil, what freedom our people have must be gradually reduced.

Therefore, members of the *Tribune* staff led in the organization of the Freedmen’s Aid Association. According to its constitution approved on March 13, 1865, the mission of the organization was to provide assistance such as land, interest-free loans, and agricultural equipment to blacks so that a freedman could work the land independently with the intention of later acquiring title to it and could ultimately “obtain for him self a *HOME*” (12 March 1868). By the end of 1865, while Benjamin Flanders was in charge of the Department of Negro Labor, the Freedmen’s Aid Association was formed with Flanders as president, the paper’s own Jean-Baptiste Roudanez as vice-president, and editor Jean-Charles Houzeau as a charter member (O’Brien 166). A year’s membership cost twenty dollars, and the association was organized as a co-proprietorship between cotton auctioneer, Anthony Fernandez, and Auguste Lesseps since Louisiana law prevented the creation of agricultural associations (O’Brien 228).

⁶⁴ Mitchell argues that debates over the apprenticeship of black children “straddled the most fundamental institutions of southern society: the household and the market. . . . [they] fused the language of family and contract, of domestic relations and the marketplace” (147).

As early as September 10, 1864, the *Tribune* found fault with the way in which the government dealt with former Confederates' land and advocated for division of the confiscated acreage among freedmen in an editorial "Division of Property":

The present national system of taking care of the "*abandoned property*" of the traitors to their country, is one of the most striking evidences of hasty, imperfect and unwise legislation which our history presents. . . . The insolvent planters had left their lands and their country . . . they had done nothing but eat, drink and be merry; they had lived luxuriously every day upon the labor of their slaves. The moment they departed, the Government should have taken possession of the lands, divided them out into five acre-lots, and distributed them among those persons who had, by dint of daily and long continued toil, created all the wealth of the South. (emphasis in original)

Instead, "The plantations were leased out to avaricious adventurers from the North, whose sole desire was to *exploit* the services of the freedmen, and make out of their labor as much money as possible. The slaves were made serfs and chained to the soil" (emphasis in original, 10 September 1864). But since "revolutions never go backward" (10 September 1864), the paper continued to argue for five acre lots for the "tillers of the soil" on September 24 and introduced a model for "the organization of Labor; the Associations of the Laborers; the union of hearts and hands" on October 4.

On November 30, 1864, the *Tribune* began to formulate its plan for the Freedmen's Aid Association. The former wealth of the planter class was fading away due to higher costs of labor and the destruction of crops due to the war and armyworm, a pest. Consequently, affluent free blacks in the city were gaining prominence and, therefore, were responsible to help the freedmen in their quest for land by investing capital in what they called "labor associations": "In this new era, we are not to turn ourselves toward the powers that were. We may ourselves come on the field of competition. We may form partnership among ourselves and with the freedmen, to participate into the agricultural enterprise. . . . Let us go to work, organize labor-colonies, and elevate our emancipated brethren" (30 November 1864). The *Tribune's* "labor

associations,” which would be funded by the Freedmen’s Aid Association, named free blacks and freedmen as managers and laborers respectively. The *Tribune*’s plan for the Freedmen’s Aid Association called members of “the old free colored people,” “citizens of intelligence, morality and industry, radically opposed to the system of slavery and strongly attached to the success of free labor,” to form associations with the freedmen because “first, it would set an example for others and stimulate them to the great social reform through which we are now passing; and next, it will give a sufficient proof of our competence” (28 January 1865; 29 January 1865). Freedmen would provide for themselves “the bare necessities of life” with their weekly or monthly wages, but this pay would be low since freedmen’s main motivation would be their third of the annual profit (29 January 1865). Another third of the association’s income would pay the owner rent on the land, and the final third would be collected by the managers of the collective (O’Brien 221-22).⁶⁵ Although some might critique the Freedmen’s Aid Association as paternalistic and give as proof its naming of free and freed blacks as managers and laborers respectively, both parties were to profit equally from their partnership.

The following year on April 5, 1865, the Freedmen’s Aid Association and *Tribune* circulated two letters, claiming that their plan had been put in place. Secretary Charles W. Hornor wrote, “The division of the large plantations in Louisiana has already begun. . . . Some of the land of Confederates had been parceled and rented out to the Freedmen. They are now cultivating these portions of the soil of the State in squads of men, women, and children, varying in number from fifteen to one hundred, and sometimes even more” (2 May 1865).

⁶⁵ Collectives that worked land owned by the government only had to budget one-eighth of their profit for rent (O’Brien 243). Most associations were divided into smaller groups of ten people on average who were assigned a specific part of the land to work, usually about one hundred acres (O’Brien 243). Occasionally, the Freedmen’s Aid Association also supported freedmen who worked alone or in partnership with only one or two others. In these cases, each freedman had a separate lease (O’Brien 243).

With loans in hand from the Freedmen's Aid Association and land, the *Tribune* reasoned that the freedmen would soon demonstrate their willingness and ability to till the ground. In fact, the Freedmen's Aid Association was so convinced of the economic and agricultural literacies of the freedmen that they created cash prizes or premiums for those freedmen who raised the largest crop; the best samples of cotton, brown sugar, tobacco; and the healthiest animals.⁶⁶ They wanted to afford the freedmen the tools needed to “prove to the world they are all good tillers of the land, law-abiding citizens, and worthy of the title of American citizens” (28 May 1865).⁶⁷

In this mission, the Freedmen's Aid Association met with some success. O'Brien estimates that the Freedmen's Aid Association provided the means to help 693 freedmen to become independent laborers on six different plantations: the Johnson Plantation, the George Tucker Plantation, the Robert Tucker Plantation, the Vicks Plantation, the Richard (Dick) Taylor Plantation, and the Lower Whitehead Plantation, all in Lafourche and St. Charles parishes. The total value of production on all six plantations was most likely more than \$30,000 (O'Brien 252). Other records claim that the organization may have offered support to freedmen on as many as fourteen plantations by the fall of 1865 (O'Brien 235). The daily claimed that “the freedmen were able to manage themselves cane and cotton plantations” and that “when acting under the stimulus of fair profits, accruing from their labor, they were as industrious as any other class of men—perhaps more” (11 July 1865). And the *Tribune's* job

⁶⁶ These premiums, which ranged from \$25 to \$250, were to be rewarded on the first Monday of March 1866, making the contest last a little bit less than a year.

⁶⁷ The Freedmen's Aid Association also gained national recognition. Agent for the New York Freedmen's Relief Association, William Harmount, attended its meetings; one of Flanders's speeches was printed in the *National Freedmen*; and George Shaw, President of the National Freedmen's Relief Association, remarked on Louisiana's Freedmen's Aid Association (O'Brien 231-32).

was to publicize the “practical and unquestionable demonstration of that important fact” to “the mass of the prejudiced public” (11 July 1865). After all, the paper pointed out on July 11, 1865 that “[o]f all our city papers . . . NONE has ever done so much as to even mention the Freedmen’s Aid Association of New Orleans,” while Rouzan claims that the daily allocated approximately twenty-two editorials to the formation of such an “association of labor” (101).

Additional support came from the Freedmen’s Bureau, created on March 3, 1865, and the promise of its leader in Louisiana, Thomas Conway, to divide sixty-eight plantations of 58,000 acres among the freedmen seemed to secure further success (O’Brien 255). In August, the *Tribune* readily published the Bureau’s Circular No. 10, which encouraged “[f]reedmen and Refugees within the State of Louisiana, who desire to procure land for their own use, [to] send their applications to these Headquarters” (30 August 1865). The Bureau quickly received 267 applications, seventy-three on behalf of associations of freedmen, for approximately forty thousand acres of land (O’Brien 256). But the Bureau’s much-needed support was only short-lived. By October of 1865, Conway was fired and replaced by J. Scott Fullerton who passed his own vagrancy order declaring that freedmen be “compelled to find an employer,” stopped sending his orders and circulars to the *Tribune*, and was ordered to make it clear to blacks in the state that there would actually be no land division (28 October 1865). The Freedmen’s Aid Association’s opportunity for land reform evaporated. Within one year, the Freedmen’s Bureau returned 85,000 acres of land to their former owners (O’Brien 257), and President Johnson declared amnesty to former Confederates and restored confiscated lands in the South to rebels. However, the paper refused to stop fighting.

The daily realized that land, the physical manifestation of the home, was necessary for economic independence and hence manhood, for the enactment of black women’s domestic literacies, and for children’s socialization into these normative gender roles. Arguments for

economic reform, which would secure African Americans their own homes, also discursively aided blacks in claiming a heteropatriarchal family structure similar to that of whites.

According to Blassingame, “Violating Negro women, encouraging immorality, and separating families with impunity, the planters had created in the freedmen a deep hunger for stable family relations. . . . Emancipation brought the freedman to a new oasis, where he had the opportunity to satisfy his thirst for regularized family relations” (86). Leroi Jones [Amiri Baraka] likewise argues that “the family had to be recognized again as a basic, social unit, and the dominant image of the patriarchal society restored to full meaning” (56). Blassingame continues by citing that seventy-eight percent of black families were headed by males in 1880, and approximately eighty percent of female heads of household were widows (236). Bacon warns, “It is reductive and inaccurate, however, to see African Americans’ views of gender as either derivative of the attitudes of whites or adopted in order to gain acceptance from a white-dominated society” (123). With the exception of those families in which the male head of household had died, most black families in the nineteenth century were heteropatriarchal in family structure. Therefore, blacks needed only to publicize their adherence.

On November 9, 1864, the *Tribune* found fault with the rebels who promised freedom to those slaves who would serve in the Confederate army:

But they [the rebels] say nothing of the wives and children of those they are calling to save from defeat in their nefarious attempt to destroy the government of the United States. Can the rebels imagine that these brave black men will consent to fight for their individual freedom unmindful of their posterity. . . . Uncle Sam gives freedom to the whole family, and does not ask a man to fight to enslave his wife and children, and the Southern slaves understand that, too.

Slavery may have threatened the stability of the black family, yet blacks in nineteenth-century New Orleans fought for the black home’s reinstatement in both print and reality. After the Emancipation Proclamation, blacks associated stable family relations with freedom and

increased political rights. Columns within the daily portrayed black males as breadwinners and black females as domestic caretakers in accordance with the dominant discourse's gender roles and notions of home and family.

“We Plead Our Manhood”: Black Men’s Economic and Agricultural Literacies and Entrepreneurship⁶⁸

In order for black men to be perceived as the heads of their homes and providers for their families, they needed knowledge of the port city economy; the *Tribune* represented that knowledge in number of ways. One specific everyday literacy that is contained in the pages of the *New Orleans Tribune* is financial and economic. Robert Reinders explains, “Commerce was king and New Orleans was his prized domain” (49). Free black males participated in this commercial market through their various occupations as grocers, bakers, butchers, merchants, and traders. Others were farmers, vegetable dealers, cigar makers, and peddlers (Blassingame 223-24). The *Tribune* catered to the need for economic knowledge that free blacks’ occupations necessitated. After all, the slogan of the daily’s predecessor *L’Union*, “Memorial, Politique, Littéraire, et Progressiste,” was altered to “Political, Progressive, and Commercial” when the newspaper became the *Tribune* to emphasize the paper’s circulation within the commercial arena and its commitment of more space to market quotes, notices of ship arrivals and departures, business advertisements, auction notices, and job ads (Leavens 52).

When the paper became a daily on October 4, 1864, the *Tribune* started publishing a column entitled “Financial and Commercial,” and later “Commercial and Monetary.” This column updated readers on the daily rates for domestic exchange, foreign exchange, the gold and silver markets, the stock market, and bank notes; listed the specific sales of cotton, flour,

⁶⁸ This quotation is from the February 4, 1869 edition of the *New Orleans Tribune*.

sugar and molasses, western produce, freight, and other goods such as oats, bran, salt, bacon, pork, lard oil, and potatoes for the previous day; and relayed the arrival, sale, and price of various animals. This list was very detailed, as illustrated in an excerpt from the paper's October 16, 1864 edition:

COTTON- There was only a limited inquiry to-day, and we did not hear of a transaction at private sale. At auction, 16 bales sold as follows: 1 bale pickings at 45c., 2 bales wet and dry at 54, 1 bale at 87 ½, 4 bales reboxed at 91 ½, 4 do. at 1.02 ½, 1 bale newly ginned at 1.16 ½ and 3 bales do. at 1.19. Low middling is still quoted at 1.17 ½ @1.20 and middling at 1.25@--.

Those individuals, including blacks, who compiled these reports and those who read these reports already had to possess a very specific form of economic literacy in order to understand what they were reading and how to use this new information. Not only did they learn the current daily worth of various forms of money, but they came to a better understanding of the economic value of their crops or livestock as well. They gained the ability to negotiate fair prices for both the sale and purchase of these items based on other sales and the supply of the desired good. Further, Ira Berlin explains, “The practice of paying free Negroes with merchandise allowed shrewd businessmen to cheat unsuspecting black workers out of a fair return on their labor. Free Negroes who exchanged their labor directly for goods generally received less than the usual dollar-per-day wage” (224). Knowing the value of this “merchandise” would have aided free black workers when it came time to receive their proper wages.

Due to the *Tribune's* wide and racially diverse readership, black men's display of economic literacy in and through the paper did the supplementary work of casting doubt on the stereotypes of black male vagrancy and dependency then circulating in the public South, which had been fostered by legislatures' and the Freedmen's Bureau's passage of numerous vagrancy

acts and labor regulations. In October of 1862, General Butler instituted Louisiana's first system of wage-labor in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. This system allowed freedmen nominal wages, food, shelter, and medical attention in exchange for one-year contracts. Freedmen, however, had to work ten-hour days and were prohibited from leaving the plantation without a pass (Rouzan 94). In February of 1864, Nathaniel P. Banks, Butler's successor, issued "General Order No. 23," which entitled freedmen to four to eight dollars a month under similar conditions. The *Tribune* complained, "According to this, the condition of the slave is not materially altered. The Eight, Six or Four dollars per month which they have the promise of getting from their Employers, but which perhaps in a great many instances they may never receive, is scarcely enough to put an extra pair of boots upon their feet" (13 August 1864). Blacks in the state met with little success at labor reform until October of 1864 when the Department of Negro Labor was transferred from the War Department to the Treasury Department under the leadership of Benjamin Flanders, a local radical. Flanders increased freedmen's wages and helped the *Tribune* to organize the Freedmen's Aid Association, already discussed in this chapter, affording freedmen the opportunity to reap the fruits of their own labor through their lease of land and formation of "labor colonies." By February 1, 1865, however, Flanders's superior, W. P. Mellon, issued his own regulations and ordered that Stephen Hurlbut replace Flanders shortly after (Rouzan 101). Hurlbut reinstated Banks's "General Order No. 23" with minor alterations. Louisiana's Black Codes were passed during a special session of the state legislature in the fall of 1865. One of the laws included within the Black Codes was "an iniquitous 'vagrant' law that would have permitted the seizing and renting out to planters of any colored man on the street, whoever he might be" (Houzeau 123). Those blacks in New Orleans who were born free soon realized that arrests for vagrancy which resulted from these orders were not limited only to those recently emancipated; they, too,

suffered from these regulations on free labor and were forced to carry a “circulation card” with them (Houzeau 103). Houzeau explained that “General Order No. 23” even “den[ied] to the older blacks and colored men who were born free that famous right, which they had always enjoyed, to come and go as they pleased” (105). O’Brien writes, “The unfree status of the freedmen meant a not entirely free status for the free men as well. Hence they were led into the fight for complete freedom for the mass of agricultural laborers of Louisiana” (156). Therefore, the *Tribune* continued its efforts to publicize the economic and agricultural literacies of free and freed blacks alike and to critique the labeling of black men as vagrants.

Rouzan estimates that the daily dedicated thirty-one editorials to discussions of free labor, even adding to its banner in 1866 “**To Every Laborer His Due: AN EQUITABLE SALARY. *Eight Hours a Legal Day’s Work***” (emphasis in original, 93). The newspaper’s representation of black men as industrious comes more clearly into focus when the “Financial and Commercial” section is considered alongside the rhetoric of some of the *Tribune*’s editorial matter. For example, on July 18, 1865, the *Tribune* published Circular Number 2, section 4 from the Freedmen’s Bureau only to later critique it. The circular read, “In no cases will freedmen be forced to work for employers who are obnoxious to them, and officers carrying out this order must, in all cases, give the freedmen to understand that they are entirely free to work when and for whom they please, and at the same time that a life of idleness will not be encouraged or allowed” (18 July 1865). The *Tribune* then pointed out the ways in which the circular was contradictory:

Circular No. 2 from the Assistant Commissioner of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands contains dispositions which seem at first to be inconsistent. . . . It is said, in sect. 4th, that the Freedmen are at liberty to choose their employers—and, in fact, without that liberty they could not be called free. Such a voluntary choice is one of the attributes of freedom. It is said that in no case the laborers will be forced to work for employers who are obnoxious to them. But at the same time, they will be given to understand that a life of idleness will not be encouraged or allowed. Now what is meant

by the life of idleness? This will be construed in many different ways. . . . Idleness is vice only when it is habitual and voluntary. (22 July 1865)

The paper sought to better define “idleness” on July 18, 1865 by including the example of, not black men, but white men on Canal Street: “They are loafers, gamblers, thieves, men who for years had no avocation and did no work, men who have no honest means of existence. . . . They have been and still are a disgrace to the city.” These were precisely the men who the police should have arrested, yet they did not: “Our loafers are permitted to parade on Canal street—the main thoroughfare of New Orleans—because they are white, and, also perhaps because they are of the rebel persuasion” (18 July 1865). On the other hand, on the levee “the black man makes some money by his labor, by the sweat of his brow, maintains himself and family, lives honestly, and pays his rent,” yet during the few hours between freedmen’s unloading of shipments, the policemen would arrest the black men and bring them before the Recorder, who would send them to the Workhouse as vagrants (18 July 1865). The *Tribune* continued, “According to this rule, if extended to all, there is not a single man, in New Orleans, who would not be liable to be arrested in walking home, at night, after his day’s work” (18 July 1865). Similarly, one week later on July 26 in an editorial “The New Orleans Recorders,” the paper’s editors complained, “It is well known that many among our humblest citizens are taken from their families, and even *from their employers*, to be brought before the Recorders; and, there, particularly in the First District, they have very little chance to escape a sentence of thirty days to the Workhouse—as vagrants?” (emphasis in original). Examples of a man arrested right after his sale of a chicken and a group of men brought to the Recorder on a Saturday evening after having worked all week followed.

The *Tribune* persisted in arguing that, if enforced, vagrancy laws should be equally applicable to all. “The black and colored people are not those who are the most in need of

Government assistance. Many whites are unable to support themselves” in Avoyelles Parish (16 September 1865), and statistics proved “that when there is one black man who draws his rations from Government without recompense, that there are ten whites, and that the *only* idle and unproductive element of the Southern country is the white,” according to the paper’s Boston correspondent Viator on October 28, 1865 (emphasis in original). During the same year, the *Tribune* chose to copy articles from the *New York Tribune* and *Chicago Tribune* that, too, dealt with the theme of vagrancy. The article from the *New York Tribune* stated, “The ‘Colored Citizens’ [of Petersburg, Virginia] scorn and treat with contempt the allegation that they understand freedom to mean idleness and indolence. This seems to us to be a good deal clearer and more correct view than that which is entertained by a good many white loafers who prefer to live by the sweat of other men’s brows, and to reap that which other men have sown. . . Laziness is not confined to any color” (16 August 1865). Then only three days later in “White Example to the Blacks,” writers of the *Chicago Tribune* cited the *New York World*’s observation that “there are few people at work besides negroes” in North Carolina, and “Confederate officers and soldiers are loafing about the streets, waiting for something to turn up, but not trying to turn anything” (19 August 1865). The duplicated article continued to blame whatever amount of blacks’ indolence which might exist on the example offered by whites: “It is very marvelous that he [a black man] should also copy the industrial habit of the ‘race,’ particularly when they are flaunted before his eyes in so attractive a form as that described by the *World*’s correspondent—playing gentlemen and living at Government’s expenses?” (19 August 1865). Two years later, the *Tribune* continued to cite statistics demonstrating the productivity of blacks as superior to that of whites: “we already know of several parishes [in Louisiana] where a majority of the lands cultivated during the year 1867, and a majority of the taxes acquitted during the same year, were respectively cultivated and

paid by colored men” (22 October 1867). The daily reversed the then-popular stereotype of black men as vagrants to instead paint black men as industrious and white men as idle.

The *Tribune* also demonstrated that blacks working farther from the city on plantations were agriculturally literate; they knew how to work the fields and could profit from the enhanced quality and quantity of their produce under free labor. On the other hand, some white planters lacked this knowledge. Ferguson explains, “Returning to the plantation after the Civil War, the white slave master can see how the conditions of slavery had equipped the slave with industrial and technical knowledge and left the slaveholding family without this vital education” (93). The cotton crop of 1864 had fallen short because of the devastation of the armyworm, which perhaps could have been avoided if the crop had been planted earlier and allowed to mature before the outbreak. The author of an article published in the newspaper on October 16, 1864 and entitled “Free Labor—The Cotton and the Cane Crops” rebutted an earlier piece from the *New Orleans Times* in which a planter claimed that the new system of free labor, in which workers received wages, was to blame for the tardy planting of the crop because it failed to cultivate a sense of industry within black men. The *Tribune* writer responded, “From all indications the cotton crop this year will fall shorter than it ever fell before, and this is attributed to the opposition made by the enemies of free labor and not to the new system” (16 October 1864). He turned the tables on the opponents of free labor, claiming that it was *their* inaction which led to the poor crop, and sought to disprove their “sophisms”: “The planting of this staple was retarded by the planters either awaiting for certain concessions from the government—which would re establish [sic] slavery in another form—or with the determination of not encouraging the new system. In fact these lords of the lash could not realize that they had to pay for the labor of those they considered their chattels” (16 October 1864). Slightly further down the page, the staff of the *Tribune* reproduced a letter to the editor

of the *Era* to point out the problem with heeding the arguments made by a planter against free labor:

Suppose slavery to be the murdered victim, and we charge the system of Free Labor with being the murderer. Is there a sensible man living who has any doubts that the old slaveholders of Louisiana are unfitted, by reason of prejudices in favor of “the old system,” to compose the jury who are to try the murderer and render an impartial verdict? How long, with such jurors, could Free Labor remain unhung? How long could slavery remain unresurrected? (16 October 1864)

A planter’s bias would cloud his judgment. Other articles similarly shifted the blame for poor harvests to whites since former slaveowners in states such as the Carolinas and Kentucky refused to hire freedmen as free laborers (3 June 1865; 20 June 1865).

The *Tribune* then cited specific evidence that the new system could and had worked, proving that black men had the industry and skill to till the land. It shared the success story of four freedmen who leased a plantation for five years and made \$18,000 per cotton crop (16 October 1864). To convince its readers that such success was not the exception, but the rule, the newspaper made it a habit to cite glowing statistics of the value of freedmen’s property and/or goods, gathered from its staff’s observations, the Freedmen’s Bureau’s reports, and records of commercial exchanges. On August 10, 1865, the *Tribune* even included the letter from a planter in Iberville Parish, which testified to the success of the “experiment of free labor”: “I am a planter of twelve years’ existence; this year . . . my laborers are to get one fourth of the net proceeds of the crops. . . . the result so far is a complete success; we have today 85 arpents of cotton; 25 arpents of sugar canes; 75 arpents of corn, all in perfect condition.”

Together, the “Financial and Commercial” section and editorials like those discussed above confirmed that free black males were not only working, but were now profiting from the fruits of their own labor, whether at the port of New Orleans or on the land. Black men were often classified as children within the public South because of their prior dependence upon their

masters for the necessities of life during slavery: historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown writes, “the idea that slaves were as children was so acute and pervasive that it became a normal assumption . . . So long as slaves were perceived as childlike in their dependency, their humanity was tragically denied them” (qtd. in Gutnam 291). The *Tribune*, therefore, not only depicted black men’s economic and agricultural literacies but made the case that these literacies should result in economic independence: “We [black men] want to work, but not for you; we want to work free and voluntarily—for ourselves. The right to earn wages and to reap the fruits of one’s labor, is a sacred right” (8 August 1865). In fact, one of editor Houzeau’s main critiques of General Nathaniel Banks’s system of free labor, in addition to its long hours, yearly contracts, and fixed minimal wages, was its requirement that freedmen rely on their employers for food, medicine, fuel, and clothing: “As long as the laborer has no liberty for going and coming, and *as long as he is fed and clothed by his employer*, he still remains under the controlling care of his master” (emphasis added, 12 May 1865). The paper celebrated in 1865 when a convention of planters called together by Flanders declared that “the laborers shall next year provide for their own clothing,” for this was “the first step towards self-management of the domestic affairs” (24 November 1865). The *Tribune* also used self-reliance as one of its main arguments for the adoption of the 1868 state constitution: “Let the laboring men remember that the ‘Black Crook’ Constitution takes them from under the control of hard times, gives them lucrative employment and bread for their families, and thus makes them, whether white or black, truly free and independent” (14 April 1868). Bell hooks writes, “In keeping with the sexual politics of 19th century America, many black slave men felt very strongly that it was their duty to provide for the economic well-being of their family and they felt bitter resentment and remorse that the slave system did not enable them to fulfill this role” (*Ain’t I a Woman* 47), and Berlin explains that although “whites might deny [black men’s] business acumen or skill . .

. material possessions were impossible to ignore” (246-47). Although slavery threatened black males’ image as breadwinners and was “a nursery for perpetuating infancy” (Gannett qtd. in Gutnam 298), writers and readers of the *New Orleans Tribune* witnessed that this was changing, that black males were men, possessing the economic and agricultural literacies necessary to provide for themselves and their families.

Finally, one cannot forget that the newspaper itself was a black-owned business. No one could deny the entrepreneurship of those blacks who ran the newspaper and used proof of its wide circulation to sell advertising space to local businesses such as J. J. Weckerling Shoe Store and J. M. Vogel Apothecary and Druggist. Nor were the members of the *Tribune* staff, who were doctors and teachers in addition to newspapermen, an anomaly, for the newspaper chose to reprint a column from the *Macon Messenger* entitled “Enterprising Men” on November 3, 1865: “It is a matter of congratulation that we have so many energetic freedmen in our city. . . . We might name a host of them who are engaged in business, and doing well. Jeff. Salisbury, a tailor; W.D. Banks, carriage and wagon maker; Wm. Clark has a grocery store; Wm. Campbell, brick mason; and many others who are worthy of public confidence and patronage.” According to the official records of Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Thomas Conway, there were fewer than five hundred black vagrants in all of Louisiana in mid-1865 (31 August 1865). Not only did the *Tribune* print evidence of black men’s economic and agricultural literacies to fight to change public perceptions of black men as vagrants or dependent children, but also perhaps because its editors were well aware that manhood and often property ownership were prerequisites to their goal, universal suffrage: “Labor produces wealth, and wealth influence; therefore every aim, every nerve, every muscle should be strained and trained to the exercise of labor,” according to *Tribune* writer Palmetto (12 August 1865).

Noble Ladies: Black Women's Public Relegation to the Domestic Sphere

Thus far this chapter has demonstrated how the staff of the *Tribune* sought to secure homes for African Americans and how the evidence of black men's everyday economic and agricultural literacies in the *Tribune* defended them against criticisms by whites of black men as unable to provide for their families and as unable to acquire property in a capitalistic society. The image of black masculinity that the *Tribune* circulated, however, cannot be studied in isolation, for the newspaper's portrayal of blacks in traditional Euro-white, middle-class gender roles can only truly be appreciated when these images of black males are juxtaposed with descriptions of black women in the *Tribune*. Only together do the newspaper's images of black masculinity and femininity create the larger image of the African American home. Jacqueline Bacon, writing on *Freedom's Journal*, the first black newspaper in the United States, admits that "male voices predominated in the periodical," but argues, "For the purpose of analyzing the rhetoric about gender in the periodical, what is said about gender is, in most cases, more relevant than the actual sex of the author" (121-22). Similarly, although some of the articles included in the *Tribune* are attributed to females, it is impossible to know the exact percentage of women's writing in the daily due to the large number of anonymous pieces. However, femininity, male-female relationships, and specific females were often discussed within its pages. Therefore, I will now turn to an analysis of the paper's depiction of black femininity.

The newspaper repeatedly positioned black women within the domestic sphere, accomplishing a similar goal to previously discussed columns such as "Free Labor—The Cotton and the Cane Crops" by undermining stereotypes—in this case of black females—circulating in other popular media in the South. Once again bell hooks explains, "During the years of Black Reconstruction, 1867-77, black women struggled to change negative images of

black womanhood perpetuated by whites. Trying to dispel the myth that all women were sexually loose, they emulated the conduct and mannerisms of white women” (*Ain’t I a Woman* 55). White women were depicted as caretakers of the home and family—pure, pious, submissive and domestic; therefore, the newspaper represented black women similarly. The *Tribune* participated in black women’s “culture of dissemblance” or “politics of silence,” discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Commentary on African American women’s sexuality was absent within its pages and countered by the daily’s public announcement of black women’s domesticity as wives.

Black women, as represented by the *Tribune*, were suitable marriage partners, although contemporaneous media often argued otherwise. Rumors of black women’s hypersexuality were used by the dominant discourse to paint black women as unfit for marriage, especially to white men. Hooks explains the motives for this discrimination: “Accordingly a black woman who marries a white man adopts his status; she takes his name and their children are his heirs. Consequently, if a large majority of that small group of white men who dominate decision-making bodies in American society were to marry black women, the foundation of white rule would be threatened” (*Ain’t I a Woman* 64). The newspaper directly critiqued the source of black women’s rumored hypersexuality, slave women’s sexual abuse by planters and overseers. Its staff placed the blame on these white “men” and portrayed black women as suitable wives for any man, black or white. For example, the *Tribune*’s third edition on July 26, 1864, contained an official report on the freedmen in Louisiana and on the banks of the Mississippi compiled by Colonel James McKaye. McKaye wrote, “As to chastity, to respect for, no such thing was known on the plantations. In the first place, the overseers had the run of all the field-women and if one of them refused, an occasion was very soon found for subjecting her to a severe punishment. . . . The planter’s habit of cohabitation with their slave-women was a source

of great suffering to these women” (26 July 1864). On October 1, 1864, the daily contained an anecdote from the *Louisville Union Press* in which a Union officer responded to a Copperhead planter. “Copperheads” was the pejorative title for Northern Democrats who had opposed the Civil War and instead supported an immediate settlement with the Confederacy which would restore the Union but leave the system of slavery intact. The Union officer rebutted the Copperhead’s claim that the Union was in favor of “negro equality”:

“Not exactly,” replied our officer; “we don’t see very well how a murderous, thieving cut-throat rebel against his Government can ever get to be the equal of an honest, well-behaved negro. Besides, you are the last people in the world who ought to talk about ‘negro equality,’ when on every side saddle colored children give ample evidence that you don’t hesitate to associate with negro *women* on terms of pretty close intimacy.” (emphasis in original)

Emancipation promised an end to such concubinage and the source of circulating stereotypes of black women’s promiscuity and immorality: “marriage [would become] the rule and concubinage the exception” (11 October 1865) as had been the case in Jamaica upon the end of slavery, according to Observer. Free black women, too, were subjected to sexual impropriety through the system of *plaçage*. Bell defines the practice of *plaçage* as “institutionalized concubinage”:

In *plaçage* a *représentant* (the young woman’s mother or a close relative) would investigate the financial stability and social standing of the white suitor. If the man was found acceptable, the representative would then negotiate a contract with the parents of the young woman of color (the *placée*). In the contract, the prospective “husband” would agree to provide financial support for the young woman and any offspring of the “marriage.” (emphasis in original, 112)

Bell argues that within Creole literary works of the mid-nineteenth century, the writers expressed their concern that “*plaçage* agreements reduced young women of color to the status of prostitutes; these Creole writers saw the practice as a threat to the social fabric of their community” (112-13).

Instead, the *Tribune* promoted that black women be legally married or even remarried by the Church, simultaneously depicting these women as proper wives and as pious. The paper copied an article from the *Vicksburg Daily Herald* on October 5, 1864:

A great many of the colored people of this city are appearing before the properly constituted authorities and having themselves re-wedded in the holy bonds of matrimony. We learn that about twenty-five couples are to be united and re-united at the Methodist church on Sunday next. Many of these people have never been married (the customs of slavery in the South not requiring it) but have been living as man and wife for years without undergoing the binding obligations of the marriage ceremony. In their improved condition as free men and women, however, they recognize a validity of the solemn ordinance, and are hastening to the altar to be united under the seal and sanction of the law.

In 1866, the staff of the *Tribune* was quick to celebrate the Freedmen's Bureau's Circular No. 5, which authorized agents of the Bureau to "grant licenses to marry, and to register marriages between persons of African descent, when the local magistrates of other legal offices decline to act" (23 September 1866), and again in 1867 when the Constitutional Convention of Louisiana debated sanctioning common law marriages. Article 140 of the proposed constitution stated, "All persons who were formally debarred by slavery from legally contracting matrimony in this State, who have lived together as husband and wife for three consecutive years prior to the adoption of this Constitution, shall be deemed . . . husband and wife, and their offspring as their legal heirs, as though said disability had never existed" (29 December 1867). The paper even defended interracial marriages against the dominant discourse's fears of miscegenation when the paper's Boston correspondent cited his agreement with another columnist, Mr. Vidal, who argued that the 1864 Constitutional Convention should repeal Article 75 of the Civil Code:

Thanks to Mr. Vidal's explanatory remarks on Mr. Marie's Bill. As slavery has been abolished, of course the law forbidding the marriage of free persons with slaves must "go by the board." As to marriages between white and colored persons any law forbidding such union is an impertinence at the best, an absurd attempt to legislate for the regulation of Nature herself. Such marriages, like all others, may be safely and properly left to the decision of the persons directly concerned. . . . there should be no

impediments to the social and sacred union of the sexes, no matter what differences in shades of complexion. (13 December 1864)

The *New Orleans Tribune* “demanded . . . respect for black women,” which could be guaranteed by publicly positioning them as wives, thus confining their sexuality to the sanctity of marriage (O’Brien 24).

Just as the staff of the *Tribune* “flipped the script” by portraying white men as vagrants and black men as industrious, as described earlier in this chapter, they juxtaposed images of black women in the home with critiques of white women’s maternity and characterizations of white women as “wenches.” For example, on November 16, 1865, the newspaper reported on the trial of an abortionist in New York City. The district attorney estimated that Mrs. Restell performed at least fifty abortions a day in that city. The *Tribune* commented on the case by claiming, “Whatever our opponents may have said about the licentiousness of the freed people, they cannot say that any Mrs. Restell ever grew rich by practicing her infamous profession among the colored women” (16 November 1865). Then, two weeks later the *Tribune* responded to the *Picayune*’s feeling of pain at having to chronicle the “great and little rows that occur among the colored people”:

Colored people have a good excuse, when they break the laws of God, the statutes of legislators, the ordinances of Aldermen, and the rules of decency: they were never taught better, and all the responsibility lies at the door of the white people. But what excuse can white persons offer when they act worse than colored ones ever did? There is in the First District a white wench by the name of Murphy, who has been arrested for drunkenness more than a hundred times during the last two twelvemonths . . . That being has a child now two months old, which she carries along with her to the meanest rum-holes, and drops in the gutters, when she is tipsy. (30 November 1865)

Both stories positioned black women as superior to white women, who were represented as immoral and bad mothers. This “white wench” was not even referred to as a woman, but as a “being.”

Black women were additionally capable of keeping house, again dutifully fulfilling their roles as wives and the Cult of True Womanhood's qualification of domesticity. Blassingame explains, "The Negro male contended that a woman's sphere of action was the home. . . . Within the family circle, the woman was expected to manage the household, care for the children, wash, iron, and sew clothes. . . . The wife was supreme in the affairs of the household and should be proud of the duties she performed" (88). Authors, such as the writer of the "Facts for Housekeeping" column in the November 9, 1864 edition of the daily, represented black women as quite literate in terms of domestic management:

Pickles already made can be preserved by putting in a few roots of horse-radish. . . . A tablespoonful of flour to each squash and pumpkin pie is equal in value to one egg. . . . Paper, torn up in small bits, make a good bed. . . . Put some juice of the frost grape into your old cider, if you would make vinegar come. Give your hens with their food at the rate of a teaspoonful of cayenne pepper every other day to a dozen fowls. It makes them lay finely.

Those black women who may not have already possessed such domestic knowledge could gain access to it upon reading the daily or listening to the newspaper being read aloud. Hooks writes that in the nineteenth century "[b]lack women wanted to assume the 'feminine' role of homemaker supported, protected, and honored by a loving husband" (*Ain't I a Woman* 91). She continues, "There was one problem—few jobs available to black men" (hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* 91). Therefore, many black women in New Orleans worked outside the home and often found domestic jobs as seamstresses, cooks, and midwives (Leavens 4). Some were also employed as washerwomen, peddlers, hairdressers, nurses, and lodging house keepers (Sterkx 228, 231). Mitchell explains that on the one hand "[f]reedwomen's visibility and daily mobility as workers were often used against them when former slaveholders and bureau agents challenged their competency as mothers" (182). Alternatively, such jobs were "merely an extension of the 'natural' female role" (hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* 91), and black women's

possession of such domestic skills may have “meant the difference between employment and joblessness, family unity and separation, and sustenance and impoverishment” (Schweninger 113). Therefore, the newspaper’s display of black females’ domestic literacies reinforced blacks women’s portrayal as good managers of the household and did the additional work of publicizing their qualifications for these domestic jobs, which were indispensable to their families’ well-being.

Just as these women used their domesticity to enter the workforce, they became advocates for their race and entered what Carla Peterson describes a “community sphere.” This “community sphere” “functioned as an intermediate sphere situated somewhere between the domestic/private and the public”; it was public because it was “located outside the ‘home,’” yet it was “also ‘domestic’ in that it represent[ed] an extension of the values of ‘home’ into the community” (Peterson 16). Black women became “municipal housekeepers” through their roles in reform organizations, benevolent societies, educational institutions, and religious groups (Baker 78).⁶⁹ Examples from the *Tribune* such as advertisements for and editorials about Mrs. Louise de Mortie’s “Patriotic and Literary Lecture” and “Grand Soiree Musicale” represent black women as inhabiting Peterson’s “community sphere.” De Mortie’s lectures were “assist[ed] by a large number of artists and lady amateurs” to raise money for “the establishment of an Asylum for the Orphans of the Freedmen” (2 May 1865). Following the advertisement for the soiree in the May 2, 1865 edition of the paper is the text of Special Order, No. 84 which confirmed that “the property known as the ‘Soule Mansion,’ on Esplanade street, is hereby assigned as an Orphan’s Home and placed in charge of Mrs. Louise de Mortie.” The

⁶⁹ In *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914*, Karen J. Blair describes white book club women’s entrance into the public sphere similarly: “But as active agents, nineteenth-century women utilized the domestic and moral traits attributed to the ideal lady to increase autonomy, assert sorority, win education, and seize influence beyond the home in the forbidden public sphere” (4).

role of de Mortie as a free black, female lecturer and intellect, was only advertised when it was counterbalanced by her altruistic, mothering role to the city's orphans. Her delegation to the community sphere was further emphasized in the editorial printed on May 11 of the same year, which described the soiree in detail. The column opened by claiming, "Nature, in forming the mind and the soul of great *men*—poets, chieftains, artists, statesmen—protests in the most unquestionable manner against our social distinctions of ranks or degrees. . . . There is no law strong enough to prevent any child of our common Father from carrying with *him*, into this world, the sacred palm of intelligence" (emphasis added, 11 May 1865). Intelligence was declared the possession of males; therefore, when Mrs. de Mortie was acknowledged for her performance, its success was attributed, not to her own talent, but to other mitigating factors, for the writer claimed, "It seems that the solemnity of the occasion, the vast attendance, the brightness of the spectacle, had given new force and expression to her recitation" (11 May 1865). The male performers, however, were credited as artists: "Mr. Basile Perrier—the self made artist in all the strength of that expression—has a remarkable talent of composition as well as of execution. The 'Magic Bells' held the house in rapture, and are in fact very powerful and captivating" (11 May 1865). Four of the five men described were termed "artists" and applauded for their talent, while the women were consistently referred to as "lady amateurs" as previously noted. The *Tribune* defended its brief commentary of the women's performances by claiming "to spare their delicate modesty" (11 May 1865). Finally, the success of the event was attributed to "the Committee of Directors, who, by unreal zeal and unceasing efforts succeeded so well in the organization of the 'soiree,'" an all male group including none other than the *Tribune's* own Paul Trévigne, rather than its officers, which later included Mrs. Paul Trévigne and Mrs. Dr. L. C. Roudanez (11 May 1865). In later editions of the paper, de Mortie was described as "the guardian of the children" (27 October 1865), "a charitable lady" (5

December 1865), and “the matron of the institution” (7 December 1865). The *Tribune* wrote about black women such as de Mortie’s entrance into the public sphere only within the pretense of their benevolence, creating for black women a separate role from men and simultaneously continuing to ensure black women’s subordination to men. After all, nineteenth-century women, according to the dominant discourse’s ideology, the Cult of True Womanhood, were to be submissive.

Similarly, on November 4, 1865, the *Tribune* printed a circular from Richard C. Baylor, a formerly enslaved laborer, entitled “To the Ladies of New Orleans.” During the previous week, Baylor had ordered those of the “Male Laboring Classes” of “Our People” to process to 49 Union Street and to deposit one dollar into a fund to defray the expenses of sending a delegate to Washington (4 November 1865). Baylor responded to black women’s critique that he had excluded them from the procession: “I take . . . your word—I believe *also* that you have money *too*. The plan I have in view for you . . . is this: ‘The support of the Colored Schools’ . . . this is a piece of *work* I have specially selected for them” (emphasis in original, 4 November 1865). Baylor successfully redirected black women’s charity and benevolence into an “appropriate” sphere. Rather than having them contribute to a political endeavor such as sending a delegate to Washington, Baylor called upon black women to donate money to education, one of the causes that falls within Peterson’s “community sphere.” Baylor continued, “I will not ask you ladies to form a procession, as the gentlemen did on Sunday but form yourselves into a body at a church or other suitable place . . . with your ‘dollar’ in your pocket books, proceed quietly to the Asylum and each one of you hand your dollar to MADAME DE MORTIE” (4 November 1865). Baylor also distinguished between the manner in which the women were to make their donation; they were to gather within the community sphere at a church or “other suitable place,” not on the streets, and they were to proceed

“quietly” once they entered the public area of the city (4 November 1865). Baylor even suggested a second option to the ladies of sending their dollar in an envelope, thereby keeping their physical bodies completely out of view from the public. Like the previous example, the daily documented black women’s domestic literacies and influence beyond the home, but only within the liminal space of the community sphere.

Outside of education, black women’s benevolence and charity were often equated with their display of patriotism to the United States and occasionally to France. De Mortie’s lecture, described above, was characterized as patriotic as well as literary, and the performances by the “lady amateurs” at the soiree included “Viva l’America” and “Marseillaise,” the national anthem of France. Such portrayal of “woman’s patriotism was often equated with sacrifice, an image that blends with woman as altruistic” (Dicken-Garcia and Cramer 269). For example, the *Tribune* announced on November 28, 1865 that “a committee of colored ladies will in a few days present an American flag to the State Senate, in behalf of the colored ladies of New Orleans.” However, the paper’s staff had to run to the defense of these black women on December 2 when the Senate chose not to display *that* flag. First, to summarize the event, the *Tribune* quoted from the *True Delta*:

A rather good joke, it appears, was played off on our grave and reverend Senators yesterday evening. A communication was received by the Senate, of which the following is the opening “The undersigned, as a committee of ladies, acting in the name of a large number of loyal ladies of New Orleans wish to present your honorable body with a United States flag, etc.” The Senate received the communication, accepted the flag, and fixed an hour in the afternoon for its formal reception. Shortly after they repaired to the hall of the House of Representatives for the purpose of electing a State Printer. That duty performed, they returned to their own chamber, and ordered, forthwith, that everything relating to the letter and flag should be expunged from the journals of the Senate. It is currently reported, and universally believed, that the “ladies” of the aforesaid flag committee, and those they represent, are “colored “ladies” [sic]. This may “account for the milk in the cocoa-nut.” (2 December 1865)

In a perfect example of intertextuality, the newspaper cited one of its contemporaries to then critique it immediately after:

The Senate refused to receive the flag, either on account of the donors or on account of the flag being the “stars and stripes” . . . they ordered yesterday a flag to be procured, so as to show that their refusal was not an insult to the glorious banner of their country. Therefore the insult was intended for the donors. It was an insult to patriotic and well intentioned ladies—the mothers, sisters, and wives of those gallant soldiers who fought for that very flag on the battlefield. (2 December 1865)

Not only did the *True Delta* portray this “insult” as a “joke,” but also the former used quotation marks around its description of these women as “ladies.” The *Tribune* responded by affirming the portrayal of black women as “patriotic and well intentioned *ladies*” (emphasis added) and conferring on them additional honorific titles such as mother and wife, again emphasizing these women’s roles within the domestic sphere. Higginbotham specifically analyzes “the trope of ‘lady’” and the ways in which it was used to discriminate against black women: “Ladies were not merely women; they represented a class, a differentiated status within the generic category of ‘women’ . . . no black woman, regardless of income, education, refinement, or character, enjoyed the status of lady” (261). In addition to being called “ladies,” in opposition to the dominant discourse, the black women in the above example were additionally characterized as “loyal” and “gallant” by the *Tribune*’s Boston correspondent when he finally entered his opinion on the subject on December 27. In her overall analysis of the early black press, Hutton writes that the black press was dedicated to “helping to counter negative images of black women, and accordingly this was accomplished through reporting the females’ good deeds and community service” (*Early Black Press* 57-58). Further, women’s patriotism “highlight[s] a recurring theme not only of women sacrificing *for*, but also sacrificing *of* their men, feelings and money” (emphasis in original, Dicken-Garcia and Cramer 269), as some of those “gallant soldiers who fought for that very flag on the battlefield” never made it home. Finally, the

Tribune's Boston correspondent used the Senate's rejection of the flag to critique white Southern and Northern manhood: "Is there anything on the face of this earth as despicable as 'Southern chivalry' unless it be Northern copperheadism?" (27 December 1865).

Reynolds and Schramm in *A Separate Sisterhood* describe the use of domestic rhetoric by women of all races in the nineteenth century:

Southern women, regardless of color, ethnicity or social class, shared aspects of strength and oppression and developed strong coping mechanisms to deal with the demands of an insensitive patriarchal society . . . their unprecedented achievements in the public sphere during the Progressive Era were gained not by reconceptualizing institutionalized sexist, racist, and classist practices, but by thinking and acting within the constructs of those realities in ways that were socially acceptable. (22)

Those African American women who were potentially writing for the *Tribune* but definitely reading the newspaper were, like nineteenth-century white women, relegated to the domestic and/or community sphere and may have likewise used similar strategies to aid their struggle into the public sphere, while simultaneously rhetorically constructing their position as wives, managers of the home, and ladies.

Limitations: "The Imperialism of Patriarchy"⁷⁰

Despite the ways described above in which the *Tribune* challenged the dominant discourse of the public South, the black family that the *Tribune* portrayed was undeniably patriarchal. In his examination of a collection of poems by free blacks in New Orleans, *Les Cenelles*, Nero argues that although the poems are on the surface about female chastity, "subtextually they focus on the role of the man as patriarch and controller of the sexuality of women in his family" (120). Similarly, the above-quoted excerpts from the paper emphasizing

⁷⁰ "The Imperialism of Patriarchy" is the title of the third chapter in bell hooks's text *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*.

black women's morality and domesticity can be read as yet another affirmation of black masculinity as black men became the "protector[s] of feminine virtue" (Nero 121). As Ferguson argues, nineteenth-century African Americans performed "sexual and gender normativity" to gain citizenship. Unfortunately, normativity included patriarchy then as it does now.

This limitation is best illustrated by the newspaper's changing of its opinion on female suffrage. Initially, on June 8, 1865, the *Tribune* claimed that neither gender nor race should exclude one from the right of suffrage. In an article reprinted from the *Boston Commonwealth*, the writer argued, "All human government, to be just, derives its authority from the consent of the whole community, because the whole community is governed. The limitation of the consent of the governed to the men of a community is in direct violation of the principle announced in the charter of American liberty. The women have the same right to give their consent as the men have, no more, no less" (8 June 1865). However, only a little over one month later on July 15, 1865, the *Tribune* changed its stance, copying an article from the *Indianapolis Gazette* in its first column: "Hence we lay down this fundamental principle or proposition, that in a Government like ours, *the right of citizenship carries with it the right to vote . . . Women and children, or minors, are not citizens . . . Women and minors have nothing to do with our proposition. It applies to men, as citizens of the republic, and we submit it to the examination of men*" (emphasis in original). Therefore, although editor Houzeau seemed forward-thinking in his own writings, claiming that suffrage was "the natural right of every woman" (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 61), the newspaper's mission became one for "manhood suffrage" (5 May 1867).

Why were black women excluded from the newspaper's fight for suffrage? I cannot be sure. Perhaps, the newspaper's staff agreed with Hon. B Gratz Brown of Missouri, who they

cited on October 31, 1865: “He also grants that consistency requires the extension of the suffrage to women, but thinks this may be postponed for the present especially as man and wife are one, and the husband acts for both, and it is to be presumed that most women will marry.” In her investigation of post-Civil War black Richmond, Elsa Barkley Brown argues that in the mid-nineteenth century “African women and men understood the vote as collective, not an individual possession; and furthermore, that African American women, unable to cast a separate vote, viewed African American men’s vote as equally theirs” (128).⁷¹ If we reenvision “freedom as a collective struggle,” then perhaps we can understand how men’s franchise promised a new opportunity for women as well (E. Brown 120). She points out, “Focusing on formal disenfranchisement obscures women’s continued participation in the external political arena” (E. Brown 126).

Alternatively, Nero writes that “when the *Tribune* included women in its demand for universal suffrage, it received such ridicule for that action that the newspaper never again called for female suffrage” (14-15). Regardless of its rationale, the newspaper’s decision to exclude black women from its quest for suffrage is evidence that the newspaper not only depicted the survival of the black home in print, but the persistence of the black patriarchal home. Hooks writes, “Among the 19th century black masses, folks were wholeheartedly committed to establishing a patriarchal social order in their segregated culture” (*Ain’t I a Woman* 91), and the black community represented by the *Tribune* was no exception.

⁷¹ Brown also argues, in contrast to this project, that in post-Civil War Richmond black men’s and women’s “active participation in the political arenas—internal or external—seldom required a retreat into womanhood or manhood as its justification” (129). For Brown, such rhetoric was not employed until the late-nineteenth century as blacks were increasingly disenfranchised and “were struggling to move back to a political authority they once had—internally and externally” (143).

Conclusion

The articles cited in this chapter from the *Tribune* are only some of the examples of the gendered rhetoric that African Americans in New Orleans used during the nineteenth century to prove themselves worthy of entrance into the white public sphere. The newspaper's staff argued, "It is well to show the world that there is intelligence, virtue, courage, industry, in the colored man [and] devotion, love, piety, poetry, in the colored woman" (4 February 1866). Within its pages, the newspaper displayed its understanding of the nineteenth century's discourse of gender, especially its separate spheres ideology, which positioned men within the public sphere and women within the domestic or private sphere. Higginbotham writes, "'Race work' or 'racial uplift' equated normality with conformity to white middle-class models of gender roles and sexuality" (271), and Ferguson concludes in his commentary on nineteenth-century African Americans' performance of gender, "By adopting normative gender and sexuality, African American elites waged war against the state's racialized exclusions . . ." (98). I echo their arguments and claim that African Americans represented their allegiance to the heteropatriarchal home and hence their worthiness of increased political rights by printing their everyday economic, agricultural, and domestic literacies within the pages of the *Tribune*. The newspaper performed the nineteenth-century separate spheres ideology for its readers, portraying black men as industrious heads of households whose success materially provided for their families and black women as noble wives whose domesticity and altruism cultivated virtue within the home and larger black community.

Simultaneously, the newspaper showed the fissures in this dominant discourse as even whites who were to epitomize it often fell short. For in "The Beating and Cheating Chivalry"

on August 1, 1865, Lieutenant Stickney reported from St. James Parish that Chivalry was ironically not chivalric:

The name of Chivalry in America has become a buzzword; and the intended nobility of the slave holding Confederacy has already acquired a fame of cruelty, injustice and business which history will record. . . . But it seems next to impossible for a slave driver to be human, just and generous. At least, taken as a class, the slave holding Chivalry does not possess such 'chivalric' accomplishments.

Nero points out the use of similar “decivilizing vehicles” to describe Confederates in many of Houzeau’s editorials from 1865 (189-92). And as for “Southern ladies,” the *Tribune* presents the story of “a fair beauty, perfectly intoxicated” on a streetcar, “who inquired whether ‘there were any negro women there,’ and who was, one moment later, taken care of by two policemen” (29 October 1867). The woman, who thought herself too good to ride the city car with “negresses,” instead rode atop the filth cart, escorted by two policemen (29 October 1867).

This chapter, however, presents further questions that beg a closer examination. For example, how did this discourse evolve and/or transform into future African American literacy practices situated in unique “historical moments” (Hammonds 176)? For this rhetoric was later challenged by female and male blues artists who sang tales of hypersexuality and prolonged travels respectively (A. Davis 11, 19). Part of the reasoning behind these seeming contradictions may lie at the intersections of race, gender, and class. Again, many of the values promulgated by the newspaper were characteristic of middle-class African Americans, whereas Angela Davis describes the blues as predominantly a working-class discourse: “Through the blues, black women were able to autonomously work out—as audiences and performers—a working-class model of womanhood” (qtd. in Keyes 187). Higginbotham writes, “Sexuality has come to be defined not in terms of biological essentials or as a universal truth detached and transcendent from other aspects of human life and society. Rather, it is an evolving conception

applied to the body but given meaning and identity by economic, cultural and historical context,” like other discourses (263).

The 1868 Louisiana constitution, however, did promote many of the changes advocated by the *Tribune* for free and freed blacks alike. In terms of economic reform, the constitution officially prohibited slavery: Article 3 of its Bill of Rights read, “There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in this state, otherwise than for the punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” Additionally, Article 11 demanded, “No law shall be passed fixing the price of manual labor,” in effect dismantling the Black Codes’ universal wage scales. Although an article legitimizing the children of slave marriages was introduced and debated, the convention ultimately left its resolution up to the incoming state legislature (Vincent 79). On November 5, 1868, an act proposed by Representative Burrell, a black man from St. John the Baptist Parish, was promulgated. The legislation repealed Article 95 of the Civil Code, which had prohibited marriages between whites and blacks and between free people of color and slaves; declared past private or religious marriages legally binding if the only impediment to their former legality was the race of the individuals; and legitimized the children of such unions (Memelo 57-58).

The newspaper’s display of black males’ manhood and property ownership did the additional work of meeting two of the prerequisites for suffrage, in addition to intellectual fitness. The following chapter will discuss yet another of the requirements for suffrage, an understanding of civics. Just as the staff of the *Tribune* used gendered rhetoric and representations of the black home to enter the public sphere, they created a civic identity for themselves to counter their exclusion from the witness stand, legal profession, and jury box.

Chapter Five

“Let the Public Know and Judge”: The Newspaper as an Alternative Court of Law



Figure 7: *Boston Court House*, 1851. Worcester & Co. Wood engraving; Courtesy Boston Athenæum

In 1851, the Boston Courthouse became the holding cell for fugitive slave Thomas Sims. Three years earlier, African American abolitionists had stormed the building to release another fugitive slave Shadrach Minkins. To prevent similar results in the Sims case, Boston authorities surrounded the courthouse with chains and militia, physically keeping African

American and white abolitionists from entering the halls of justice, as pictured above (Figure 7) (DeLombard 59).⁷² This image, in addition, visually symbolizes African Americans' exclusion from court proceedings in the North and the South throughout the nineteenth century, which effectively denied them justice in the courts of the United States. Black testimony was often outlawed, and although Louisiana was the first state in the South to admit an African American lawyer to the bar in 1860, it took over a decade for a second black attorney to practice in the state.⁷³ Therefore, in order to find an audience for their eyewitness accounts of harsh treatment and whites' crimes and advocates, African Americans had to turn to an alternative court of law, the press. In *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture*, Jeannine DeLombard argues that in the antebellum North "slavery was on trial in another sense, as a new interracial cadre of abolitionists redirected the legal tactics of earlier reformers into the mass medium of print, converting antebellum print culture itself into an alternative tribunal" (1).⁷⁴

Focusing on the juridical rhetoric of the *New Orleans Tribune*, this chapter borrows from cultural legal studies to extend DeLombard's reasoning to the Reconstruction South and to newspapers rather than literature. I argue that the *Tribune* itself became an alternative court of law where crimes against blacks both on the streets and in the courthouses, were tried—or

⁷² Massachusetts's "Latimer Law," passed in 1843, prohibited state authorities from participating in the capture of fugitive slaves. Therefore, fugitive slaves in Boston were imprisoned in the federal courthouse rather than the local jail (DeLombard 59).

⁷³ Free black C. Clay Morgan was listed as an attorney in New Orleans in 1860, making Louisiana the first state in the South to admit an African American to the bar. It took almost ten years for other Southern states to follow suit: Arkansas in 1866; Tennessee in 1868; Florida and Mississippi in 1869; Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Virginia in 1871; and Texas in 1873. Louis A. Bell joined Morgan in 1871 as the second African American to practice law in Louisiana (Emanuel 104-05).

⁷⁴ More specifically, DeLombard analyzes Frederick Douglass's *Narrative and My Bondage and My Freedom*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*, and William MacCreary Burwell's *White Acre vs. Black Acre* together with popular coverage of the trials involving William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, and John Brown.

retried—at the bar of public opinion during Reconstruction. The *Tribune* provided a space and audience for otherwise outlawed black testimony about rebel wrongdoings, hence repositioning free blacks and freedmen as witnesses and Southern planters and ex-Confederates as defendants. Using the trope of the trial, the newspaper served as advocate, informing the public, now playing the role of jury, about the facts of the case, while simultaneously increasing its readers’ legal literacy by sharing with them pertinent laws and jurisprudence. By describing the vagaries of the justice system, the paper was also teaching its readers how the judicial system worked, or did not, as was the case for African Americans. The *Tribune* drew upon the tradition of popular constitutionalism, which according to legal historian Larry D. Kramer is an “inversion of interpretive authority,” to encourage its readership, whites and blacks alike, to supervise the judicial branch of the government and to hold it responsible to the fundamental principles of the *Declaration of Independence* and *Constitution* (30). Beginning with its first issue, the *New Orleans Tribune* promised to “defend” and “advocate” for blacks in the city, not only turning its pages into a metaphorical courtroom, but also printing the information necessary for blacks to gain recognition as a “people of law” (21 July 1864; Weiner 5). This legal identity positioned African Americans within a civic community able to honor the nation’s founding documents and worthy of protection by the law. Being a “people of law” was vital to the attainment of citizenship and the political rights that it offered, such as the *Tribune*’s goal, suffrage (Weiner 11).

Juridical Rhetoric in the Public Sphere: Voyeurism or Supervision

Habermas argues that the rise of the penny press and advertising in the 1830s in the United States collapsed the public sphere as an arena of rational-critical debate, for “the press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialized” (185). Economic

concentration and the rising need for profits from advertising to meet the costs of increasingly expensive technologies created an apparent consensus in public opinion; however, this “staged ‘public opinion’ . . . does not seriously have much in common with the final unanimity wrought by a time-consuming process of mutual enlightenment . . . for the criteria of rationality are completely lacking” (195). Instead, public opinion was molded, not debated, to meet a “sham public interest,” the economic success of private individuals (195). According to Habermas, “consumer culture’s distortion to publicity” extended to the judiciary: “For the trials in criminal court that are interesting enough to be documented and hawked by the mass media reverse the critical principle of publicity . . . instead of serving the control of the jurisdictional process by the assembled citizens of the state, publicity increasingly serves the packaging of the court proceedings for the mass culture of assembled consumers” (207). Habermas suggests that legal news became depoliticized, as the penny press appealed to its consumers’ voyeuristic desires, selling them tales of crime and justice.

DeLombard contradicts Habermas’s argument, however, by putting forth the example of the abolitionist press, which she argues was “motivated by a commitment to political change over financial profit” (56). She argues that “abolitionist propaganda sought to provide the reading public with the knowledge and the authority to render its own verdict; in true republican fashion, censure had to come from the people” (DeLombard 56). Censure was also not limited to a finding of guilty or not guilty in a particular case, but extended to the supervision of the judiciary, holding it accountable to the principles set forth in the *Constitution*. Using Larry Kramer’s concept of “popular constitutionalism,” drawing from English traditions of fundamental law, “it is ‘the people’ who constitute the authoritative ‘tribunal’” well into the nineteenth century (45). The people were responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the United States’ founding documents. “Final

interpretive authority rested with ‘the people themselves,’ and courts no less than elected representatives were subordinate to their judgments” (Kramer 8). Arguably, the abolitionist press was also subordinate to its readers’ judgments, providing them the facts of the case and appropriate laws and jurisprudence, but withholding the power of supervision of the judiciary for the reading public. Kramer argues that a shift to juridical supremacy culminated with the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, making the abolitionist press’s appeal to the people for interpretive authority all the more powerful and oppositional.

DeLombard concludes that the use of the trope of the trial and juridical rhetoric by the abolitionist press aided a debate about “questions of social culpability, legal capacity, and civic belonging” in addition to its supervisory function (221). Perhaps most importantly, “the abolitionists’ trial trope facilitated a radical reconceptualization of civic participation in America. By patterning their behavior on the personae of the criminal trial, those who approached the bar of public opinion challenged prevailing hierarchies of race, gender, class and condition by modeling new forms of civic presence” (DeLombard 222). Therefore, the nineteenth-century exchange between law and print in the abolitionist press additionally worked to “draw its circle of civic belonging” to include African Americans, who had been denied citizenship by the United States Supreme Court’s *Dred Scott* decision in 1857 (Weiner 9).⁷⁵ Michael S. Weiner analyzes black trials from the seventeenth century to 2004. He argues that for African Americans to be labeled citizens, not just legally but culturally capable of active political participation, they had to be accepted as “people of law” (Weiner 5). To be considered such, blacks had to prove their “*capacity* to honor the most fundamental legal

⁷⁵ As a result of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857, the United States Supreme Court ruled that enslaved blacks as well as their descendants were not protected by the *Constitution* and would never be entitled to United States citizenship.

principles of the nation,” “be deemed *worthy* of the law and its protection,” and “demonstrate a commitment to the law in [their] *culture* and everyday practices” (emphasis in original, Weiner 11-12).

Therefore, this chapter investigates how the *Tribune* helped African Americans to meet these requirements for citizenship through its use of juridical rhetoric and the trope of the trial, for what better tool to perform blacks’ legal capacity and worthiness of the law than a periodical, which was everyday by its nature. DeLombard claims that John Brown’s attack on Harper’s Ferry, subsequent trial, and execution in 1859 “seemingly confirmed to Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line the futility of print or legal solutions to the slavery crisis” (221). However, just as she poses the abolitionist press as an exception to Habermas’s breakdown of the public sphere to create a space for supervision of the judiciary rather than mere legal voyeurism, I argue that the staff of the *Tribune* still saw within print the possibility of creating an “an alternative vision of race and justice under American law” (DeLombard 222). Slavery may have been made illegal by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, but blacks in the city of New Orleans returned to the rhetorical strategies of the abolitionist press to fight for their membership within a civic community and for increased political rights.

“As If Justice Could Be Disgraced by Listening to the Utterance of Truth”: Blacks as Witnesses

In 1853, Harriet Beecher Stowe admitted that “the very keystone of Southern jurisprudence is the rejection of colored testimony” in her *Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (qtd. in DeLombard 75). Throughout the South, in particular, blacks in the early nineteenth century were often barred from the witness stand. Justification for this exclusion ranged from religious

concerns that Africans and their descendants were incapable of “appreciating the unique significance of the oath in Judeo-Christian culture” to legal definitions that categorized slaves as property of their masters and therefore lacking in free will. Their testimony would be undermined by their dependency on their masters (DeLombard 75). Despite the rise of African American Christianity and the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, blacks in the second half of the nineteenth century did not fare much better. Although the Louisiana’s 1864 constitution allowed for black testimony, the *New Orleans Tribune* pointed out the difference between law in fact and in practice. In a “Report of the Condition of the Freedmen,” the author described the status of freedmen before the courts of justice at the beginning of 1864 in Louisiana:

Much suffering was endured in consequence of the stubborn and persistent refusal of the civil authorities to recognize the Freedmen as entitled to “any rights that a white man was bound to respect.” They were tried and sentenced to imprisonment or fine; but they in turn could bring no suit against any one, or under any circumstance be heard in law against a white person, except the judge might “condescend” to permit it. They could not “demand” the respect of the courts. Some judges went so far as to declare that they were still slaves and had no right to appear in court. (20 September 1864)

For example, in September of 1864 Mr. Alcibiade Deblanc, a white attorney, claimed that black testimony was still outlawed in St. Martin, Louisiana, because “the slaves are not free in the parish of St. Martin, because that parish was specially excepted from the effect of the emancipation proclamation, and because the State Constitution of 1864 declaring that slavery had ceased to exist here has not yet been ratified by the people of this parish” (10 September 1865).⁷⁶ He continued to remark on the “incapacities” of freedmen: “there is no legislation removing the incapacities created by law against them, which still stand unrepealed in our Code

⁷⁶ Although President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the document only freed enslaved people in Confederate-held territory. Therefore, proponents of slavery in areas of the South that had already been taken by Union troops, such as this planter from St. Martin, Louisiana, argued that slavery remained permissible (Mitchell 2).

and Statutes, and one of the incapacities is that of testifying in our courts of justice against the whites” (10 September 1865). The *Tribune* quoted Deblanc’s reasoning to the court for prohibiting black testimony, reprinting an article from the *Courier of the Teche*: “The negroes were declared incapable, not only because they were slaves, but because they are an inferior race . . . Their incapacities, as a class, are nearly all enumerated in article 177 of the Civil Code, and among enumerated incapacities are these of executing any public office, or being a public witness” (qtd. in 10 September 1865). This excerpt from Deblanc points to yet another justification for the exclusion of black testimony; proslavery legal theorist Thomas R. R. Cobb explained, “that the negro, as a general rule, is mendacious, is a fact too well established to require the production of proof, either from history, travels, or craniology” (qtd. in DeLombard 76). Once the legal barriers to black testimony were for the most part removed in Louisiana, attacks of African Americans’ character became the rationalization for this prohibition, making freedmen and those born free equally vulnerable. The *Tribune* concluded its address to its “Northern friends” with “[s]uch is Justice in Louisiana at the present time” (10 September 1865).

On December 1, 1865, the newspaper critiqued this rejection of black testimony, using a specific court case as an example in “A Curious Scene in a Country Court.” The article began, “It is well known that, the Constitution of 1864 notwithstanding, many of our country courts persist in rejecting the testimony of colored persons” (1 December 1865). The *Tribune* then cited a case in which two travelers witnessed the homicide of a debtor by a citizen of a nearby town. One of the witnesses, a Circassian, “could only convey the most common and vulgar ideas, in very bad English. He was utterly unable, except in his own language, to describe the scene of the murder, or to understand the questions propounded to him by the prosecution or

the defense” (1 December 1865).⁷⁷ The other traveler, however, was “a very intelligent colored man . . . He spoke English, French, and Spanish fluently” (1 December 1865). The black witness was sent home “because he had a few drops of African blood in his veins,” while the court spared no expense obtaining a common English education for the Circassian, who once able to speak English only admitted that he had seen nothing but that his black companion had witnessed the entire affair (1 December 1865). The *Tribune* pointed out the faulty reasoning of the court:

What did they do? Call the witness who had seen and heard every thing, who speaks English, who heard and understood the words which passed between the murderer and his victim, who was able, in fact, to bring full light in the case? No. They would have interrogated a dog, if we are permitted to speak, and would have derived circumstantial evidence from dumb witnesses, as the knife and the clothes of the murdered man. But from a living witness, who has a drop of African blood in his veins, they will hear nothing. Their judgment hall would be defiled by his presence, —as if Justice could be disgraced by listening to the utterance of truth! . . . The murderer went free, but the prejudice was safe and had been respected. (1 December 1865)

On January 16, 1865, the *Tribune*’s argument for the allowance of black testimony reached its height when Congressman William D. Kelley, a Radical Republican from Pennsylvania, read one of Houzeau’s editorials to the House of Representatives (Leavens 58). Houzeau wrote, “This was a sort of baptism for the *Tribune*” (87), as half a million copies of Kelley’s speech were printed (Houzeau 87, footnote 46). In the editorial from December 15, 1864, the newspaper asked, “Is There Any Justice for the Black?” before relaying the facts of the Gleason case. According to the *Tribune*, Irishman Michael Gleason was tried for the murder of a black boy, Johnny Hamilton, on the steamer *Mittie Stephens*. Rosalie Cora, eyewitness for the state, testified that she saw Gleason throw Hamilton off the steamer into the water, where he then drowned. Her “evidence” was corroborated by two of the boy’s fellow

⁷⁷ “Circassians” is the Western term for the Adyghe or Adygs people of North Caucasus.

employees who were fishing with him at the time of the crime. All three boys had been hired to clean the steamer's boilers. Although "the evidence was as strong and conclusive as it may be. [And] we believe that a case of murder has never been established by the witnesses for the State, in a more positive manner," the jury returned a "strange verdict" of not guilty (15 December 1864). The *Tribune* continued by quoting the critiques of the *Times* and the *Era*, who although usually hostile to blacks in the city, even had to admit that an injustice had been done. The *Times* named Gleason a murderer, for his only defense, the race of the victim, according to the prosecuting attorney was legally unsound:

He [Attorney General Lynch] knew nothing in favor of the prisoner, except that the deceased was a black boy; that because God in his infinite wisdom had thought proper to send the deceased into the world with black skin, the act of the prisoner, by which he had sent him out of the world, was to be looked upon with leniency. These persons had the same rights as any man. Though the witnesses were colored; the evidence of these witnesses was clear and to the point. He was positive that the witnesses spoke the truth . . . it was murder . . . The flag is a lie, and an emblem of a lie, if it does not protect the rights of men of this class, who have once been slaves, if it does not afford punishment to the malefactor who would injure one. (qtd. in 15 December 1864)

The *Times* blamed the false verdict on the race of the victim, but also pointed out that all of the witnesses were black.

A week later, on December 20, the *Tribune* printed the letter of "A Juror," who critiqued the *Tribune's* assessment of the Gleason case as "Ethiopian madness" and its editor as a "lunatic" and instead argued that the prosecution's evidence was lacking precisely because the only witnesses were black. The juror wrote, "the witnesses for the State were three boys of color, none of whom were apparently over twelve or thirteen years of age, who have never had the benefit of an education, and barely know the responsibility of an oath. The other witnesses (two black females of questionable reputation, from Dauphin street, one of whom is rarely out of the Parish Prison) contradicted each other frequently during the examination" (20 December

1864). The *Tribune* responded with a defense of itself and of black testimony in general: “It matters very little who utters a truth—let the utterer be black, colored or white. Aesopus was a slave, and spoke the truth. ‘Truth is good to listen to,’ . . . ‘from whencesoever it comes.’ But no one has less right to ask which particular man told the truth, than the *juror* who does not sign his name” (emphasis in original, 20 December 1864). No law of nature dictated that only a white man could speak the truth. Further, to rebut the juror’s attack on the education and reputation of the black witnesses in the case, the editor of the daily attacked his character, effectively calling him a coward. In addition to not signing his name to his letter, the juror failed to send his letter directly to the *Tribune*, but instead addressed it to the *New Orleans Times*. The *Tribune* then directly undermined the juror’s statement that the black testimony was contradictory: “There is a single fact put forth in the ‘Communication,’ and that is, that the five witnesses for the prosecution were *colored* witnesses and did not agree on every minor point” (emphasis in original, 20 December 1864). But “If they [the jury] want to convince the people, they have to . . . show that the discrepancies between the witnesses bore on the fact of drowning, and not on the way in which the unfortunate victim was lifted up” (20 December 1864). Apparently, all of the witnesses shared the same story of the actual criminal act. Almost exactly a year later, the *Tribune* reported Gleason’s arrest for stabbing a man named Rourke, reminded its readers of the previous case involving Gleason, and once again reflected, “Will the murderer be punished? ‘Tis possible if the victim was a white man, but ‘tis improbable if Rourke was a colored thing” (28 December 1865), or if the witnesses were black. Houzeau wrote that the ruling in the Gleason case “annulled, in effect, the efforts of those who had worked to permit blacks to testify” only a few months earlier; “it threw them aside with the most glaring injustice and partiality” (86).

The newspaper advocated for the acceptance of black testimony in the courts of justice, for without it murderers like Gleason would roam free. But the *Tribune* also became an alternative witness stand itself, publishing testimony that otherwise would have went unheard. Legal scholar Robert Cover emphasizes the importance of narrative within the legal system of the United States and its ability to destabilize the law in “*Nomos and Narrative*.” Cover explains that “no set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate and give it meaning” (95-96); therefore, “in liberal societies like the United States in which government and other authorities do not claim the right to control the stories that endow law with its meanings, such meaning-making narratives have the potential to destabilize law’s power” (DeLombard 22). The *Tribune* often used its pages to give the reading public the other side of the story.

The newspaper included one such story on January 10, 1866, in “Another Crime Unpunished.” The newspaper included its “testimony” of the facts of the case, which had occurred in Terrebonne Parish:

The facts are these. On the evening of January 8, about six o’clock, a colored man, by the name of Carter, employed on R. R. Barrow’s plantation entered the store of Mr. Hawthorne, at Houma, in company with two other men of color, and when there gave the clerk a bill of fifty dollars, in payment of a small sum, and took back the change. This being done publicly Carter was known, therefore, to carry fifty dollars with him.

At eight o’clock, when going back to Barrow’s plantation and only a few steps from their cabins, Carter and his companions were ordered to halt. This was of course in the dark. But the very place that the event occurred seems to indicate that the patrol was waiting for them. . . . One of the patrolmen jumped from his horse and—strange to say—he shot precisely at the man that was known to carry money about him. . . . he was shot twice and died. . . . Poor Carter could still be seen on the road, the next day, lying dead on the spot where he was shot but no money in his pockets. (10 January 1866)

The *Tribune* then immediately reprinted the “very imperfect narrative of the occurrence” by the patrolman who shot Carter, Captain H. C. Daspit, from the *Houma Civic Guard*. According to

Daspit, he was out looking for another man to inquire about a delivery, met Carter who was “not polite enough” and intoxicated, and shot Carter after Carter threatened him with a pistol (qtd. in 10 January 1866). As the *Tribune* pointed out, however, Carter did not have a gun on his person, and “how [could] Capt. Daspit distinguish a pistol when he avows that it was too dark to recognize a man from another?” (10 January 1866). Therefore, the newspaper simultaneously acted as witness and advocate as it not only testified to its side of the story, but also cross-examined Daspit in print. The daily concluded, “As usual no investigation took place!! Has it become lawful for returned rebels to shoot and rob loyal men on the highways?” (10 January 1866). Since the official justice system failed to pursue the case, the *Tribune* picked up the case and tried it before the reading public instead, leaving it to its readers to decide whose story was true.

Similarly, On December 23, 1865, the eyewitness testimony of the newspaper’s Mobile correspondent Alpha was included in the *Tribune* regarding the arrest of a black man for stealing cotton on the wharf: “But I was an eye witness of the affair; the charge is false. He was only picking up some scraps of loose cotton that was lying about the wharf, and because the man refused to go with them to the guardhouse, they pounded him over the head with clubs as large as a man’s arm.” Then Alpha asked the staff of the *Tribune*, “I would like to know if this is the law in your city, to maltreat a prisoner before trial or conviction” (qtd. in 23 December 1865). The newspaper gave voice to the maltreatment of blacks that was witnessed throughout Louisiana and its neighboring states, allowing the reading public to make its own decisions about the effectiveness of the judiciary and the identity of the guilty parties.

“None of Those Rough Customers Are Colored Persons”: Rebels as Criminals

Such testimony also reversed the popular association of blacks with criminality and positioned white rebels as malefactors. DeLombard explains, “the testifying former slave had to overcome the pervasive tendency in law and print culture to reduce black testimony to confession,” which resulted from the disproportionate representation of African Americans within the antebellum gallows literature tradition (73). Similarly, as discussed in chapter four, black men and women were often depicted as vagrants and sexual predators within the public sphere of the Reconstruction South. Therefore, besides aiding blacks in the creation of an identity as speaking subject, such black testimony also helped African Americans to shed an imposed identity as criminals. Instead, rebels were the guilty parties to the crimes witnessed in the *Tribune*.

A case described in an article “Truth is Mighty and Must Prevail” in the *Tribune*’s August 9, 1864 edition described the case of a black man who was arrested in the city for stealing \$30,000 from the office of his employer, Paymaster Lawrence. “After some time spent by Lawrence in obtaining testimony which was procured, no doubt, at an enormous price, the trial was called up, and by the false testimony that was brought to bear against him [the black man] he was convicted and sent to Dry Tortugas” (9 August 1864). The daily then reported, however, that suspicion soon fell upon Lawrence that he had stolen the money for himself, and after a trial in Washington, “he was found guilty, not only of the charge preferred against him, but of others of a still more rascally nature” (9 August 1864). As a result, Lawrence was dishonorably discharged from his office, sentenced to suffer six years hard labor, and compelled to pay the government \$35,000. The editors of the *Tribune* cited their rationale for including this excerpt in the daily: “justice compels us to bring out the affair in its true light,

and consequently we give the above facts in conformity with the expectation of the reading public” (9 August 1864). They continued, “But all that we deem necessary is that justice may be done to all,” and advocated for the immediate release of the falsely accused (9 August 1864). This article not only called its readers’ attention to false testimony purchased by whites to punish innocent blacks, but also reversed the popular association of blacks with criminality, revealing Lawrence as the true criminal.

The *Tribune*’s strategy to include stories of whites’ criminality was perhaps best exemplified in its “Local Intelligence” column on December 17, 1865. The *Tribune* reported, “L. H. Barlow was arrested for drawing a revolver on Patrick Haggerty; J. S. Washington was put in the lock-up for assaulting and threatening to shoot E. K. Washington; and officer Lawless, (an unfelicitous name for a policeman,) [sic] brought Daniel Cavanaugh to the station, for attempting to cut him with a knife” (17 December 1865). But after this list the newspaper added, “None of those rough customers are colored persons” (17 December 1865).

The *Tribune* even used the “evidence of distinguished and disinterested travelers” to position wealthy whites in New Orleans as criminals “for fear of being influenced by any bias or prejudice” (2 July 1865). In “Planters’ Manners,” the *Tribune* staff wrote back to the *Picayune* who a few days previously had “undertook to vindicate the purity of manners, refinement and gentleness of the planters” (2 July 1865). The daily cited Captain Marryat in describing “the lawlessness among rich people of New Orleans”: for example, a slave-owner in Louisiana, Colonel Whittaker, murdered a bartender by cutting him to pieces with a bowie-knife for not waiting on him quickly enough (2 July 1865). Aside from asserting that at least some planters in New Orleans were criminals, the newspaper additionally used this example from Marryat to paint justice in Louisiana as misguided. The story continued to explain that Whittaker committed suicide by drinking poison to avoid sentencing. “His body being made

over to his relations, was escorted to his home with great parade; the militia were turned out to receive it with military honors, and general _____, who set up for the governorship of Louisiana, pronounced the funeral elegy!” (Marryat qtd. in 2 July 1865). The city’s officials essentially honored a criminal.

Instead, the newspaper argued that white men who were criminals should also have been treated as criminals rather than ignored, pardoned, or eulogized. The daily often cited instances in which whites had disturbed the peace but remained free, whereas black men in similar situations would have been arrested. Examples included “a wanton attack made on Monday afternoon on a funeral cortège of colored persons” (22 March 1865) and the instance of a drunken white man who said “to the top of his voice that he wished the Yankees to h—ll” and when approached by a police officer retorted, “I can lick you, if you dare interfere with me” (29 October 1865). In the second case, the newspaper commented on the fact that the drunken man was not arrested: “How long would that policeman’s patience stand, in [the presence] of a riotous colored man?” (29 October 1865).

Ultimately, Louisiana’s justice system failed to protect free and freed blacks in New Orleans from ex-Confederates. The newspaper wrote, “It is often and truly said, that the colored population of this city enjoyed more security and more protection during the reign of slavery than they can obtain at the present time. Every resident of this city for the last twenty years, can testify that the colored man found redress before the courts of justice, more readily under the Slavery regime, than he finds it now” (22 March 1865). In “How the Lives of White Men Are Protected,” the staff of the newspaper asked, “God grant that the lives of the colored persons be as well protected as those of the white citizens. God grant that the murderers of our colored brethren, in the districts of Amite, of the Teche, and elsewhere, be as promptly detected, and as energetically brought to justice, as the alleged murderers of white men are” (19

December 1865). Then it compared the cases of Edward Cantwill and Samuel Nickolson to those of Fortune Wright and Fields. Cantwill, a pardoned rebel soldier who stabbed the sergeant of a black regiment in the abdomen numerous times with a bowie knife, and Nickolson, a member of the colored infantry who shot another black man who was preventing him from performing his military duty, were both found guilty of murder and were sentenced to death. Yet both life sentences were later mitigated to ten years imprisonment at hard labor. On the other hand, Wright, a black private who stabbed a white doctor to death after that man had hit him with a cane to prevent him from hitting a black woman that he was quarreling with, was sentenced to hanging, and Fields, who struck a white man with his bayonet after that same man had insulted, threatened, and eventually shot at him, received twenty years at hard labor for manslaughter, after his plea of self-defense was rejected by the court. In other words, murderers of black men, such as Cantwill and Nickolson, would not be executed; however, Wright, a black man who had killed a white man, was sentenced to be hanged and received no reduced sentence. The *Tribune* blamed President Johnson: “The President of the United States had ample time to exercise his privilege of clemency in this case as well as in that of Cantwill; but Wright is a colored man, while his victim a white citizen; and for these reasons, we would be greatly surprised were the sentence to be commuted . . . Comments are unnecessary” (10 January 1866). The *Tribune* concluded, “justice requires that they [murderers of our colored brethren] should not be permitted to go unmolested and unpunished” (19 December 1865).

Similarly, treason, another crime of which rebels were guilty, should have been punished, according to the newspaper, so it again critiqued Johnson for granting amnesty. On September 15, 1864, the *Tribune* first quoted Jefferson Davis, “‘We have committed no crime,’ said Jeff. Davis to Colonel Jacques,” but then critiqued Davis, “He pretends to have forgotten the meaning of certain disagreeable law terms, included under the general head of crime and of

which terms, Treason is one.” Further, the daily argued that such criminal activity should have been punished, rather than excused under President Johnson’s plan of general amnesty: “He [Jefferson Davis] must be one of the earliest victims of Justice, if this war is to be carried out to its legitimate issue, unless providence has in store for him some more suitable punishment” (15 September 1864).

Ultimately, by posing rebels as guilty of crimes, including treason, not only did the *Tribune* reverse popular associations of blacks with criminality, but it also characterized ex-Confederates as defendants vulnerable to the judgment of the public. After all, the public, the community as a whole, is considered the wronged party in a criminal trial.

“The Pioneer in the Defense of Our Neglected Brethren”: Newspaper as Advocate

The newspaper also, however, pointed out the potential limitations of the publication of black testimony. Although black testimony often rendered whites as criminals, as described in the previous section of this chapter, it simultaneously had the potential to victimize blacks, placing blacks in another position from which it is difficult to claim legal personhood. Blacks’ testimony could morph into a “narrative of dependency,” when depicting African Americans as helpless, uneducated, and in need of protection. DeLombard explains that in antebellum America, “the rudimentary trial model seemed to have little room for the figure of the free black abolitionist—one who, perhaps, had never been enslaved and, therefore, could not depict himself or herself as either victim of or witness to the crime of slavery” (26). Blacks were the discursive authorities of their experiences, but whites alone were tasked with giving meaning to those narratives as advocates. After all, as stated in beginning of this chapter, although Louisiana was the first state in the South to admit an African American lawyer to the bar in 1860, it took over a decade for a second black attorney to practice in the state.

An article from the *Cincinnati Gazette* reprinted on September 22, 1864 serves as an example of the potential limitations of white advocacy. In the article, a black Union soldier who had recently escaped from the Confederate army shared his eyewitness testimony of the rebels' mass murder of blacks. The *Gazette* transcribed the speaker's dialect, for "[t]o Anglicise the story would, I think, take away its impressiveness": "I's been wi' rebs and 'scaped. I was in Stoneman's raid, suh, and dey capshod us. Only two ob us boys scaped. Dey dug a long ditch and made all de niggers stand in it, and dey took a cannon and fired right 'long de ditch and killed all at once. Two hundred were in it. Dey all fell right back in de ditch, and de rebs made de Yankee prisoners shovel dirt on 'em" (qtd. in 22 September 1864). The *Gazette's* army correspondent then gave credence to the story, "These are his words as near as I can give them. . . . The boy is dressed in Federal uniform, and has evidently been in rough service; whether the shocking tale he tells can be relied upon I don't pretend to say. To us it sounded very much like truth" (qtd. in 22 September 1864). Like many slave narratives, the passage quoted above exemplified the need for white corroboration of black testimony which still existed during Reconstruction and provided an example as to how black testimony could be used to infantilize blacks, to paint them as uneducated, and to appeal to audiences' sentimentality rather than their logic.⁷⁸

However, unlike white advocacy, in which "black victimization, even debility, is white advocacy's *raison d'être*" (DeLombard 153), the *Tribune* acted as a witness stand but also as an

⁷⁸ In *African American Slave Narratives*, Sterling Bland explains that the "abolitionist movement securely codified this style of writing [the slave narrative] through the Civil War" (16). For example, most slave narratives contained a preface written by a white abolitionist supporter or white editor or author "to emphasize the fundamental truth of the narrative to follow" (Bland 16), for "slave narratives required white corroboration in order to achieve any kind of resonance with readers" (Bland 18). See abolitionist Lydia Maria Child's preface in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* as an example of "introductions or prefaces that serve as testimonials to the character of the narrator and the accuracy of the narrative" (Bland 16).

advocate for African Americans, serving as a rare model of black advocacy in action and in print. “The two papers [the *New Orleans Tribune* and its predecessor *L’Union*] urged a national policy of abolition of slavery and the unequivocal recognition of black people’s God-given rights. Through ‘Union meetings,’ rallies, petitions, and appeals, blacks in New Orleans grew in political awareness and sophistication” (Vincent 70). The *Tribune* even called itself “the first advocate of Liberty in Louisiana” (21 November 1865). White advocacy still existed, of course, in combination with black advocacy, but more emphasis was placed on white advocates partnering with African Americans through interracial civic organizations such as the Friends of Universal Suffrage. The *Tribune* warned its readers about “false advocates” and instead demanded that they choose their “own delegates or representatives.” Such was the system of republican government:

We must not be over confident in officious advocates; some are true, but some are not well posted on the real interest of the class they undertake to defend; some, moreover, may be false. . . . let them at least choose their own delegates or representatives. Self-constituted advocates will not do . . . Let us keep in mind the principles not only of a Republican Government, but of every true and real defense, in every case where interests are involved. Let the interested parties choose freely their own counsel, and choose them, if they please, from among their peers. (11 December 1864)

The *Tribune* led New Orleans Republicans in choosing their own territorial representative to Congress in June 1865. As discussed in chapter two, the *Tribune* was the official organ of the Friends of Universal Suffrage, a group of radicals of both races who met weekly. In order to prove to the public that blacks were capable of voting and choosing their own delegate, the organization decided to hold a voluntary election for a territorial representative to Congress. Not only would the election’s success provide evidence of African Americans’ capacity to exercise their civic duty, to vote, but it also forwarded the Friends of Universal Suffrage’s and the *Tribune*’s position that the state’s current government was invalid and therefore Louisiana a

territory. Editor Houzeau reasoned, “Nothing can equal the demonstrative power contained in the action of that Greek who, in order to prove the existence of movement, began to walk in front of the crowd. . . . Similarly, it was by making the ballot available to all that the black’s ability to vote in an orderly and intelligent manner could be proven and his understanding of the supreme rights established” (111-12). A successful election would perform New Orleans blacks’ identity as “people of law” (Weiner 5).

An initial election for delegates to the organization’s convention was held on September 16, 1865, at the same time as the state’s official fall election.⁷⁹ Voters of both races chose an equal number of white and black delegates, including President Thomas Durant, C. J. Dalloz (*Tribune* editor Houzeau’s pen name), Henry Clay Warmoth, P. B. S. Pinchback, and Benjamin Flanders. Houzeau reported on the success of the election: “Never had an election been held with such a constant and perfect order. There were no mobs, no singing, no drunken scenes, no tumult. Conditions were such that the next day we were able to say: ‘Here was an election which the whites would do well to take as an example!’” (114). The newly chosen delegates declared as their mission, “universal suffrage, and liberty and equality of all men before the law.”

Then, November 6, 1865 was chosen as election day for a territorial delegate to Congress. Each day leading up to the election, the *Tribune* provided African Americans their legal justification for voting and then explained to them the process: “Your right to hold a voluntary election is secured by Art. 1st, Sect. 5th of the Constitution of the United States, which provides that Congress *alone* (and not the State authorities neither the military commanders) will be the judge of the credentials of its members” (emphasis in original, 5 November 1865). The

⁷⁹ Houzeau incorrectly wrote that this election took place on September 11, 1865 (113).

“Instructions to Voters” also listed the locations and hours of the polls before telling readers how to vote:

3. Write a single name in your ballot, the name of the candidate of your choice. Judge H. C. Warmoth is recommended by the Convention. Tickets already prepared will be found at election’s places. The ticket that we publish to-day, at the head of our paper, can also be cut out with scissors, and used to same purpose.
4. Tender your ballot to the Commissioners in charge of the bureau; answer promptly and to the point all questions that these Commissioners or Clerks will put to you; and follow generally all directions they may give you.
5. Having done this, you will have accomplished your duty; go peaceably, and send your friends and acquaintances to do the same. (5 November 1865)

The *Tribune* staff, therefore, not only explained to blacks the process of voting, forwarding their legal and civic literacies, but also encouraged them to vote for the candidate that they endorsed, Warmoth, and made it as simple as possible for those who may have been illiterate to exercise their civic duty by providing a sample ballot (Figure 8).⁸⁰

Additionally, on the day before the election the *Tribune* called the disenfranchised citizens “to make him [Warmoth] strong and powerful by the number of votes that will be polled for him. For every one understand that if we poll only a few thousand votes, our voice

⁸⁰ Although the *Tribune* endorsed Henry Clay Warmoth during the 1865 voluntary election for a territorial delegate, its owner, Roudanez, later refused to support Warmoth as the Republican candidate during the 1868 gubernatorial election, ultimately causing the demise of the newspaper, as discussed in chapter two. Binning explains, “The free men of color and the former Union army officers worked in tandem in the early summer of 1865 to form the Friends of Universal Suffrage which was dedicated to the extension of the franchise to Negroes. But soon cooperation in this common crusade succumbed to distrust on the part of the Free Negroes who felt that the carpetbaggers were using Negro suffrage merely as a device to catapult themselves into political power” (259). One possible cause for the newspaper’s change of heart may have been their growing distrust for the state’s Republican party in general. White Radicals belonging to Ben Butler clubs had requested membership after having excluded blacks and displaying their reluctance to endorse universal suffrage (Binning 262). Also, during the state’s Republican convention in 1867, the party submitted a list of white names for membership within the party’s central committee at the last minute; these men had not been members of the state’s party previously, nor were they endorsed by the committee. One of these men was Lionel Sheldon, one of Warmoth’s army companions, who had testified on behalf of white rioters during the New Orleans Riot (Binning 263). As a result, Binning explains, “Roudanez mentioned Warmoth by name as one to watch, suspecting, probably correctly, that Warmoth had masterminded the convention coup” (263).

will hardly be heard; on the contrary, if we succeed to poll ten or twenty thousand votes in the State, we will have a right to be regarded as the people, or the majority of the people” (5 November 1865). The *Tribune* continued to emphasize the importance of the voluntary election: “This is a great political contest; it is the first battle at the ballot-box” (5 November 1865). Not only was the Friends of Universal Suffrage’s voluntary election a battle between political factions, but it was also a chance for African Americans to prove that they were capable of political participation as citizens.

Arguably, the *Tribune* won the battle on both fronts. Warmoth received more than 19,000 unofficial votes and approximately 25,000 official votes, a strong showing in comparison to the 28,000 total votes cast in the state’s simultaneous official gubernatorial election (Bell 259-60). The Friends of Universal Suffrage, by now the Republican Party of Louisiana, gained the acceptance of the national party, and Warmoth received a seat in the House in Washington “while Louisiana’s legal delegation watched from the gallery” (Leavens 63). Once again, in his

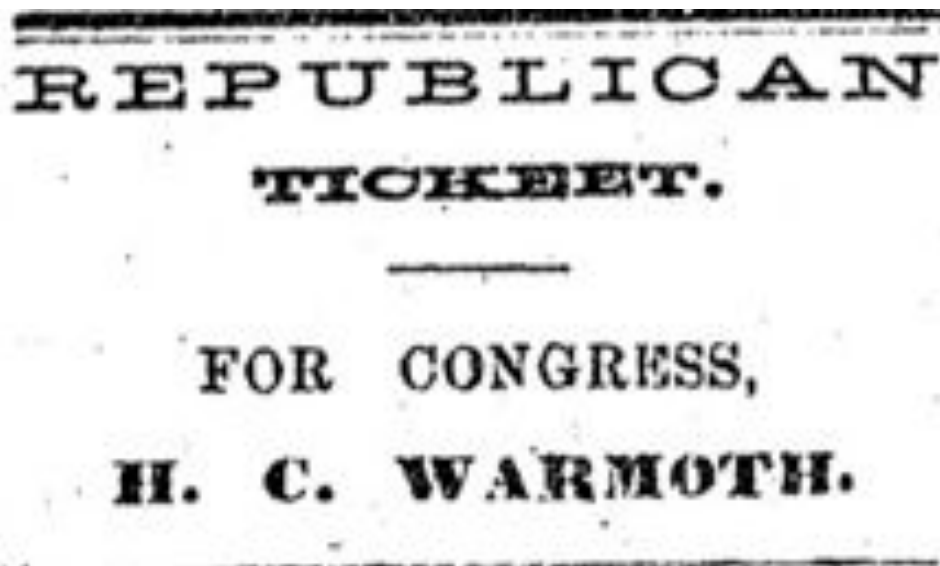


Figure 8: Voluntary Election Ballot; Courtesy NewsBank-Readex

editorial the following day Houzeau laid proof before the reading public that the disenfranchised were not indifferent to their rights, not disorderly, and not indiscriminate:

It will not be said any longer that the people of color are indifferent to their rights, when we see them coming out in full force, by tens of thousands, to attend the polls organized by those people themselves, with all the forms of law and after two months of preparatory operations at the registration bureaus.

It will not be said any longer that the disenfranchised, if admitted to the legal polls, would be a cause of disorder and trouble, since we have seen them yesterday, voting in the calmest and most orderly manner, without the concurrence of public officers, or the aid of State authorities.

It will not be said any longer that their choice would be indiscriminate, since they showed their good sense and patriotism, by electing a sincere Unionist and a tried friend of liberty and freedom, while the legal voters had no other candidates than Copperheads, or even rebels. (7 November 1865)

However, the election also was met with resistance by Democratic papers such as the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, which termed the election a farce and a “new fangled insult” (qtd. in 7 November 1865). The *Tribune* was again called to serve as an advocate for African Americans in the city, speaking out against the arbitrary arrests of Commissioners of Election of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, Burel and Cephes. Unfortunately, the *Tribune* was provided yet another opportunity “to show to what extent injustice and malicious persecutions are practiced against colored men” in Louisiana (2 December 1865).

The *Tribune* published its testimony or the facts of the case on December 2 in “Illustration of Freedom in Louisiana”: Burel and Cephes, despite opposition in their parish, “faithfully attended to their duty” and started for New Orleans the day following the election to deliver the returns to the Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Friends of Universal Suffrage. Upon their way home, “they were arrested, without any cause or warrant, nor any alleged reason, by an officer of the civil police” (2 December 1865). Several members of the Central Executive Committee then made every effort to lend assistance but could not

find any information as to the whereabouts or circumstances of the two men. The *Tribune* reported, “Mr. Crane examined the Recorders’ books, and satisfied himself that our friends were not to be tried before those magistrates. He then went, in company with Mr. Montieu, to the Freedmen’s Bureau, where it was denied that such prisoners had been brought in. . . . A kind of mystery seemed to cover these arbitrary arrests” (2 December 1865). But the mystery was soon solved:

When walking out from the guard-house, the above named members of the Central Executive Committee passed an open door and perceived in a room, among a crowd, the citizens they were inquiring for. A guard was standing at that door, and Messrs Crane and Montieu were informed by the officers of the Freedmen’s Bureau that their friends were located there, under a special order of Brigadier General Fullerton, until otherwise ordered. It seems, however, that nobody had taken pains to ascertain their names. (2 December 1865)

The members of the Central Executive Committee immediately confronted General Fullerton who was “as much surprised as themselves” and ordered the release of both Burel and Cephes (2 December 1865).

However, Burel’s and Cephes’s three days of false imprisonment were not the end to the injustices that they suffered. After they returned home, they were both again arrested by a Justice of the Peace “who told them that a voluntary election was in opposition to law; moreover, that white men only had a right to vote, and that they were therefore high offenders” (2 December 1865). The *New Orleans Tribune*, however, had armed its readership with their legal justification for the voluntary election. According to the *Constitution*, Congress alone was to judge the credentials of its members.

The false imprisonment of Burel and Cephes was not the only injustice that resulted from the voluntary election. Polls were prohibited in Covington, others were arrested in Assumption Parish, and ballot-boxes were broken. The paper also relayed the testimony of Mr. John

Johnson, who fled Assumption Parish to avoid persecution: “On election day, at about 10 o’clock in the morning, the Sheriff, O. Melancon, and a squad of cavalry men went to our polls at Napoleonville, took forcible possession of the ballot-box, broke it open, scattered the tickets they found therein, and carried away a sum of \$30, amount of voluntary contributions by the voters, collected during the morning” (8 November 1865). The paper was sure to state that Melancon was one of the signers of the Ordinances of Secession before explaining that two other polls in Assumption Parish were also closed by military order, invalidating 670 votes that had already been cast. On November 10, 1865, the *Tribune* called to task the “rabid secession paper, the *True Delta*,” which “finding itself at a loss to excuse the outrageous conduct of Sheriff Melancon and Colonel Searles in Napoleonville, alleged *at random*, that the negroes in the Parish of Assumption ‘went around to the polls, flourished clubs, knives, &c., and behaved in so violent a manner that the authorities were compelled to disperse them as a precaution against serious disturbances. . . . Two white men Peter Hills and E. Pintado were arrested by the post commandant, for inciting darkies to riotous conduct” (emphasis in original). Kindly declining to “charge” the *True Delta* with “slander” against loyal citizens of the state, the daily did question its contemporary and asked, “But will that paper give the name of its informant!” (10 November 1865).

In its role as advocate or legal counsel, the *Tribune* tried these injustices, not before a judge or magistrate, but before the bar of the reading public. The daily responded to its Boston correspondent’s suggestion that it print a pamphlet to include the history of the voluntary election by publishing the Proceedings of the Central Executive Committee and the Convention, for “Should justice be denied by the Louisiana courts, it must be sought else where, at the hands of higher and national tribunals” (3 December 1865). The reading public was one such tribunal.

“From the People”: The Reading Public as Jury

If the *Tribune* acted as an advocate, presenting the case and legal defense of those such as Burel and Cephes to the reading public when the official courts failed to correct injustices, it also encouraged its readers to take on the role of the jury. Although the Louisiana Supreme Court claimed that the “African race are strangers to our Constitution” (qtd. in Bell 85), the *Tribune* shared with its readers its interpretation of the *Declaration of Independence* and *Constitution*—in a true democracy, sovereignty rested with the people. It reminded its readers, “They [Our Founding Fathers] dug deep and laid the foundations of one National government on the eternal granite, *upon the will of the people*, who were, for the first time, constituted *the sovereign power*” (emphasis in original, 15 September 1864). To define this “people,” the newspaper copied a speech given by Hon. B. Gratz Brown in St. Louis, Missouri:

The term [people] used is the largest collective word known to the law—a word that excludes the idea of classification or subjection—and one that has attached to it a well settled meaning in the contemporaneous exposition of the Constitution. The very preamble of that instrument begins, ‘We, the people of the United States,’ and it is a fact well known that among that ‘people’ not only were there many citizens of the African race exercising rights of suffrage, but at that time no political distinctions formed on race or color had obtained national recognition of the colonies that assented to the Articles of Confederation, or the thirteen States that ratified the Constitution of the United States, no one of them by any constitutional provision excluded any person from the right of suffrage on account of color, except South Carolina. (26 October 1865)

The newspaper argued, therefore, that “the people,” any “free inhabitants” of the United States, had the power to supervise all branches of the government, including the judiciary, and to hold the courts responsible to their duties as described in the United States’ founding documents and interpreted by these same “people.” Returning to Kramer’s description of “popular constitutionalism,” in the nineteenth century “it is ‘the people’ who constitute the authoritative ‘tribunal’” (45). The *Tribune*’s interpretation of these documents not only rewrote “We, the

people” to include African Americans, but also had practical consequences when it came to representation on juries and suffrage.

Therefore, the *Tribune* first and foremost argued that juries then be representative of “the people,” including members of both races. In the above described Gleason case, the *Tribune* blamed the false verdict on the jury’s turning of a deaf ear to black testimony but also on the racial makeup of the all white jury: “The jurymen have to represent the community at large, in all its classes and varieties of composition. . . . Why have we no representatives in the jury? Are our lives, honor and liberties to be let in the hands of men, who are laboring under the most stubborn and narrow prejudice? Is there any protection or justice for us at their hands? . . . there is no redress for us” (15 December 1864). DeLombard explains, “Initially, the jury, widely viewed as the personification of the community, seemed the one legacy of English jurisprudence most clearly destined to attain fulfillment in American law” (20). She continues, “Seen as a ‘jury of the country—an abstract . . . of the citizens at large,’ the American jury trial represented not only the palladium of liberty, as it long had in England, but also ‘the sublimity’ of the republican experiment” (DeLombard 20). Similarly, Houzeau refused to stray from the demand that a jury be chosen “impartially from all classes of society,” for without it justice could not be served, as evidenced in the Gleason case (86). Also, the nation’s founding documents failed to name “the people” as only “white people,” and finally an individual’s aptitude to serve on a jury also qualified one as a citizen. Therefore, the *Tribune* continued to fight for African Americans’ right to serve on juries and to be tried by a jury of their peers. The newspaper posed the question, “Is it so wonderful a spectacle to see a colored man sit in the jury box alongside of other citizens? In every other country jurors are taken from all classes of the people, and wherever there are colored men among these people, there are, as a consequence, colored men on the jury” (21 April 1867).

Like juries, which “many Americans perceived . . . as crucial safeguards of democratic rights against the despotic tendencies of a corrupt judiciary” (DeLombard 21), the people were also to supervise the judiciary. This argument allowed the *Tribune* to gain the attention of a racially mixed audience as well. The *Tribune*’s Donaldsonville correspondent explained that governmental power “originates from the people”:

All lawful authority . . . originates from the *people*. Power in the *whole people* is like light in the sun, native, original, inherent, and necessarily unlimited by anything human. In government it may be compared to the reflective light of the moon; for it is only borrowed, delegated, and limited by the intention of the people, whose it is and to whom governors are to consider themselves as responsible. (emphasis in original, 7 December 1865)

Therefore, it was the duty of “the people,” or in the case of the newspaper the reading public, to hold government officials, including judges, responsible to enacting the design of the Founding Fathers, for “the main design of the Founders, both of our national and State constitutions, has been to make the government the work of the PEOPLE; and to constitute the people the sovereignty” (3 September 1864). The daily continued, “To make *all* the officers of the Government from the President, the Judiciary, the Legislators down to its lowest functionary directly responsible to the people, was the end and aim of the Revolution that separated us from Great Britain” (emphasis in original, 13 September 1864).

For example, the *Tribune* held the judiciary responsible when R. W. Bennie, a white advocate of the newspaper’s cause, was arrested for no legal reason. At first, the daily described his “crime” as follows:

His titles to rebel hatred are these: Mr. Bennie is a Unionist; he was a member of the Convention of 1864 which abolished slavery, and he voted, in that Convention, with the most progressive members. He was the sheriff of the parish under the rule of the Union party,—removed of course by Governor Wells. He is now a proffered friend of universal suffrage,—in the Parish Jail of Terrebonne, for advising the colored people to constitutionally and legally demand the right of franchise. (21 October 1865)

The newspaper demanded, “We only ask for legality,” and began its own investigation into the charges against Bennie (21 October 1865). In addition to being charged with carrying a pistol and for treason against the State, for the reasons described above, Judge J. K. Belden accused Bennie of embezzlement: according to the *Tribune*, as Collector of Taxes, “Mr. Bennie made his quarterly return, for the quarter ending June 30th, to A. P. Dostie, recognizing him, as he had always previously done, as Auditor of Public Accounts”; however, the State Treasurer then “refused to receive the funds or to pay the warrant for the commission, because they bore the signature of A. P. Dostie and not that of Julian Neville. Mr. Bennie has always been ready to pay the money, but the State Treasurer has always refused to receive it” (25 October 1865). A. P. Dostie was the duly elected Auditor despite his unlawful removal by the police force after he charged Governor Wells himself with defaulting on his payment to the State of \$28,000 (29 October 1865). Bennie was then tried by the judge, in the absence of a jury, and sentenced to six months imprisonment without bail and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine.

Besides printing documents or “evidence” sworn to by A. P. Dostie and a witness, W. H. Hire, proving that Bennie had successfully performed his duty and therefore did not actually commit any crime, the *Tribune* pointed out that Judge Belden failed to provide Bennie with a fair trial and exposed Belden as corrupt and in need of supervision. On October 24, 1865, the newspaper reprinted the Report of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Louisiana of 1860 to prove Belden guilty of forging a dispensation, which allowed his Masonic lodge to meet regularly. The investigating lawyer explained, “I am led to think that the document under which ‘Lake Charles’ Lodge worked last year was forged by J. K. Belden of that place, and this is the general, if not unanimous, opinion of all the brethren of that place” (qtd. in 24 October 1865). The *Tribune* then concluded, “The only wonder is that such a man is allowed, in a country making pretensions to civilization, to go through the farce of administering justice. He should

not only be removed from the bench, but his infamy should be published to the ends of the earth, in order that he may be avoided by respectable people and receive the rewards of his perfidy” (24 October 1865). According to the daily, the first of republican principles was “government of the people by the whole people”; therefore, it was the duty of all races to hold the government, including the judiciary, responsible and to punish corruption (22 March 1865).

A Final Example: The New Orleans Riot

“Government of the people by the whole people” also demanded universal suffrage (22 March 1865). Instead, Louisiana’s Constitutional Convention of 1864 ultimately “provided for a government of white men” (Reynolds 191). Despite the fact that the convention allowed for the possibility that the legislature could grant blacks who met certain qualifications such as military service, taxable property, or marked intelligence the right to vote, universal male suffrage was not mandated legally and, therefore, not realized. Most of the government officials elected in 1865 were ex-rebels who passed numerous Black Codes. Radicals in the state, therefore, needed to hatch a plan to secure blacks’ rights and to ultimately grant them suffrage. The 1864 convention had allowed for the possibility that it could be reconvened “for any cause . . . for the purpose of taking such measures as may be necessary for the formation of a civil government for the State of Louisiana” (qtd. in Reynolds 192). Radicals and Unionists in the city decided to reconvene the convention, which would hopefully be met with resistance by ex-Confederates who would decide not to attend, and then with a Republican majority present they could pass a revised constitution granting universal male suffrage and adopting the Fourteenth Amendment.

On July 30, 1866 the state convention of 1864 reconvened. Houzeau, reflecting on the resulting New Orleans Riot, wrote, “The proslavery forces now could not ignore that the

convention would meet with sufficient numbers, that it would declare itself duly assembled, and that within twenty-four hours, it would have declared universal suffrage, called for new elections, and established and authorized the election of new assemblies that would be the product of a vote in which blacks would participate” (126). He concluded, “In a word, this would have been the planters’ Waterloo, and they had to prevent it” (Houzeau 126).⁸¹ After blacks and white Unionists had assembled at the Mechanics Institute, city policemen, white rioters, and even a man in Confederate uniform attacked first a procession of approximately two hundred African Americans in the street and then continued their assault upon the convention attendees. Many black men died as result; although estimates of the number of African Americans killed range from thirty-four to 130, almost all historical accounts of the incident agree that only one rioter died since most of the conventionists were unarmed and unprepared.⁸² Houzeau emphasized, “It was not a battle, but a frightful massacre. . . . a sort of ambush into which unarmed victims continually fell” (128-30), and according to General Philip H. Sheridan, in charge of United States troops in Louisiana, “It was no riot; it was an absolute massacre by the police . . . It was a murder which the Mayor [John T. Monroe] and police of the city perpetrated without the shadow of a necessity; furthermore, I believe it was premeditated” (qtd. in 31 August 1866). City police murdered nine-tenths of the victims (Sheridan qtd. in 31 August 1866), and those who tried to surrender were nonetheless treated with contempt (Reynolds 195).

⁸¹ See Donald E. Reynolds’s “The New Orleans Riot of 1866, Reconsidered” and Gilles Vandal’s “The Origins of the New Orleans Riot of 1866, Revisited” for more in-depth analyses of the causes of the riot.

⁸² Reynolds claims that official reports listed thirty-eight dead and 146 wounded as a result of the riot (195). Thirty-four of the casualties were black, three white Radicals, and one a white anti-conventionist shot by accident by a policeman’s bullet (Reynolds 195). Vandal cites forty to fifty casualties, and Tunnell claims forty-six blacks died and one assailant (106). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Houzeau wrote that 130 people lost their lives, all Unionists (131).

Houzeau, who was present at the convention in his capacity as editor for the *Tribune*, escaped harm but immediately wrote a personal account of the riot, which he sent to Congress by personal courier. No existing editions of the *Tribune* exist from the immediate aftermath of the riot, for according to Tinker, they were “destroyed by Southerners who were none too proud of the measures they were forced to take” (112). But Houzeau claimed that his account was reprinted throughout the North (133) and was at least partially responsible for gaining the attention of the federal government. Three men were sent from Washington to investigate the riot (Leavens 68).⁸³ After collecting the testimony of 197 witnesses, including Houzeau, the delegates returned to Washington to enact the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, a group of legislation passed in the spring and summer of 1867. These acts not only mandated the states to enfranchise black men, but also disqualified many disloyal whites from voting or holding office and required that states ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before being represented in Congress (Reynolds 197; Bell 264; Memelo 38-39). Leavens comments on the irony of the New Orleans Riot: “The irony of the riot was that though it blocked the Negro vote, at the same time it convinced the North that the South was still in rebellion. In part this led to Radical Reconstruction which did far more than just give the Negro suffrage” (Leavens 32). Similarly, Houzeau wrote, “Instead of seeing the plan to extend political rights to the African race

⁸³ The House of Representatives formed the Select Committee on the New Orleans Riot on December 6, 1866 (Houzeau 134, footnote 142). The three men sent to Louisiana included two Republicans, Thomas Dawes Eliot from Massachusetts and Samuel Shellbarger from Pennsylvania, and Democrat Charles Denison. Due to illness, Denison was later replaced by Democrat Benjamin M. Boyer from Pennsylvania (Reynolds 197). Rankin describes Shellbarger as a “Republican representative from Ohio,” instead of Pennsylvania (Houzeau 134-35, footnote 144).

drowned in blood, they had on the contrary assured the success of this measure and had brought the question before Congress” (Houzeau 133-34).⁸⁴

The juridical rhetoric used by the *Tribune* a month later serves as a final example of the main points I have raised throughout this chapter: the newspaper provided a space for otherwise outlawed black testimony, positioned white rebels as criminals, advocated for equality before the law, and tried otherwise ignored cases before “the people,” who then served a supervisory role to the judiciary. On September 1, 1866, the daily included the eyewitness testimony of “WATCHER AROUND TOWN”: “It is one month today since the cowardly and brutal murder of us, innocent blacks, by the police and citizens of New Orleans . . . Being one of the attendance at the Convention, and through the mercy of God having escaped killing, I will now give my experience of that day”:

I went into the Institute when the Secretary was calling the names of members, before there was any trouble in the building. I remained inside all the time till, I think, three brave charges were made by the police on the conventionists and spectators. We repulsed the braves with chairs and canes and a few pistol shots. They seemed to have met with more courage inside than they anticipated from the blacks, so they undertook to separate the sheep from the goats and then kill all the goats. I thought I saw the trick so I jumped out of the window and was captured and robbed by the gentlemen in blue, not only myself, but a dozen others or more. Some had their watches taken from them, with all their money, which none of us have had returned; but they are kept by the police or some of the city officials. They or some one robbed the dead. They and their newspapers are continually harping about negroes stealing, and we are taught to steal by our would be superiors. (1 September 1866)

Luckily, this witness only lost his valuables, not his life, for Rankin describes the New Orleans Riot as “the bloodiest riot of the entire Reconstruction era” (“Origins” 434).

⁸⁴ A similar statement is made by Reynolds: “Ironically, by their violence they [white citizens and policemen] helped to bring upon New Orleans, Louisiana, and the South what they most wanted to avoid—Negro suffrage” (204).

“What was their crime?,” an article from the previous day by a former slave J. W. M. who was present at the Mechanics Institute, described those killed as “innocent” and “unoffending victims” who were executed without a trial:

[While] the thirsty earth drinks the cold, innocent blood of poor, unoffending victims, let us ask, what is their crime? For what are they persecuted? With what do they stand charged? Have they had a hearing? Have they had *even a mock trial*? . . . They have violated no law; they have injured no man; they have not encroached on the rights of any one; they have insulted no one, and neither have they even returned blow for blow. What have they done then, to merit *execution without trial*? Simply because they are *black*—nothing more! Their *color* is the crime. (emphasis in original, 31 August 1866)

However, the correspondence from the Cooper Institute Meeting in New York which followed used the evidence of one hundred men “murdered in cold blood” to hold ex-Confederates and even President Johnson guilty of “a crime of the most serious character” (31 August 1866). Specifically, the attendees resolved, “we hold the President of the United States guilty before God and the nation of the crime of permitting loyal citizens of the United States to be massacred by the pardoned but unrepentant rebels who have for four years earnestly striven for the destruction of the Union” (qtd. in 31 August 1866). They continued, “he has no excuse or palliation to offer for his conduct, but that, on the contrary, he but deserves the condemnation of every friend of law and order in our country” (qtd. in 31 August 1866). Read together then these articles from the *Tribune* repositioned blacks as victims and white rebels, and even President Johnson, as murderers and criminals.

Besides bringing the riot to the attention of the national government in the form of Houzeau’s personal account, the staff of the newspaper also acted as advocate by basing its claim against the injustices suffered as a result of the riot in the legal promises of the *Constitution*. Specifically, the newspaper argued that “the laws of the land and the principles of our national institutions . . . accustom the people to free speech and free meetings . . .

Practical liberty must be secured everywhere, and a faithful execution of the National Laws must be exacted” (31 August 1866). If the guilty parties were not brought to justice for infringing on the victims’ First Amendment rights to free speech and peaceful assembly, then the “law is a sham” and “[i]t is a kind of abandonment of the liberties and rights that have to be secured to the people as citizens of this free Republic, and a disregard of the dignity of this great government whose laws and principles should be respected” (31 August 1866). How could none of the white Democrats or police responsible for the riot be arrested (Reynolds 195)?

Finally, “WATCHER AROUND TOWN” pointed out the inadequacy of Louisiana’s courts: “When I reflect back on to-day, a month ago, how I, an American citizen, was treated without obtaining justice, I feel for one that redress should be had, any way we can obtain it. They have closed our churches, murdered our friends in their own yards, in the presence of their own family, and yet our civil government is still running, and the murderers are still allowed to roam our streets undisturbed” (1 September 1866). And J. W. M. proposed that “the people” then try the case, pronounce the verdict, and execute the criminals’ punishment. He wrote, “THE [American] PEOPLE will yet revenge these outrages upon humanity, and mete out to rebel murderers their just due, *even over the head of ‘the dead dog of the White House’*” (emphasis in original, 31 August 1866).

Conclusion

Once again, Weiner cites the following three requirements as necessary for a community to be considered a “people of law” and citizens: a “*capacity* to honor the most fundamental legal principles of the nation,” “*worth[iness]* of the law and its protection,” and “a commitment to the law in [their] *culture* and everyday practices” (emphasis in original, 11-12). The *New*

Orleans Tribune used the trope of the trial to prove that African Americans met these criteria, while simultaneously creating in print a new vision of Louisiana's justice system. This "alternative vision of race and justice under American law" (DeLombard 222) rhetorically positioned African Americans as witnesses to the crimes of ex-Confederates and in need of and "worthy of the law and its protection." The newspaper's staff "demonstrate[d] a commitment to the law in [their] *culture* and everyday practices" through their leadership within civic organizations such as the Friends of Universal Suffrage, participation in political advocacy like the voluntary election of 1865, and ultimate reliance on sound legal argumentation to fight everyday injustices in the city. Their arguments always emanated from their fundamental interpretation of the United States' founding documents: "Our Fathers contemplated a plain, simple and unexpensive National Government, in which the people should be the sovereignty. . . . The Constitution guaranteed in every State a republican form of government" (4 October 1864) and "Setting out with the cardinal principles 'that all men are created equal,' which we hold as an axiomatic truth. . . . The government of the United States is based upon the good moral principle that every man 'is endowed by his creator with certain inalienable rights, and that, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'" (13 September 1864). They, therefore, proved their legal literacy and "*capacity* to honor the most fundamental legal principles of the nation." Describing the history of the black press in general, the *Pittsburgh Courier* wrote, "The Negro press is the FREEST press in America because it is the ONLY press that consistently advocates freedom and equality for all citizens; that urges strict adherence to the letter and SPIRIT of the US Constitution" (qtd. in Wallace 73). Likewise, Hutton points out the ways in which black editors' "encouragement about the ideals of true republicanism" simultaneously "strategically reminded America's leaders that the country's democracy was very badly flawed" ("Democratic Idealism" 17).

Furthermore, the newspaper's rhetorical construction of African Americans as "people of law" was a final step in its march for universal male suffrage and membership within a larger civic community. An identity as a "people of law," according to Weiner, qualified a group as citizens, which meant they "enjoy[ed] the rights to vote and participate in the process of government (for instance, by sitting on juries), as well as the freedom to go about one's life in 'the pursuit of happiness'" and to be recognized as "belonging" (7-8). The daily demanded that "[f]reedom without equality before the law and at the ballot box is impossible" and used similar arguments to accomplish both (15 November 1864). Both juries and the electorate should be representative of "the people." While mixed juries would arguably more fairly decide the verdicts of specific cases, a representative electorate would ensure the success of self-government, which was "on its trial before the tribunal of the world" (11 August 1864).

The newspaper met with success on both counts in the form of Louisiana's 1868 constitution, which began with the following words, mirroring the *Declaration of Independence*: "All men are created equal, and have certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the *consent of the governed*" (emphasis added). The 1868 constitution was the first in the state to include a Bill of Rights; it guaranteed all persons the right to assembly, freedom of the press, the right to trial by jury, and protection from unreasonable searches and seizures. Article 10 provided a means of redress for wrongs committed against whites and blacks alike: "Every person for injury done him in his land, goods, person or reputation, shall have adequate remedy by due process of law." In addition, the 1868 constitution removed the property requirement for jury service (Vincent 80), and subsequent legislation signed on September 29, 1868 provided that "any qualified elector, without regard to race, color or previous condition, might serve as a grand or petit juror"

(Memelo 59). The convention seemed to finally acknowledge Houzeau's fundamental belief that "justice is the same for all men, whatever the shade of their skin" (82).

According to the 1868 constitution, electors included black men, and the newspaper finally fulfilled its mission of securing universal manhood suffrage. Article 2 proved false the statement that "no colored person can be a citizen" (qtd. in Bell 88), for it read, "all persons, without regard to race, color, or previous condition, born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, and residents of this State for one year, are citizens of the State." It continued, "They shall enjoy the same civil, political, and public rights and privileges, and be subject to the same pains and penalties." One of these political rights was suffrage: according to Article 98, "Every male person, of the age of twenty-one years or upwards, born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, and a resident of the State one year next preceding an election . . . shall be deemed an elector." The convention even went so far as to disenfranchise ex-Confederates who refused to take an oath of allegiance and had been guilty of treason. Memelo explains, "By the end of 1868 Louisiana Negroes were either by statute or constitutional provision, the complete equals of their erstwhile masters," but unfortunately the success that the *Tribune* achieved did not last once federal troops abandoned New Orleans in 1877 and blacks' legal and political rights once again evaporated (60). The daily's successors were left with the challenge of actually bringing about its promised revolution.

Conclusion

“The Drop of Water That Is Wearing Away the Rock”: The Legacy of the *New Orleans Tribune*⁸⁵

During its lifetime from 1864-1870, the *New Orleans Tribune* debated “all the momentous questions of the day” within its columns (11 June 1865). It defended “the weak against the mighty,” “the oppressed against the oppressor,” and served a “noble and holy cause” (5 March 1865). It defined its mission on March 5, 1865 in “Our Platform.” First, the newspaper fought a legal system corrupted by racial prejudice, denying blacks the rights to serve as witnesses, legal advocates, and jury members and to bring claims against white criminals: “We ask for justice—full justice—for all” (5 March 1865). Secondly, the daily envisioned a plan for economic reform that would secure African Americans in the city homes and simultaneously represent black men as industrious and black women as noble:

For colored laborers we want entire freedom, and self disposal of themselves. We want that they be as free as white men in contracting for their labor, going from place to place, and enjoying the earning of their toils. . . . For the colored women we claim the same regard as for the white ones. They are, as well as the women of any other race, mothers, sisters, wives and daughters; they partake of the same feelings, and we do not want to see them . . . treated not as women but as brutes. (5 March 1865)

Thirdly, the *Tribune* continued blacks’ tradition of self-help, using whatever means necessary to secure education for African American children, specifically integrated education. It continued, “For colored children . . . we want to see our children seated on the same benches with the white girls and boys, so that every prejudice of color may disappear from childhood, and the next generation be aroused to a sentiment of fraternity” (5 March 1865). While each of these causes was noble in itself, these self-representations of blacks’ literacy practices

⁸⁵ Philadelphia lawyer Charles W. Hornor described the *Tribune* in this way in 1865 (Houzeau 96). He was a radical white Unionist and later was an officer of the Freedmen’s Aid Association in New Orleans (Houzeau 96, footnote 63).

rhetorically constructed an African American discourse community that was worthy of citizenship and therefore suffrage, the daily's main goal: "For colored men in general, we [wish for] the right of suffrage, and thereby the right of self taxation and self government. We claim that privilege [because] they are men and they are American citizens" (5 March 1865). In conclusion, the newspaper wrote, "These are the principles we have at any time advocated and defended. . . . Do not say that we are going too fast or going too far" (5 March 1865).

Despite the *Tribune's* perseverance and optimism, many of the advances that it witnessed in Louisiana's 1868 constitution, discussed within the previous chapters, were unfortunately short-lived. Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877: in exchange for the election of Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes, Democrats demanded the removal of federal troops from the South, including New Orleans. During that same year, the city's Democratic school board resegregated its schools. Superintendent William O. Rogers declared, "Our Board has already indicated its policy in the matter of color line and has resolved that hereafter there shall be separate schools for whites and blacks" (qtd. in Mitchell 223).⁸⁶ The system of Jim Crow segregation had begun. Bell points out that many of the same rights that the *Tribune* had advocated for were once again denied blacks. Jim Crow progressed "from an indiscriminating attack upon the Negro's ballot to a like attack upon his schools, his labor, his life—from the contention that no Negro shall vote to the contention that no Negro shall learn, that no Negro shall labor, and (by implication) that no Negro shall live" (qtd. in Bell 282). Approximately thirty years after its last issue, the men of the *New Orleans Tribune*

⁸⁶ Editor of the *Tribune*, Paul Trévigne filed a lawsuit to stop resegregation, arguing that "this case is one of great magnitude, involving as it does a question of civil liberty and constitutional right, with all the sacred guarantees of citizenship, and is really a test, judicially, of the status of that class termed 'colored,' whose rights to citizenship ought to be protected" (emphasis in original, qtd. in Mitchell 224). However, the court dismissed Trévigne's case, claiming that he had failed to prove damages and had filed his claim too late.

witnessed their revolutionary vision dissipate when Louisiana's 1898 constitution once again disenfranchised blacks. "Radical Reconstruction's promise of freedom, opportunity, and equal citizenship had ended in a nightmare of semiservitude, Jim Crow laws, and disfranchisement" (Bell 282).

My analysis of the *New Orleans Tribune*, however, continues to raise questions for scholars in the present by problematizing accepted definitions and conceptions of *Reconstruction, resistance, literacy, and ephemera*. In this dissertation, I use the newspaper to retell the history of African American literacy in Reconstruction New Orleans as one of agency and oppositionality. Radical Reconstruction was "not wholly a Northern product" (Leavens 51), nor was "the periodical, as an agent for the vindication of equal rights, . . . no longer needed" (P. Bullock 64). Instead, blacks in the South, such as the men of the *Tribune*, guided the agenda of Radical Reconstruction despite the "wave of violence that raged almost unchecked in large parts of the post war South" (Foner 119). Louisiana was in a "peculiar position":

All the Southern States look upon her as upon a leader in Republicanism. She went back into the Union long before any other rebellious States were subdued. She enjoyed three more years of freedom and political liberty. She had colored schools long before the Freedmen's Bureau had reached Charleston, Montgomery, and Richmond. Her great commercial and geographical importance, her numerous population of the African race, the wealth and education of a large number of her colored citizens place her in a peculiar position. (5 May 1867)

But even in New Orleans, federal troops failed to protect Republicans in the city during the New Orleans Riot, discussed in the last chapter. The *Tribune* declared, "Reconstruction is a phantom, an air-castle, that has no substance and no reality. Reconstruction is still an unsolved problem. Nothing is done yet; all remains to be taken care of by the people—the whole people—and by Congress" (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 44). The *Tribune* did not merely

record the history of Reconstruction but became an active shaper of Reconstruction culture by providing a unique space within its pages for “the people” to publicly debate and critique the political and social inequalities which continued to exist in the city even after emancipation.

According to Hutton, “More than any other form of black popular culture, the black press before and after the Civil War was used continually in an attempt to quell negative images of people of color” (“Democratic Idealism” 6). I also argue that the *Tribune* circulated a counterdiscourse that challenged dominant stereotypes of blacks. In “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere,” Catherine R. Squires observes that counterpublic discourses 1) “increase communication between the marginal and dominant discourses”; 2) “travel outside of safe, enclave spaces to argue against dominant conceptions of the group to describe group interests”; and 3) “test the reactions of wider publics by stating previously hidden opinions, launching persuasive campaigns to change the minds of dominant publics, or seeking solidarity with other marginal groups” (460).⁸⁷ Although the *Tribune* met all of these requirements through its circulation of its equal rights campaigns among whites and blacks, Northerners and Southerners, Americans and Europeans, one could argue that the newspaper’s resistance was limited by its middle-class sentiments and male perspective. Gunnar Myrdal reminds us, “The Negro press is primarily controlled by the active members of the upper and middle classes of the Negro community” (qtd. in Fultz 134), and Frazier charges, “Although the Negro press, including magazines as well as newspapers, claims to be published in the interest of the ‘race,’ it represents primarily the interests of the black bourgeoisie and promulgates the bourgeois values of the make-believe world of the black bourgeoisie” (qtd. in Fultz 134-35). In the

⁸⁷ Squires distinguishes counterpublics from enclaves, which must “[hide] counterhegemonic ideas and strategies in order to survive or avoid sanctions, while internally producing lively debate and planning,” and satellites, which “seek separation from other publics for reasons other than oppressive relations” (448). These differing types of black publics are the result of varying levels of oppression and the public’s own material and cultural resources.

nineteenth century, it was common that “race work” or “racial uplift” “counter[ed] images of physical and psychical rupture with images of wholeness”; however, we must not lose sight of “the critical liberating intention implicit in blacks’ own usage of the term ‘the race,’ when referring to themselves as a group” (Higginbotham 270). Once again, the daily refused to accept half-measures which would divide free blacks and freedmen in the city into two distinct castes: “We claim the electoral franchise as an act of justice, as an application of a general principle; we do not claim it for a few individuals, but for all” (18 November 1864). Perhaps E. Frances White most eloquently characterizes resistance when she writes, “the site of counter-discourse is itself contested terrain” (82).

The newspaper’s counterdiscourse hyper-performed the norm, claiming that blacks in the city were more educated, harder working, more domestic, and better “people of law” than whites. The *Tribune* did not always challenge the norms of the white, dominant discourse, except to argue that they applied to African Americans as well as to whites. Hutton explains, “it [the black press] ironically strove to be an insider in its espousal of republican ideals and democracy. . . . as led by the editors, people of color worked toward an illusive goal of democracy in every regard: economic, educational, social, and legal” (“Democratic Idealism” 6-7). The daily argued in “Tolerance” on September 29, 1864, “A wise man will always listen [to] his opponent in discussion with attention and respect, for he knows he will find his defense in his adversary’s own words.” Therefore, the staff of the newspaper did not create a new discourse but “[used] the same categories [of the dominant discourse] by which it was . . . disqualified” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 101). One of these categories was literacy, which became a dual-sign in the nineteenth century. Brandt writes that still today “literacy is valuable—and volatile—property” (*Literacy* 2). Whereas whites used literacy as a weapon against blacks first to prevent slaves from reading or writing their way to freedom and later to

justify their exclusion from political participation and from public schooling, African Americans viewed literacy as a means of proving their humanity, of securing the possibility of escape during slavery, and of ensuring their future social mobility—as a means of liberation.

Literacy is a technical skill, but also a resource by which “identities are made and sustained” (Brandt, *Literacy* 6). Gee defines literacy as mastery of a Discourse, “a sort of ‘identity kit’ which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (“Literacies” 526). The staff of the *Tribune* painted a portrait of a black community united by shared, multiple everyday literacies through its inclusion of evidence of blacks’ education and knowledge of historical texts; black men’s economic and agricultural literacies and black women’s domestic skills; and the community’s understanding of civics. But the *Tribune* also created an interracial discourse community of Americans: it concluded, “The prosperity and, above all, the strength of this nation, as one of the powers on earth, depends upon our union of classes in patriotism. Do not make any longer white and black citizens; let us have but Americans” (31 July 1867). Through its articulation of sameness, the newspaper built what Benedict Anderson refers to as an “imagined community,” uniting an “assemblage of fellow-readers” (62). However, this community remained imagined since within it there still existed tensions and conflicts as it consisted of both friends and foes (Rousseve 114).

The newspaper continues to create community, molding disparate time periods into a history of shared struggle. Despite the ephemeral quality of newspapers, which are “date-stamped” and often thrown away before their subsequent edition is printed, periodicals can create a lasting influence (Beetham qtd. in Dawson, Noakes, and Topham 2). For example, we can trace the legacy of the *New Orleans Tribune* to a monthly paper of the same name started in 1985 by Dr. Dwight McKenna and Beverly Stanton McKenna. The modern-day *Tribune*

describes itself as “part of a publishing legacy that began 146 years ago, when Roudanez published the first Black daily newspaper in the United States. Then, as now, the *Tribune* was dedicated to social justice and civil rights for all Louisiana citizens” (“About Us”). Like the men of the 1864 *Tribune*, the McKennas hope that “through an accurate portrayal of the African–American community, their publications have the power to open windows of greater appreciation for working relationships between the races and diverse cultural groups in our city, our state, and our nation” (“Meet the Staff”). Today’s *Tribune* distributes 20,000 copies per issue and engages 70,000 readers, statistics that prove its influence among “affluent, well-educated African-Americans in the greater New Orleans area” (“Media Kit 2011”).⁸⁸ Unlike its predecessor, however, the monthly does not seem to have a high circulation beyond the local black community.

Houzeau described Reconstruction as another chapter in “the great universal fight of the oppressed of all colors and nations” (qtd. in Rankin, Introduction 61) and wrote in his journal, “Societies are like travelers: the more they travel forward, the more new horizons open before their eyes” (152). Although much has been accomplished in terms of racial equality since the nineteenth century, there is still much work to be done before the revolutionary vision of the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States, the *New Orleans Tribune*, is finally realized. Bell, too, comments on the legacy of Afro-Creoles in the Crescent City during Reconstruction: “Although their dream of a utopian millennium of racial justice and harmony far exceeded what their state and nation were willing to concede, their actions assured the survival of their protest tradition. Their legacy of dissent, which would be used to rescue the

⁸⁸ The monthly’s “Media Kit 2011” also states that 80% of its issues are distributed for free at high traffic areas in the city.

Reconstruction amendments in later Supreme Court decisions, offered a vision for the future” (282).

This dissertation, too, is a beginning, rather than an end, for I have only analyzed a sampling of the English editions of one black newspaper. There is much work that remains to be done to unearth the rhetorical strategies and literacy practices of the African American press, specifically in the South. Just as the specific findings of this project cannot be generalized without qualification, the “analytical vitality [of any black public] can be sustained only if we cleave firmly to its historicity, its materiality, its plurality, and its political relevance” (Holt 326). In his Preface to *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*, Henry Suggs stresses this: “The black press in the South is a fighting press; it is an advocate, crusader, and . . . an institution, and like other institutions in the black community—church, family, and school—it is a mirror of black life and culture and an important segment of American social history” (x-xi). The *New Orleans Tribune* is no exception and should continue to be studied as both a record of free black life in New Orleans in the nineteenth century and as a rhetorical tool.

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Vita

Kristi Richard Melancon is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of New Orleans. Soon after the completion of her degree, she decided to pursue her doctorate at Louisiana State University, where she discovered her love for teaching writing and enjoyed collaborating with her colleagues as both Assistant Director of University Writing and the H. Eustis Reily Service-Learning Graduate Assistant. Her archival work on local literacy practices has enabled her to learn more about the place that she calls home and to share that knowledge with others in order to rethink the historical narrative of African American literacy in the Crescent City. She and her husband will soon relocate to Clinton, Mississippi, as she begins her tenure as Assistant Professor of Composition and Rhetoric at Mississippi College.