

THE 1860 JAPANESE EMBASSY AND THE ANTEBELLUM AFRICAN AMERICAN
PRESS*

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ABSTRACT

The 1860 Japanese Embassy inspired within the antebellum African American press an imagined solidarity that subverted American state hierarchies of ‘civilization’ and race. The bodies of the Japanese ambassadors, physically incongruous with American understandings of non-white masculinity, became a centre of cultural contention upon their presence as sophisticated and powerful men on American soil. The African American and abolitionist press, reimagining Japan and the Japanese, reframed racial prejudice as an experience in solidarity, to further prove the equality of all men, and assert African American membership to the worlds of civility and ‘civilization.’ The acceptance of the Japanese gave African Americans a new lens through which to present their quest for racial equality and recognition as citizens of American ‘civilization.’ This imagined transnational solidarity reveals Japan’s influence in the United States as African American publications developed an imagined racial solidarity with Japanese agents of ‘civilization’ long before initiatives of ‘civilization and enlightenment’ appeared on Japan’s diplomatic agenda. Examining the writings of non-state actors traditionally excluded from early historical narratives of U.S.-Japan diplomacy reveals an imagined transnational solidarity occurring within and because of an oppressive racial hierarchy, as well as a Japanese influence on antebellum African American intellectual history.

I

‘These colored men of the East’, declared the June 1860 *Weekly Anglo-African* about the visiting Japanese embassy, ‘are paving the way for a new state of things much needed in our country’.¹ African American and abolitionist newspapers embraced the 1860 Japanese embassy to the United States as ‘negroes from Japan’,² using race to create an imagined solidarity that subverted and transcended state hierarchies of ‘civilization’ and race.³ The African American and abolitionist press, reimagining Japan and the Japanese, reframed racial prejudice as an experience in solidarity, to further prove the equality of all men, and assert African American membership to the worlds of civility and ‘civilization’. The acceptance of the Japanese gave politically and socially ostracized African Americans a new lens through which to present their quest for racial equality and recognition as citizens of American ‘civilization’. This imagined transnational solidarity reveals Japan’s influence in the United States outside the American state’s vision of how white and non-white powers should interact. Public representations of the Japanese have never been used as a lens on African American identity formation, historical production, or intellectual history in the antebellum era. Similarly, the cultural influence of Tokugawa Japan has not been studied using the writings of antebellum African American and abolitionist newspapers. Examining the writings of non-state actors traditionally excluded from early historical narratives of U.S.-Japan diplomacy reveals an imagined transnational solidarity occurring within and because of an oppressive racial hierarchy, as well as a Japanese influence on antebellum African American intellectual history and cultural production.

The seventy-seven samurai embassy left Yokohama aboard the U.S.S. *Powhatan* in February 1860.⁴ The singular diplomatic objective of the embassy was the ratification of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which, among other conditions, granted American access to certain Japanese ports. Unlike the Iwakura embassy of 1871, the sole purpose of the 1860

Japanese embassy was treaty ratification, not treaty negotiation or targeted information gathering. As such, the men selected for this mission were not necessarily those who most wanted to learn about America and its people.⁵ After refuelling in Hawaii and California, the U.S.S. *Powhatan* sailed to Panama. The embassy crossed Panama by train, boarded the U.S.S. *Roanoke*, and, after some minor confusion, arrived in Washington, DC on 14 May 1860. After the treaty ratification on 17 May, the embassy experienced a whirlwind of technological and cultural demonstrations, celebrations, and shopping. The embassy spent nearly four weeks in DC, one night in Baltimore, Maryland, seven nights in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and two full weeks in New York before leaving the U.S. for Japan on 30 June 1860.

Despite the significant cultural and racial discourse inspired by the presence of the Japanese in America in 1860, neither the embassy nor the racial implications of their visit have received serious scrutiny since Masao Miyoshi in 1979. English-language scholarship often leaps from Perry to Meiji, as if no U.S.-Japan encounters of importance occurred between those fifteen years.⁶ This gap is, in part, because of a reliance on state relations as the definitive lens through which to view this interracial, intercultural encounter.⁷ Consequently, the interpretation first promoted by antebellum American publications of the 1860 Japanese embassy as a meeting of 'East learning from West' remains largely unaltered over one hundred and fifty years later. The 1860 Japanese embassy has been mentioned in the past as a diplomatic anecdote in the Japanese journey towards 'civilization and enlightenment', partnered with a mistaken, though perhaps comforting, narrative of nations developing friendship through cultural exchange. Employing non-state sources to examine U.S.-Japan encounters expands our understanding of the production of culture between minority groups and within nineteenth-century intellectual history, revealing a rich history of interracial encounters and their transnational influence.⁸

The importance of the 1860 Japanese embassy was one of the few political issues upon which most antebellum Americans, regardless of race, gender, or region, could agree. Commercial interest in Japan transcended regional loyalties, and both Northerners and Southerners were inclined to think the best of ‘this wonderful people’,⁹ their potential trade partners. The diplomatic mission was the ‘great event of the age’,¹⁰ with some newspapers printing up to seven articles about Japan and the embassy per issue.¹¹ The American the Japanese explored demonstrated extravagant overtures of hospitality designed to inspire awe and a desire for commerce. The samurai, immediately upon their arrival, initiated a deluge of discourse that attempted to reconcile America’s endemic racial hierarchies and understandings of ‘civilization’ with the nation’s economic ambitions regarding Japan. The Japanese ambassadors—non-white men of conspicuous wealth and power—jumbled the usual metrics of American hierarchy-building. From the moment the embassy’s visit was announced, and for the duration of the embassy’s stay, the American metropolitan press struggled to define the Japanese while welcoming them into public and private American life.¹² Newspapers publicized ‘the fine heads, intellectual countenances and dignified bearing’¹³ of the embassy members. Metropolitan publications struggled to reconcile the burgeoning link between ‘civilization’ and race with the commercial promise of the non-white embassy.¹⁴ Newspapers depicted the Japanese as ‘a highly civilized people’,¹⁵ even ‘the British of Asia’,¹⁶ as early racial demarcations of ‘civilization’ splintered upon the presence of the Japanese in America. The male bodies of the Japanese ambassadors, physically incongruous with American understandings of non-white masculinity, became a centre of cultural contention.¹⁷ The metropolitan press initially praised the Japanese as refined gentlemen, then later ridiculed the embassy as non-white inferiors. This shift in the metropolitan press’ representation of the Japanese occurred within the fifteen weeks between the escort group’s arrival in California on 17 March 1860 and the embassy’s final departure

from New York on 30 June 1860—a time made more tumultuous considering the embassy spent nearly half that time at sea, physically out of reach of most Americans.

Acknowledging the later mistreatment of the embassy members was an opportunity for the African American press to demand an improved treatment of all non-white people: ‘Learn to respect the colored people in our midst, and we will know how to respect those from abroad’.¹⁸ African Americans were politically and socially barred from the mechanics of American policy-making and ‘civilization’, a loosely defined hierarchy of power cobbled together as the United States geographically extended into the wider world. The Japanese presence and performance as powerful, sophisticated, men of colour on American soil challenged the validity of hierarchies of race and ‘civilization’ to create an imagined transnational solidarity between African American and Japanese people. Antebellum African American and abolitionist publications viewed the Japanese and the embassy’s reception as a reflection of African American experiences of state hypocrisy and denigration as non-whites in a society ruled by a racial hierarchy. The vehicle for this imagined solidarity and interpretation of racial hierarchies was the African American and abolitionist press, a non-state source heretofore unexamined in the studies of the cultural influence of Tokugawa Japan.

Newspapers were a primary source of information and entertainment for nineteenth-century Americans. The African American middle class viewed newspapers and regular, quality reading material as a vehicle for personal improvement and respectability. African American newspapers reported national and international affairs, discerning the influence of world events on their community and quest for human rights. Political news and calls for racial equality occupied the majority of print space. There were also poems, stories, and brief amusements meant to entertain and inform the newspaper’s middle-class audience. These newspapers, like many publications of the day, often featured a religious element.¹⁹ Though,

in the words of Erica L. Ball, ‘few free blacks had the financial means generally associated with middle class status’,²⁰ they were, on a whole, ‘aspiring men and women looking for more ways to ensure their behavior matched their sense of themselves as virtuous and respectable’.²¹

This study examines the surviving discussion and interpretation of the Japanese generated by the African American press during the period of most volatile discussion of the embassy.²² Every extant African American and abolitionist newspaper and periodical published between April and August 1860 was consulted for the purposes of this study.²³ The exact circulation figures of the African American press are unknown, but ‘based on scant commentary from the editors’, writes Frankie Hutton, ‘circulations ranged from 1,500 to 3,000’.²⁴ Newspapers were often shared orally in family parlours, schools, and literature circles, but free African Americans without access to these groups or the necessary funds to procure copies for themselves makes it unclear as to the extent of the press’ reach.²⁵ African American publications were inaccessible to most residents of the American South due to the distribution censorship of anti-slavery literature.²⁶ Low literacy rates and lack of funds among both free Southern blacks and slaves would have made accessing these publications even more difficult. Any African American publication’s immediate audience was therefore circumscribed to sympathetic northerners and literate, most likely free, African Americans. Due to a dearth of data regarding the reading patterns of the urban poor or African American populations in the South, this study focuses on the reception of the Japanese by the free, middle class African American population assumed to be the target audience of these newspapers.²⁷

II

Discussion of the Japanese commanded print space amidst calls for abolition, political debates, and horror stories of slavery and kidnapping. The Japanese embassy was one of the most important political events of the summer of 1860, and discussion of the Japanese pervaded all levels of society. The Japanese arrived at an already turbulent time in the United States and provided, with a state-supported whirlwind of exoticism and festivities, both a celebratory and contentious outlet for the political and social tensions facing the nation. America's volatile welcome and later rejection of the embassy reflected the threat the embassy members posed as non-white men of 'civilization' and power to America's tenuous hierarchies of race and 'civilization'. News of 'Prejudice Against Color Manifested Toward the Japanese Embassy' was important enough to include alongside Charles Sumner's rousing speech on the criminal nature of slavery, which directly challenged the 'alleged inferiority of the African race, an argument which...leaves it uncertain whether the same principle may not be applied to other races, as to the polished Japanese, who are now the guests of the [nation]'.²⁸ A disclaimer in the same July issue of *Douglass' Monthly* noted that 'there are many topics which we would have gladly made room for in this our July number—some of them quite important and interesting; and yet we think that...our space could hardly be more worthily occupied'.²⁹ Despite the interest in Japan-related news, without any scheduled interactions with the Japanese, African American newspapers relied on circulated metropolitan coverage—even from publications that regularly belittled African Americans—from which to base their commentary.³⁰ Many of the African American publications that discussed the embassy did not introduce the Japanese or the purpose of their visit, implying that their readers were already familiar with the embassy from other sources.

Upon the arrival of the Japanese, some abolitionist newspapers joined in the celebration of Japanese exoticism, but reports of the extravagant pageantry surrounding the Japanese were largely absent from the African American press. This omission reflects, besides the

prioritization of news regarding racial equality, a possible conflict between the editors' visions of practical sensibility and the manner in which the Japanese were celebrated. A line-by-line analysis of fashion and frivolity would hardly have suited the pragmatic aesthetic these newspapers produced amidst urgent appeals for racial equality. Still, the Japanese people themselves were subjects of African American praise. Japan was 'Arcadia Realized',³¹ a land of no taxes, in which 'drunkenness and vice are rare'.³² 'Japanese [belles]'³³ were modest and enjoyed reading, reflecting and exemplifying the middle-class sensibilities the African American editors wished to promote. The 'civilized world'³⁴ was reported to have 'followed the example of the Japanese'³⁵ in valuing public education. Proper education fostered gentility and 'civilized' status, prompting one abolitionist newspaper to comment that 'it would seem that the Japanese are really as much a reading people as some who are deemed more civilized than they'.³⁶ Even the justice system—an institution notorious for its treatment of African Americans—was, in Japan, fair and even cooperative: 'the rich man [in prison] can have good food if he wants it, but only on one condition, that he shares it with his fellow prisoners'.³⁷ The early celebration of Japan and the Japanese reflected the aspirations of education and civility of the readers of the African American press.

While African American periodicals evinced a connection to Japan and the Japanese, the embassy neither sought nor desired interaction with African Americans as a community. Already displeased with the unanticipated extension of their visit, interacting with African Americans was far from the ambassadors' agenda.³⁸ Identifying with a population viewed as lesser by America's ruling powers could potentially have had negative repercussions for the potential racial classification of Japanese people. With few exceptions, references to African Americans in the journals of the Japanese are limited to what are likely parroted repetitions of the racist rhetoric of the day.³⁹

The lukewarm detachment of the embassy from African Americans makes the African American perceived solidarity with the Japanese all the more significant. The members of the embassy were an interesting contradiction for many Americans: not white, but not quite ‘coloured’ either. This was not true for the African American press in 1860, which, having established an early identification with Japan, embraced the Japanese wholeheartedly as ‘negroes from Japan’.⁴⁰ African American publications scarcely used the ‘distinguished strangers’ epithet which the metropolitan press frequently used to describe the Japanese.⁴¹ Instead, the Japanese were ‘distinguished colored foreigners’,⁴² ‘distinguished colored visitors’,⁴³ or even ‘our Oriental brethren’.⁴⁴ The Japanese were ‘distinguished’ *and* ‘brethren’, neither hierarchically above nor below African Americans, but equal to all men, all men being equal. An article in the *Weekly Anglo-African* represented the Japanese as actually seeking out interaction with African Americans, asserting—only half in jest—that ‘[the Japanese] have inquired for “the stores of the brown-skinned men” [and said] “we want to trade with them”’.⁴⁵ In this fictionalized letter, the Japanese understood the slurs used against them. Despite—or, perhaps, because of—the embassy’s experiences of racial intolerance, the Japanese envisioned in this encounter desired to connect with the African American community and offer ‘the brown-skinned men’ the connection most desired by the American state: commerce. Separated from the Japanese by state machinations, linguistic differences, and physical distance, the African American press imagined a perceived closeness between themselves and the Japanese, derived from an assumption of similar experiences of prejudice. Unlike articles attesting early African American contributions to the founding of America as a means of asserting black patriotism and citizenship, these interpretations of Japan transcended the nation to pursue a solidarity in defiance of a state that racially rejected its non-white people. Through imagined solidarity with the Japanese, the

African American press expanded membership to non-white ‘civilization’ beyond America’s borders.

The language barrier of the embassy and the political intent of their American hosts made it unlikely that the Japanese glimpsed any African American publications during their stay. The embassy’s encounters with African Americans were distanced, and it does not appear that any effort was made to ensure otherwise.⁴⁶ It could even be argued—and was—that the separation of the Japanese from any exploited racial minority was a political calculation designed to impede solidarity and the exchange of ‘dangerously contagious’⁴⁷ sentiments. The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* portrayed potential interactions between the Japanese and enslaved African Americans as disruptive and powerful to all parties involved: the Japanese, for witnessing a more accurate picture of the civilization that longed to ‘enlighten’ them, and for ‘the negroes themselves [who] might draw improper inferences from the unusual attention paid by order of “the authorities” to gentlemen of color’.⁴⁸ As portrayed in the metropolitan press, the samurai ambassadors set a dangerous example, proving that men of colour could possess citizenship as members of ‘civilization’ and its accompanying cultural, economic, and political power. The physical separation of the Japanese from African Americans demonstrated to the African American and abolitionist press that even the leaders of the American government, though claiming slavery as a necessary evil or even a ‘form of civilization’,⁴⁹ intuitively registered slavery as wrong and ‘not, on the whole, calculated to give us much credit as a nation in the eyes of foreigners’.⁵⁰ The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* and *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, reprinting an article from the *New York Evening Post*, spoke to abolitionists and African Americans in one of the few acknowledgments in any American periodical of the insulation of the embassy from exposure to slavery. The article questioned why slavery, if truly the moral and religious imperative that some of its supporters claimed, needed to be hidden from the nation’s civilized guests: ‘As slavery is the corner stone of our

free institutions, why should it be hid from the gaze of strangers?’⁵¹ Through analysing the reception of the Japanese, abolitionists and African Americans critiqued the hypocritical nature of American society and challenged the state’s barbaric treatment of its non-white people.

III

As early as 1828, African American publications discussed Japan. Early nineteenth-century interpretations of Japan, regardless of their target audience, relied on much of the same material: the geography of the country, its agricultural opportunities, and the anticipation of trade. Apart from reprinted references to Japan’s ‘barbarous treatment’⁵² of shipwrecked foreigners, little news was produced or available regarding developments in Japan. Yet even in these early articles, the African American press evinced an interest in Japan for reasons beyond exoticism or commercial opportunity.

Each issue of the African American press served as a moral advance against the theories of innate African degeneracy promulgated by advocates of slavery. Elaborate compositions detailing the historical triumphs of African American people aided the argument against the pervasive rhetoric of black inferiority. These stories inspired readers themselves to ‘cultivate all the social virtues, improve our intellect, and render ourselves worthy of our origin’.⁵³ One such article in *Freedom’s Journal*, reprinting from the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, attested that, in the early history of mankind, ‘[the Negro Race] bore sway over almost all Asia, and traveled even to the borders of Japan. Negro settlements are at present, scattered through out [sic] the mountains of that country’.⁵⁴ This narrative, though historically inaccurate, reimagined African American and Japanese history to cast Japan as an early site of African connection. The triumphant reimagining of historical boundaries of state, race, and

even geography in connection to the Japanese cultivated an imagined, shared past in the pursuit of a present and future membership to a global citizenship of ‘civilization’.

Japan was represented as a place where dark skin and ‘blackness’ were not laden with negative connotations, where ‘white is the sign of mourning, and black of rejoicing’.⁵⁵ The Japanese registered within the African American imagination decades before diplomatic narratives of ‘opening’ littered American headlines. Early discussions of the tribulations of a virtuous, mixed-race young American described her as of ‘Japanese complexion’.⁵⁶ To a writer wishing to solicit sympathy on behalf of mixed-race women, the Japanese were neither black nor white, but somewhere in between, yet still physically similar to many members of America’s ‘coloured’ population. This shared physicality envisioned a relationship between African Americans and the Japanese that existed without hierarchy, diplomacy, or even the state.

The 1850s and the Perry Expedition sparked a surge in American curiosity about the nation’s interests and doings in the Pacific. From the beginning of the African American press’ relationship with Japan, the Japanese were a lens through which to critique American society. African American publications did not employ racism or narratives of barbarism to demean Japan.⁵⁷ Negative depictions of the Japanese were used, not to assert a disparity between Japan and the ‘civilized’ West, but to emphasize by comparison the inhumanity of Southern plantation owners. If Japan was barbaric for its treatment of non-Japanese, then Southerners were equally or more barbaric for mistreating those ‘of a different complexion’.⁵⁸

The American state interest in converting, trading, and communicating with Japan perturbed the African American press, distressed by the desperate needs of America’s enslaved peoples: ‘Have you faith to believe that you can save your brother in Japan...and

have you none in the cause of your brother here?’⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the African American affinity for Japan and the Japanese developed throughout the 1850s as the United States heightened its diplomatic ambitions. Beyond religious interests, the recognition of the sovereignty of non-white governments was paramount to African Americans eager to assert their own right to participate in the intercourse of the world and to promote the success and independence of non-white nations. African American newspapers saw the American government’s refusal to diplomatically recognize Haiti, a country both geographically and culturally closer to the United States, to instead pursue commercial ‘favours which we now propose to force on Japan’⁶⁰ as a state denial of the value of non-white nations and, accordingly, non-white peoples.⁶¹

A government that rejected commerce with a non-white country denied the legitimate claim of people of colour to participate in world ‘civilization’. For most nineteenth-century Americans, ‘civilization’ was a hazily-defined arena of state recognition in which ‘civilized’ behaviour and some amalgamation of economic and/or cultural might, along with a certain racial classification, remained the criterion for entry. African Americans were, in many parts of the nation, considered undeserving of human rights, let alone citizenship. Many abolitionists encouraged the ‘return’ of African Americans to Africa, rather than an eventual integration into white society.⁶² Many free African Americans laid their claim to equal membership in the world of opportunity, ‘civilization’, and power through their pursuit of education and a refined respectability. Civility as an indicator of ‘civilization’ also operated in reverse. Recognition from the powers of ‘world civilization’ conferred assumptions, if not of equality, then at least of the elevated human faculties, and thus the humanity, that civility entailed. *Douglass’ Paper* astutely ascribed the reason for the American government’s refusal to recognize the sovereignty of Haiti as ‘because that sovereign happens to be a colored man, and would be likely to send a person of a somewhat darker hue...as his diplomatic

representative to the United [States]’.⁶³ Unexpectedly, this ‘darker’ diplomacy and the complication of American understandings of non-white sovereignty and ‘civilization’ would be achieved through the interpretation of the 1860 Japanese embassy.

African American editors used their interpretation of the Japanese diplomats to imagine a border-transcending, hierarchy-less comradeship with the people these state officials represented. This imagined solidarity extended to unite two groups—African Americans and the Japanese people—separated by barriers of geography and language, on the basis of race, gentility, and experiences of prejudice. This was not cultural diplomacy; this was diplomacy inadvertently creating culture. The Tokugawa state did not predict or promote this imagined solidarity, and the African American interpretation of the Japanese was neither controlled nor directed by powers from either state. Over the course of the 1860 Japanese embassy, African American and abolitionist newspapers employed representations of diplomatic and racial exclusion to imagine a transnational solidarity with the Japanese.⁶⁴ An imagined solidarity enabled by state diplomacy subverted the same national authority that attempted to deny African American and Japanese interaction, yet strove towards the spirit of cooperation that was supposedly the goal of state relations.

IV

‘Jap’, like ‘No-Kamis’ or ‘Nipponese’, was one of many words used, often complementarily, by the American press to describe their foreign guests. In 1860, the term ‘Jap’ was considered a neutral abbreviation made negative only through offensive context targeting ‘personal appearance and intelligent bearing’.⁶⁵ Japanese masculinity and bodies were demeaned in metropolitan publications, often in odd combinations—“Japan-knees”...“small potatoes”...“good-looking boys”⁶⁶—but not the concept of the Japanese as a race. Instead, publications seeking to racially denigrate the Japanese emphasized similarities

to the Chinese or equated Japanese-ness with blackness.⁶⁷ This comparison further solidified the African American press' identification with the Japanese. In a time when free African Americans endured daily struggles against prejudice and exclusion, these Japanese gentlemen dined alongside the niece of the American president. The continued representation of the Japanese as civilized gentlemen further confirmed to the abolitionist and African American press that different shades of people could be 'intelligent, refined, and talented gentlemen'⁶⁸ and equal participants in the civilized diplomacy of world affairs.

After twenty-five days in Washington, DC and a brief visit to Baltimore, Maryland, the embassy arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 9 June 1860. The 'City of Brotherly Love' welcomed the Japanese with a military display and crowds of onlookers, 'among which the colored race, the females and small boys largely predominate[d]'.⁶⁹ Metropolitan newspapers reported, however, that uncouth Philadelphians shouted racial slurs at the embassy.⁷⁰ The presence and performance of the Japanese as civilized gentlemen threatened America's internal racial hierarchies, and as this threat escalated, the metropolitan press—and, according to its articles, the American people—merged the neutral term 'Jap' with slurs related to blackness, such as 'nayger Jap'.⁷¹ Racial slurs reportedly used upon the reception of the Japanese in Philadelphia attempted to demean the Japanese men once seen as equal members of 'civilization'. The public abuse of the Japanese and their reclassified racial status—now as non-whites, rather than '[possessing] so many elements of the Anglo Saxon mind'⁷²—intensified the sympathy and impact of the Japanese visit within the African American press. Outraged that the Japanese, or any men, could be attacked with such vehemence, the African American press reported that 'intelligent American[s]'⁷³ shared a condemnation of this rudeness. This criticism of American vulgarity asserted black membership to two conditions deemed essential to partaking in 'world civilization' and denied to many African Americans: recognition as both an intelligent, capable being, and as a citizen.

Metropolitan publications across the country admonished the ‘hooting and insults’⁷⁴ used to harass the Japanese for their offensive nature and potential consequences for America’s commercial ambitions, and at the same time reprinted the abuse in detail. The metropolitan press no longer mentioned the probationary ‘white’, or at least non-black, status of the Japanese. When the Japanese were ‘white’, they were ‘white niggers’.⁷⁵ When they were ‘yellow’, they were ‘yellow nagurs’.⁷⁶ Racist remarks towards the Japanese relied on slurs invoking blackness. *Douglass’ Monthly* condemned these ‘insults on account of color’⁷⁷ and bitterly remarked that ‘we have, perhaps, on the ground that misery loves company, a little satisfaction in seeing the epithet always insultingly applied to us, extended to persons of such distinction as those who make up this famous Embassy’.⁷⁸ The racial harassment of the Japanese was deemed inappropriate by metropolitan American publications as well, not for its derogatory nature, but for its potential implications for U.S.-Japan commerce and breach of the laws of civilized hospitality. Some articles in the metropolitan press represented those who harassed the Japanese as ‘negroes, rowdies, boys and dirty women’⁷⁹—all non-members of ‘civilization’.

This failure of white civility emerged as a triumph of respectability for all people of colour as the Japanese, ‘intelligent, refined, and talented gentlemen, from a proud and high-minded people’,⁸⁰ comported themselves as superior to the ‘vulgar [roars] of laughter’.⁸¹ A Japanese gentleman described in the *Weekly Anglo-African*, despite the mob’s catcalls, ‘sat upright in the carriage...[his eyes glistening] with intelligent inquiry’.⁸² The embassy member, conscious of his worth as a human being, maintained his dignity under duress and thus exhibited his civilized superiority to the uncivilized masses. The harassment of the Japanese may have resonated with many African Americans, physically and psychologically assaulted for attempts at self-betterment and claims to respectability, yet also, to quote Ira Berlin, ‘condemned [as] hopelessly depraved, indolent, and [criminal]’.⁸³ In the eyes of the African

American press, the Japanese were able to achieve a superior civility—however bittersweet—through the recognition of the fundamental wrongness of those who perpetuated racial prejudice. In criticizing the denigration of the Japanese, African Americans reimagined state encounters to assert their claim to status as equal members of ‘civilization’.

Minstrel productions afforded many urban Americans a ‘Japanese’ experience expunged of threats to societal order.⁸⁴ Performances of men pretending to be Japanese were a commercial confrontation with an increasingly convoluted racial ideology. In his study of blackface minstrelsy, Eric Lott writes that ‘the black mask offered a way to play with collective fears of a degraded and threatening—and male—Other while at the same time maintaining some symbolic control over them’.⁸⁵ The racial implications of the minstrel setting implied that the Japanese, like African Americans, were appropriate objects of ridicule. Public advertisements intimated that the Japanese themselves would attend some of these productions.⁸⁶ These Japanese diplomats were ‘civilized’ enough to merit welcome into the cultural space of the theatre—in a time when some establishments banned African American guests⁸⁷—but not enough to warrant preservation from the cruel eye of the stage. The Japanese did not attend *The Japanese Treaty* and were perhaps even unaware of its existence.⁸⁸ The incorrect affirmation of the presence of the Japanese at this racial spectacle served as a publicity stunt that solidified the embassy as willing participants of their own derision. Unlike the street harassment of the Japanese, these minstrel shows received no criticism in the metropolitan press. Embassy-themed entertainments achieved such success that the show *The Japanese Treaty* continued years after the embassy’s return to Japan, well into the middle of the American Civil War.⁸⁹ African American newspapers did not comment directly on these performances; their opinions on minstrelsy, ‘that pestiferous nuisance’,⁹⁰ required little elaboration.

In writing about Japan and the Japanese, African American newspapers were really writing about American prejudice, American hypocrisy, and American people. By claiming the Japanese as ‘negroes from Japan’, the African American press highlighted the duplicity of the American government and the absurdity of racial prejudice. The deprecation of the Japanese in the metropolitan press reaffirmed to African American and abolitionist editors the injustice of America’s racial intolerance. Newspapers across the country linked negative representations of the Japanese with African Americans by ‘reporting’ the criticism of uneducated African Americans in the form of a joke. These racial jokes followed a similar pattern, invoking images of blackness, connections to slavery, and the condescension of crude African Americans to lower the public’s opinion of the Japanese: ‘Why, dey ain’t nothin’ more’n colored folks, wid their heads shaved...Go to foolin’ round too much, somebody shake ‘em off and sell to Orleans’.⁹¹ Metropolitan publications depicted the Japanese as both ‘colored folks’ undeserving of the state’s elaborate attentions and ‘strangers’⁹² deserving of African American contempt. Some newspapers reprinted ‘A Negro’s Notion About the Color of a Japanese’, mocking the treatment of the Japanese as white equivalents: “‘If de white folks is as dark as dat out dare, I wonder what’s de color ob de niggers’”.⁹³ The civilized behaviour and commercial appeal of the Japanese may have enabled a temporary access to white ‘civilization,’ but the embassy members were represented as neither white, nor black, nor in solidarity with any racial minority. The African American press reprinted these racist jokes to demonstrate both the injustice of these remarks and the legitimate threat of potential solidarity perceived by the metropolitan press.

Through this tactic of double denigration, the metropolitan press belittled all racial minorities. ‘John Chinaman’s’ opinion of the Japanese received extensive reprinting even before the embassy reached Washington, DC.⁹⁴ ‘Chinese merchants’ in San Francisco were reported as having ridiculed Americans entranced by the Japanese, which allowed the joke’s

author to reject the idea that the Japanese could alter America's racial order: "Japanese great men now—Americans want more Treaty—by'n'by Treaty be signed, Japanese like anybody—just like Chinese—just like dam [sic] nigger".⁹⁵ Though the metropolitan press was, on a whole, excited to receive the embassy, snide racial criticism increased as the presence of the Japanese became more of a threat to the established racial hierarchy. Racist humour reassured white audiences of the impossibility of solidarity between America's ostracized and the Japanese, and that the normal racial order would soon return.⁹⁶ In the African American press, reprinted racist jokes targeting the Japanese served a similar purpose as slave auction advertisements and reports of horrendous crimes against African Americans. These unsavoury stories showcased American barbarism to further elicit horror at racial prejudice and the state's mistreatment of its fellow men. The same metropolitan presses that fuelled the frenzy for the Japanese with early descriptions of Japanese gentility and potent masculinity later rejected the 'distinguished strangers'. The political machinations of the metropolitan press pulled the African American and abolitionist press closer to the 'celestial gentlemen'⁹⁷ as the America portrayed in the metropolitan press pushed the Japanese away. This perceived closeness between the African American press and the embassy is evident in the increased frequency of articles about the Japanese, as well as the questioning displayed within the articles themselves:

What other country in the civilized world but this would make the color of the skin the basis of all manner of insult and wrong? What other people than the American people would make the color of a man's skin the subject of contumely and coarse ridicule, no matter what his rank, station, intelligence, or high moral worth?⁹⁸

The Japanese were a lens through which African American editors interpreted their own experiences of racial prejudice and quest for recognition as equal members in the ‘civilized’ world. African American newspapers saw the demeaning of the Japanese as additional proof that America’s perpetuation of slavery and prejudice had plunged the nation further into barbarity. African American newspapers, through their creation of an imagined, transnational relationship of brotherhood, challenged the authority and ideology of the state, ironically with as hierarchical and state-entrenched a group as Tokugawa diplomats.

African American and abolitionist publications employed sarcasm to criticize America’s double-standard of who and when someone was allowed access to ‘whiteness’ and its accompanying privileges of inclusion and power. A correspondent for the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* wrote:

Our surprise was greatly increased by seeing with what distinguished consideration the official representatives of the U.S. Government treated these niggers...hob-nobbing with men, whose complexion, in any Southern State would be *prima facie* evidence they were chattels personal!⁹⁹

These articles feigned outrage at the American government’s welcome and festivities for the ‘swarthy hued individuals whose complexion would have barred against them every entrance into respectable society in the North’.¹⁰⁰ The article claimed the Japanese as African American equivalents, as ‘colored people’,¹⁰¹ and, perhaps sarcastically imitating the racial humour of the metropolitan press, appraised the Japanese as if for the slave market, surmising that certain popular samurai ‘would undoubtedly command a high cash price’.¹⁰² The article then named the illustrious members of ‘civilized’ American society who, despite an assumed

prejudice, '[solicited] the pleasure of the company of the colored people'.¹⁰³ The *Weekly Anglo-African* reprinted a story about a 'young lady who was desirous of making the Japanese Prince a present',¹⁰⁴ but mistakenly presented her bouquet to the wrong embassy member, a man depicted as of less importance than 'the darkey who washes the pavement in front of her father's mansion'.¹⁰⁵ Though meant as a humorous anecdote in its original printing, for the *Weekly Anglo-African*, the girl's inability to physically distinguish a perceived inferior, combined with either her ignorance of or disregard for rules of racial distance, illustrated the unsubstantiated nature of racial prejudice. Whereas hostile depictions of the embassy attempted to racially place the Japanese, the *Weekly Anglo-African* reprinting mocked the entire hierarchical system, conflating servants and princes, black and Japanese. This *Weekly Anglo-African* writer questioned the civility of 'some of our white-faced civilized (?) men',¹⁰⁶ and through them, the legitimacy of a state composed of such fallible frameworks. The reimagining of racist humour targeting the Japanese criticized the state's hypocrisy and imagined a future of racial equality.

The 1860 Japanese embassy did not directly influence racial discourse in Japan, but the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*'s premonition that 'when [the Japanese] go away they will take with them...our equally warm prejudices against the colored people'¹⁰⁷ would manifest itself in the early twentieth century. Yukiko Koshiro writes that 'in an attempt to restore the Japanese power status side by side with the Western (white and capitalistic) nations, the postwar Japanese government quickly restored its dualistic racial identity of being an honorary white nation standing above other people of color'.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, early twentieth-century African Americans celebrated Japan's achievements and sympathized with their struggles.¹⁰⁹

Before the embassy's arrival, African American publications equated the foreign policy of Japan—regularly condemned in the metropolitan press as 'barbarous and intolerable'¹¹⁰—to the 'seclusion' of the American South. Pre-Perry, metropolitan publications often portrayed

Japan as barbaric and in desperate need of Western influence. African American publications, though less hyperbolic in their initial treatment of the Japanese, did not reject or slander the Japanese people. In the African American and abolitionist press, the ‘tyrannical acts’¹¹¹ of Japan served to emphasize the ‘unmitigated despotism’¹¹² of the American South. Japan’s state policies may have been compared to those of the barbaric South, but the Japanese themselves were firmly claimed as gentlemen in their interactions—however imagined—with American people throughout the embassy’s travels. Discussing early nineteenth-century American views of East Asia, Akira Iriye writes that ‘most Americans may never have seen an Asian, much less visited Asia, but they had an image of Asia because they had an image of America’.¹¹³ Rather than tout American ‘civilization’ as the example for the Japanese to follow, articles in the African American press explored their government’s instinctive recognition of the diplomatic shame of slavery. Abolitionist papers equated the Southern masking of African American slavery to the embassy with Japan’s oft-condemned foreign policy: ‘In this respect the policy pursued by the Tycoon has been reversed by our own President. At the moment when the Japanese propose to abandon their exclusiveness and open their country to the world, we as carefully shroud the most interesting part of ours in an impenetrable seclusion’.¹¹⁴ The ‘seclusion’¹¹⁵ of sites of slavery from the Japanese gaze was represented by the African American press as a bittersweet triumph—proof of the uncivilized nature of slavery and the moral depravity of the American state.

The early celebration of the Japanese by white America exemplified a belief often expressed in the African American press, that what white America despised was not the black man, but the black man’s condition.¹¹⁶ The rudeness of Irish immigrants towards the Japanese served as evidence to these publications that the poor treatment of the Japanese was a matter of class, not race, mocking the Irish, those ‘miserable wretches’,¹¹⁷ much in the same way the metropolitan press manufactured ‘negro dialogue’ for comic effect.¹¹⁸ The African American

press blamed not the ‘corrupted hearts’¹¹⁹ of the Irish for the verbal abuse of the Japanese, but America’s wealthy and powerful. The same ‘better classes’¹²⁰ now decorating their homes with Japanese flags had previously, by their own example, instructed new immigrants to the United States in racial prejudice.¹²¹

The African American press, though critical of the nation-wide hypocrisy that valued commerce over colour, also welcomed this potentially liberating flexibility: ‘the bringing of [the Japanese] will...teach poor white men that all this clamor about color is all moonshine—that their rulers associate as freely with colored men as with men of a lighter complexion, provided they have money to spend’.¹²² Wealth and gentility, then, would ultimately overcome colour prejudice: ‘Give [the USA] money, and the roughest of his edges wear off; show him where he can push his trade, and the bitterest of his prejudices vanish in the air—Japan, Soudan, or Dahomey will be all the same to him’.¹²³

V

The members of the 1860 Japanese embassy, without intent or inclination, inspired in the African American and abolitionist press an alternate interpretation of the experience of racial exclusion and oppression within America’s antebellum racial hierarchy. By manifesting non-white membership to the worlds of civilization and respectability that America most sought to deny in its African American citizens, the Japanese, in the eyes of the antebellum African American press, had already triumphed on American soil. The race and dignity of the ambassadors made the Japanese symbols of the human solidarity and respectability to which many diplomatically peripherized African Americans aspired. The African American press rejected the ideology of the white state to promote an imagined brotherhood between minorities whose identities were in part defined by their mutual experience of racial prejudice. Instead of a rivalry between minorities jockeying for a higher position on the

state's hierarchy of whiteness, as perhaps the metropolitan press encouraged through its doubly denigrating racial jokes, the African American press navigated outside the power and interests of the state to define its own relationship with the Japanese.

African American newspapers used the status of the Japanese as gentlemen and equal participants in 'civilization' to criticize the American state as corrupt and concerned more with commercial gain than the ideals of civility and civilization the United States claimed to promote. Public accounts and discussions of the Japanese within the African American press reveal a relationship between those operating both within and outside American hierarchies of race and 'civilization', generating a perceived non-state solidarity ironically enabled by state diplomacy. The 1860 Japanese embassy expands our current understanding of the transnational production of history, culture, and identity, as well as of interracial relations within and across state hierarchies, by giving witness to an imagined solidarity of culture and race occurring outside the framework of diplomacy. This imagined solidarity and production of culture occurred within select factions of the American population and Japanese agents of 'civilization'—educated and 'civilized' state ambassadors—long before initiatives of 'civilization and enlightenment' appeared on Japan's diplomatic agenda, before a Japanese military victory over a white power, and before the diffusion of Western racial hierarchies in Japan.

This new information about the antebellum influence of the Japanese on American cultural discourse presents a new historical framework for exploring the interconnected role of culture, identity, and resistance in the context of state and transnational activity, as well as African American intellectual history and historical production. Further studies of the interpretations and exchanges of and between minority groups would contribute to a greater understanding of the transnational production of culture and identity, especially as a mechanism to subvert state authority. Over the course of the 1860 Japanese embassy, people

considered on the outskirts of American diplomacy generated an imagined solidarity that inspired intellectual inquiry, sympathy, and a perceived brotherhood surpassing seemingly insurmountable borders of language, geography, and culture.

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¹ 'The Japanese', *The Weekly Anglo-African* (WAA), vol. 1, 30 June 1860, p. 2.

² 'Our Correspondence from Philadelphia', WAA, vol. 1, 30 June 1860, p. 3.

³ For the purposes of this research, the term 'African American' will use the following definition, 'an American (esp. a North American) of African origin; a black American'. See 'African American, n. and adj.', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (July 2018). For the difficulties in defining 'Afro-American' and the early origins and different development of African American cultures, see Ira Berlin, 'Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America', *The American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), pp. 44-78.

⁴ A 91-man escort group aboard the *Kanrin Maru*, plus an additional eleven American sailors transported the embassy's gifts and luggage. The *Kanrin Maru* arrived in California two weeks before the U.S.S. *Powhatan*. The escort group, upon receiving word that the ambassadors had arrived safely in DC, left for Japan in May 1860.

⁵ For discussion of the embassy members and selection process, see Masao Miyoshi, *As we saw them: The first Japanese embassy to the United States (1860)*, (Berkeley, CA, 1979), p. 28.

⁶ Masao Miyoshi's *As we saw them* is the most thorough and critical scholarship of the embassy. Nearly all modern English-language studies cite Miyoshi's excellent translations and research. Other works highlight the embassy's reception in the context of U.S.-Japan state relations, Japanese literature, or the personal experiences of the embassy members. See Walter LaFeber, *The clash: A history of U.S.-Japan relations* (New York, NY, 2007); W. G. Beasley, *Japan encounters the barbarian: Japanese travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven, CT, 1995); Donald Keene, *Modern Japanese diaries: The Japanese at home and abroad as revealed through their diaries* (New York, NY, 1998). These notable works excepted, most English-language writings on this embassy reflect a racialized early- and mid-twentieth century celebration of an 'awakened' Japan on the road to progress. For one of many examples, see Chitoshi Yanaga, 'The First Japanese Embassy to the United States,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 9 (1940): pp. 113-138. Japanese scholarship rarely questions the veracity or intent of the American reports of the embassy's visit. Modern Japanese scholarship focuses on the embassy's effect on future intellectual and political leaders, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, upon their return to Japan, as well as the observations of the participants themselves. See Nakazaki Masao, *Fukuzawa Yukichi to shashin'ya no musume* (Osaka, 1996); Hashimoto Susumu, *Kanrin Maru taikai o yuku: San Furanshisuko kōkai no shinsō* (Tokyo, 2010).

⁷ Though not the focus of this study, several of the samurai discussed native, immigrant, and African American people encountered during their travels. For one of many examples, see Muragaki Norimasa, 'Kenbeishi nikki', in *Kengai shisetsu nikki sanshū*, ed. Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai (Tokyo, 1971).

⁸ The Japanese ambassadors were a racial minority within the geographic context of the United States, but not, as can be imagined, in their own country. I here refer to the Japanese as a minority to reflect their status as a racial minority while physically in the United States.

⁹ 'Japanese—The Objects of the Embassy, Etc.', *Wilmington Journal*, 24 May 1860, p. 5.

¹⁰ 'The Japanese Embassy—Their Arrival at Washington, &c., &c.', *The Daily Exchange*, 15 May 1860, p. 4.

¹¹ 'Japan', *The Daily Exchange*, 25 May 1860, p. 4.

¹² Here I am using the phrase 'metropolitan publications' to encompass newspapers, including those with a political and/or commercial focus, published in metropolitan areas in daily and/or weekly form and aimed towards an English-speaking audience, excluding specialty publications targeting specific minority and religious groups, women, or children. Examples of such publications consulted for this study include the *New York Herald*, the *Daily Dispatch*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *Daily Alta California*, and the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, among others. The majority of these metropolitan publications' editors, publishers, and documented contributors were white and male.

¹³ 'The Japanese Embassy in San Francisco—Their Trip—Recapture by the State Authorities—California News—Advices from the Territories, &c.', *The Daily Dispatch*, (*DD*), vol. XVII, 17 Apr 1860, p. 2.

¹⁴ This analysis is based on an earlier study of every surviving issue of every surviving daily newspaper published in the four most populated Southern cities between the months of May and August 1860. Additional issues printed before and after the above range, as well as select leading Northern publications, such as the *New York Times*, were consulted to illuminate the different ways in which Southern and Northern publications rejected the 1860 Japanese embassy. For a full list of periodicals and the complete study of the welcome and subsequent rejection of the 1860 Japanese embassy, see Natalia Doan, 'Samurai and Southern Belles: "Prince Tommy" and Southern Representations of the 1860 Japanese Embassy', (MSc thesis, Oxford, 2015).

¹⁵ ‘The Japanese Embassy in San Francisco—Their Trip—Recapture by the State Authorities—California News—Advices from the Territories, &C’, *DD*, p. 2.

¹⁶ ‘Our Japanese Visitors’, *Harper's Weekly*, vol. IV, Harper & Brothers, 26 May 1860, p. 2.

¹⁷ For more on bodies as encounters, see Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, *Bodies in contact: Rethinking colonial encounters in world history*, (Durham, NC, 2005).

¹⁸ ‘The Japanese,’ WAA.

¹⁹ None of the publications in this study had explicit religious affiliations. African American and abolitionist newspapers frequently invoked religious elements to further condemn racial injustice. For one of many examples, see the reprinted article ‘Conflict between Christianity and Slavery’, *Anti-Slavery Bugle (ASB)*, 12 May 1860, p. 3.

²⁰ Erica L. Ball, *Race in the Atlantic world, 1700-1900: To live an antislavery life: Personal politics and the antebellum black middle class*, (Athens, GA, 2012), p. 16.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

²² Defining African American newspapers and periodicals as those published and/or written by African Americans, as well as those publications with African Americans as their target audience, the African American and abolitionist publications with extant issues published between April and August 1860, the period of highest discussion of the embassy, consist of the following: the *Anglo-African Magazine* (NY), the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (OH), the *Anti-Slavery Tracts* (NY), *Douglass' Monthly* (NY), the *Liberator* (MA), the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (NY), and the *Weekly Anglo-African* (NY).

²³ Articles about the Japanese appeared in Californian newspapers in March upon the arrival of the *Kanrin Maru* and enjoyed heavy reprinting throughout April. Extensive and reprinted commentary regarding the embassy regularly appeared in metropolitan publications through August 1860. The only extant 1860 issues of the *Anglo-African Magazine* are listed as published January through March. However, the 26 May *Weekly Anglo-African* advertised

the recent release of the February issue of the *Anglo-African Magazine*. It can be assumed, then, that the production of the February and March issues of the *Anglo-American Magazine* coincided with the stay of the Japanese embassy. See ‘The Anglo-African Magazine,’ WAA, vol. 1, 26 May 1860, p. 2.

²⁴ Frankie Hutton, *The early black press in America, 1827 to 1860*, (Westport, CN, 1993), p. xv.

²⁵ The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* was funded by the Anti-Slavery Society, a British organization. The other newspapers in this study received funding through donations, often from white abolitionists, and subscriptions. Low subscriber counts and unpaid dues resulted in the closing of many African American publications in the antebellum era. For discussion of the financing and circulation of African American periodicals, see Penelope L. Bullock, *The Afro-American periodical press 1838-1909*, (Baton Rouge, LA, 1981), especially pp. 233-234 and pp. 240-241, for the subscription rates and publication details of some of the newspapers cited in this study.

²⁶ Sean Wilentz, *The rise of American democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*, (New York, NY, 2005), p. 410.

²⁷ References to the ‘African American community’ henceforth refer to free, urban, middle class African Americans. Though the interests and views of African Americans and abolitionists often differed, both types of publications with an overlapping audience interested in racial equality were consulted for this study. Three publications, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (1840-1909), the *African Repository* (1850-1892), and the *New-York Tribune* (1841-1966) were intentionally omitted. The first, although circulated in the United States, was a British publication with no extant 1860 issues. The *African Repository* was a product of the American Colonization Society (ACS) and encouraged the ‘repatriation’ of African Americans into Liberia. The ACS, though its aims appealed to some African Americans, was

based on the assumption that free African Americans could never truly be American citizens. For this reason, despite its target audience of African Americans, the *African Repository* is not comparable to publications that urged the pursuit and promotion of racial equality in America. Similarly, the *New-York Tribune* was the most widely circulated abolitionist newspaper of its day, but it was pro-abolition, not pro-equality. The *Tribune*'s editor, Horace Greeley, received frequent condemnation in African American periodicals and speeches for his 'negro-hate.' See 'Mr. Horace Greeley's Dislikes', *The Liberator*, vol. XXX, 23 Mar 1860, p. 2.

²⁸ 'Prejudice against Color Manifested toward the Japanese Embassy', *Douglass' Monthly*, vol. III, July 1860, p. 304 (16). Also 'Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, on the Bill for the Admission of Kansas as a Free State', *ibid*, p. 302 (14).

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 304 (16).

³⁰ Publications large and small reprinted news from metropolitan publications. African American publications too, as small, though influential organizations, gathered and discussed the news their editors believed most appealing to and necessary for their readers. For a history of early African American publication practices, see Frankie Hutton, *The early black press in America, 1827 to 1860*. Very few articles in the newspapers consulted for this study cited individual or group authorship by name. None of the Japanese-related material, excepting transcribed speeches about the Japanese, cited more than a penname or set of initials. Though it is possible authors feared the repercussions of personal linkage to inflammatory articles, or that the authors—especially for papers such as *Douglass' Monthly*—were the editors themselves, most antebellum newspapers attributed simply initials, a last name, or no name at all to the authorship of their articles. For more details on the journalistic practices of the era, see Ryan Cordell, 'Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers', *American literary history*, 27 (2015), p. 417.

³¹ ‘Japan—Arcadia Realized’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 45, 23 June 1860, p. 4; ‘Japan—Acadia [Sic] Realized’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 42, 2 June 1860, p. 4.

³² See ‘A Japanese Belle’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 4, p. 4; Also, ‘Japanese Clothing’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 42, 9 June 1860, p.4.

³³ ‘A Japanese Belle’, *ASB*.

³⁴ ‘Japan—Acadia [Sic] Realized’, *ASB*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ No direct interaction occurred between the embassy and Frederick Douglass, who had recently returned from Europe. Though no longer under direct suspicion as a potential conspirator in John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, Douglass was in mourning for the death of his ten-year-old daughter. Douglass was highly aware of the Japanese visit, and both reprinted and published articles about the embassy in *Douglass’ Monthly*.

³⁹ Masao Miyoshi discusses the homogeneity of the embassy’s reactions to non-white people. See Miyoshi, *As we saw them*, pp. 59-64.

⁴⁰ ‘Our Philadelphia Letter’, *WAA*, vol. 1, 30 June 1860, p. 3.

⁴¹ For some of many examples, see ‘The Japanese at New York’, *DD*, vol. XVII, 4 May 1860, p. 1; ‘The Japanese Embassy at Panama’, *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, vol. XIII, 14 May 1860, p. 10.

⁴² ‘The Japanese’, *WAA*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ ‘Our Philadelphia Letter’, *WAA*.

⁴⁵ Bob’n Around, ‘A Letter to My Country Cousin’, *WAA*, 7 July 1860, p. 2. This satirical letter, of unknown authorship, was written from the perspective of a man to his cousin,

describing the New York procession of the embassy. The light tone of the narrator, an avid supporter of the *Weekly Anglo-African*, grows more serious as he discusses the injustices of racial prejudice and the potential positive effects of the ‘complexional sympathy’ of the Japanese on the American people.

⁴⁶ The Japanese observed African Americans employed in a serving capacity at hotels and at musical performances, but these were distanced encounters not designed to encourage communication. No African Americans were diplomatically introduced to the Japanese.

⁴⁷ For discussions of intentionalized distance, see ‘Imperfection of the Japanese Programme’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 45, 30 June 1860, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Charles Sumner criticized the ‘character of slavery as a pretended form of civilization’ in his notable attack on slavery. ‘Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, on the Bill for the Admission of Kansas as a Free State’, *Douglass' Monthly*, vol. III, July 1860, pp. 290 (2)-304 (16).

⁵⁰ ‘Imperfection of the Japanese Programme’, *ASB*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² ‘Plan for Opening Japan’, *National Era*, vol. V, 18 Sep 1851, p. 152 (4).

⁵³ ‘Original Communications’, *Freedom's Journal*, vol. II, 5 Dec 1828, p. 130 (2).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ ‘Mourning’, *Freedom's Journal*, vol. II, 2 Jan 1829, p. 314 (6).

⁵⁶ M.R.D., ‘Southern Customs - Madame Chevalier’, *The North Star*, vol. II, 22 June 1849, p. 2.

⁵⁷ The mentions of Japan in connection to barbarism were reprints of political speeches and current events articles from other newspapers. See *ibid.*

⁵⁸ E. B., ‘Glasgow, Scot., May 28, 1852’, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, vol. V, 24 June 1852, p. 3.

⁵⁹ ‘Anti-Slavery Convention at Lockport’, *The North Star*, vol. IV, 3 Apr 1851, p. 2.

⁶⁰ ‘Going Further to Fare Worse’, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, vol. V, 11 Mar 1852, p. 3.

⁶¹ The United States had engaged in commerce with Haiti, but did not diplomatically recognize the country until 1862. For a history of U.S.-Haiti relations, see Philippe R. Girard, ‘Haiti and the Early United States’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, (Dec 2015)

<<http://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-256>>.

⁶² Jürgen Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world: A global history of the nineteenth century*, (Princeton, NJ, 2014), p. 845. For discussion of the colonization movement, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves without masters: The free negro in the antebellum south*, (New York, NY, 1974); James Oliver Horton, *Free people of color: Inside the African American community*, (Washington, DC, 1993); For opinions on colonization in some of the newspapers above, see Bernell E. Tripp, ‘Like Father, Like Son: The Antislavery Legacy of William Hamilton’, *Seeking a voice: images of race and gender in the 19th century press*, ed. by David B. Sachsman et al., (West Lafayette, IN, 2009), pp. 87-96.

⁶³ ‘Going Further to Fare Worse’, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*.

⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson used the phrase ‘imagined community’ to define the nation as ‘an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.’ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, Rev. edition, (London, 2006), p. 5. The interactions between African Americans and the Japanese were neither communal, in the sense of both sides participating, or political—rather, they subverted U.S. state policies. For these reasons, I term these interracial interpretations as those of ‘imagined solidarity’ rather than as part of an ‘imagined community’.

⁶⁵ 'The Japanese at Philadelphia', *New York Times (NYT)*, vol. II, 11 June 1860, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ This representation dramatically differed from earlier representations of the Chinese in metropolitan publications, which emphasized the dissimilarities between the Japanese and 'all the races of Asia'. See 'The Japanese Embassy in San Francisco', *DD*, 17 Apr 1860, p. 2. As the metropolitan press perceived the embassy members' threat to America's racial hierarchy, assertions of Japanese difference from the Chinese decreased.

⁶⁸ 'The Japanese', *WAA*.

⁶⁹ 'The Japanese at Philadelphia', *NYT*.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Several articles reprinted reports of members of the crowd comparing the Japanese to monkeys. See 'Movements of the Japanese', *Harper's Weekly*, 23 June 1860, p. 391 (7). Also 'The Japanese in New York', *New York Herald*, 15 June 1860, p. 2. It is, of course, possible that these reports of racial rejection were manufactured. It is equally possible that this rejection *did* occur, but went unnoticed by the Japanese. The Japanese were in the carriages for the duration of the parade and very few of the embassy members had any proficiency in the English language.

⁷¹ Kinahan Cornwallis, 'Paddy's Ode to the Prince', *Vanity Fair*, vol. 2, 1860, p. 126.

⁷² 'The Japanese Embassy', *Louisville Daily Journal (LDJ)*, vol. XXX, 1 May 1860, p. 4.

⁷³ 'The Japanese', *WAA*.

⁷⁴ Discussing the comparative treatment of the Japanese in various cities, see 'The Japanese in New York', *New York Herald*, 15 June 1860.

⁷⁵ Ibid. This term was also used to offensively describe Irish immigrants. See Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American under fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the politics of citizenship during the Civil War era*, (Ithaca, NY, 2009), p. 19.

⁷⁶ This racist remark was reprinted in an abolitionist publication. See M., 'Our Philadelphia Correspondence', *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, vol. XXI, American Anti-Slavery Society, 23 June 1860, p. 3.

⁷⁷ 'Prejudice against Color Manifested toward the Japanese Embassy', *Douglass' Monthly*, July 1860, p. 304 (16).

⁷⁸ Ibid. This article, while reporting outrage at the treatment of the Japanese, described the embassy members as 'unsophisticated' and 'simple children of the sun'. It is perhaps possible that these descriptions reflect the importance of religion—'Christianity over Idolatry [and] American civilization over heathenism'—to the African American press and the concerns that many Americans had about the embassy members not being Christian. For the importance of religion and the church to nineteenth-century African Americans, see Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *Exodus! : Religion, race, and nation in early nineteenth-century black America*, (Chicago, IL, 2000), pp. 19-21. However, considering the later defence of the Japanese in *Douglass' Monthly*, as well as the life work of Douglass himself, I do not believe that Douglass or the author of this article actually believed the Japanese to be 'children' or 'unsophisticated'. This article begins from the perspective of those discriminated against based on colour. When describing the parade, the author adopts the rhetoric of an American perpetrator of racial intolerance, describing 'our incivility' and declaring that 'we hate niggers...[and] we pour contempt upon all the dark races of men'. At the end of the article, the author returns to the 'us' who, like the embassy, experiences racial prejudice.

⁷⁹ 'The Japanese at Philadelphia', *NYT*.

⁸⁰ 'The Japanese', *WAA*.

⁸¹ Bob'n Around, 'A Letter to My Country Cousin'.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, p. 369.

⁸⁴ Eileen Southern defined blackface minstrel shows, also known as ‘Ethiopian minstrelsy’, as a type of entertainment that ‘[emerged] during the 1820s and reached its zenith during the years 1840s-1880s. The first half of the period was dominated by whites, who blackened their faces with burnt cork and took to the stage to impersonate the rural slave and his free urban counterpart’. I describe these productions as ‘minstrel shows’ instead of ‘blackface minstrelsy’ since it is unclear whether the actors in these performances donned blackface in their representation of the Japanese. See Eileen Southern, ‘Black Musicians and Early Ethiopian Minstrelsy’, *Inside the minstrel mask: Readings in nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean et al., (Hanover, NH, 1996), p. 43.

⁸⁵ Eric Lott, ‘Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture’, *Inside the minstrel mask*, p. 13.

⁸⁶ ‘George Christy’s Minstrels—Niblo’s Saloon, the Coolest Salon in the City’, *New York Herald*, 20 June 1860, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Many minstrel theatres allowed African Americans into less desirable sections of the theatre. See ‘Japanese Treaty’, Christy’s Minstrels, Playbill, 25 July 1860, American minstrel show collection, 1823-1947, MS Thr 1556 (1322), Christy Minstrels in Philadelphia, Playbills, 1859-1863, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, seq. 1. Other antebellum performances banned African American guests entirely. See Morris Bros., Pell & Trowridge’s Minstrels, ‘Programme for This Evening’, Playbill, J. E. Farwell & Co, 1859, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, seq. 1.

⁸⁸ Considering the celebrity of the embassy, it would have been nearly impossible for one of the samurai to observe this performance undetected, undisturbed, or unmentioned. It is equally unlikely that American officials tasked with ensuring the Japanese returned to their country with a high opinion of America and its people, would have exposed the embassy to

such entertainment, especially when hundreds of artists, businessmen, and politicians regularly beseeched the Japanese to visit their reputable establishments, and were denied.

⁸⁹ ‘Immense Hit or The Treaty with Japan’, Christy’s Minstrels, Playbill, 12 Nov 1862, American minstrel show collection, 1823-1947. MS Thr 556 (319), Christy Minstrels in New York City at various theatres, Playbills, 1859-1866 and undated, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, seq. 1.

⁹⁰ ‘Frederick Douglass in Newcastle-on-Tyne’, *Douglass’ Monthly*, vol. II, Apr 1860, p. 6.

⁹¹ *LDJ*, vol. XXX, Prentice, Henderson, & Osborne, 18 June 1860, p. 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ ‘A Negro’s Notion of the Japanese’, *Lewistown Gazette*, 7 June 1860, p. 2.

⁹⁴ See ‘John Chinaman’s View of Treaties’, *DD*, vol. XVII, 2 May 1860, p. 1.; Also ‘Japanese’, *The Daily Exchange*, vol. V, 1 May 1860, p. 1.

⁹⁵ *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 39, 12 May 1860, p. 1.

⁹⁶ For examples, see *LDJ*, vol. XXX, 18 June 1860, p. 4; ‘A Negroe’s [Sic] Opinion of the Japanese’, *ASB*, 9 Jun 1860, p. 3; Also, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 44, 16 June 1860, p. 1.

⁹⁷ ‘The Japanese’, *WAA*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ ‘Editorial Notes’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 44, 16 June 1860, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ ‘A Bit of Satire’, *ASB*, vol. 15, no. 50, 28 July 1860, p. 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Banneker, ‘Our Philadelphia Letter’, *WAA*. Many of the embassy members were mistakenly referred to as ‘princes’ by the American press. See ‘About the Strangers’, *NYT*, 18 May 1860, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ 'A Bit of Satire', *ASB*.

¹⁰⁸ Koshiro, p. 197.

¹⁰⁹ For early twentieth-century black internationalism, see Marc S. Gallicchio, *The African American encounter with Japan and China: Black internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).

¹¹⁰ 'The American Expedition to Japan', *The Republic*, 21 May 1852, p. 1.

¹¹¹ 'Doings in South Carolina. The Hair-Brained Fools of South Calhounia', *The North Star*, vol. II, 12 Oct 1849, p. 2.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Iriye, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ 'Imperfection of the Japanese Programme', *ASB*.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ For the interplay of race, class, and self-improvement in the lives of antebellum African Americans, see Clarence E. Walker, 'The American Negro as Historical Outsider, 1836-1935', *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 17 (1986), pp. 137-154.

¹¹⁷ Bob'n Around, 'A Letter to My Country Cousin'.

¹¹⁸ For the relationship between African Americans and Irish immigrants, see Samito, *Becoming American under fire*, pp. 18-22.

¹¹⁹ Bob'n Around, 'A Letter to My Country Cousin'.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Not all African American and abolitionist publications expressed anti-Irish sentiment. The *Anti-Slavery Tracts*, for example, urged solidarity with and compassion for Irish immigrants. See Daniel O'Connell and Theobald Mathew, 'Address from the People of Ireland, to Their

Countrymen and Countrywomen in America!’ *Anti-Slavery Tracts No.5: Daniel O’Connell upon American Slavery: with Other Irish Testimonies*, American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860, p. 38.

¹²² ‘The Japanese’, WAA.

¹²³ Ibid.

