

Excerpted from Gerald Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown: African Americans and the British Empire Fight the U.S. before Emancipation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

The British, Africans, and Indigenes versus the U.S.

In mid-January 1819 Lord Castlereagh demanded that the U.S. minister, Richard Rush, make an “immediate” dash to his London abode, where Britain’s top diplomat was enduring a bout of gout. Rush was ushered into a dressing room where the man celebrated for bringing Napoleon to accountability was propped up on a couch. Yet the chilliness of that winter day may have been exceeded by the frostiness of Lord Castlereagh’s words as he upbraided Rush about the death of two British subjects in Florida. This was in the context of a war that, unbeknownst to the two men, came to be known as the “first” Seminole war (two more were to follow). In this conflict London was perceived by the republic as continuing its 1812 war strategy of stirring up Africans and indigenes against the U.S. Rush did not back down as he charged one of these slain subjects for being “patron of the Indians, penman of their petitions, the spokesman at their council,” which was not far from the truth. Rush contended that the two men were “taken in the field, fighting on their side,” meaning indigenes, “against the forces of the United States.”

Unfazed, Lord Castlereagh advanced, reminding Rush that the dual executions were “exciting strong sensibility” in Britain. Rush did not have to be reminded of this, for he saw that “out of doors, excitement seemed to rise higher and higher. Stocks experienced a slight fall, under an apprehension of war with the United States.” The British press was in a frenzy and directed much of its fire toward Andrew Jackson: “He was exhibited in placards through the streets of London. The journals, without any distinction of party, swelled the general chorus.” Subsequently, Lord Castlereagh stressed to Rush that a “war might have been produced on this occasion, *if the ministry had but held up a finger*. On so slender a thread do public affairs sometimes hang!”

As inflamed mobs called for Jackson’s head, U.S. and British diplomats were embroiled in increasingly contentious debates about slavery and com-

penetration for slaveholders, the arguments being so heated that Russia had to play an ever larger role in arbitration. But there was a rudimentary conflict of competing outlooks as Washington “did not consider the original capturing of the slaves, under whatever circumstances, justified by the ordinary usage of war. The British plenipotentiaries,” he added drily, “did not accede to this doctrine.” Before his January conversations with Lord Castlereagh, Rush had taken the time to confer—extraordinarily, in retrospect, given the tender passions in the Slave South—with William Wilberforce, the epitome of rising abolitionism, whose realized goal could involve tremendous losses for slaveholders. Rush recognized that his interlocutor’s “parliamentary labours and those of his pen, had probably been more diffused over the United States than any other country out[side] of England,” testament to the utter dependence of abolitionism on the west bank of the Atlantic on its mightier counterpart in London.¹

As it turns out, Rush’s dialogues with Lord Castlereagh and Wilberforce might have been a classic rendition of a sly “good cop-bad cop” interrogation, for London had shown that it could reach deep into the U.S. heartland, enlist Africans and indigenes against the government, plunder the capital, and potentially block the republic’s expansion, which was in the process of devouring Florida: the reformist Wilberforce could afford to be charming in such a context, just as Lord Castlereagh, holding more than one trump card, could afford to avoid tact. With the capital reduced to ruin, Washington knew that severe adjustments were required. Moving toward a regular army was a response²—though following Wilberforce was not yet in the cards. For shortly after Londoners were clamoring in the streets against the misdeeds of General Jackson, legislators in Kentucky petitioned Congress urging the solons to take a sterner view of Canada’s warm reception of runaways and demanding direct negotiations with London on this fraught front. A few years later Secretary of State Henry Clay proposed various arrangements to the British on this matter, but was met with a cold shoulder.³

The same year as the Rush-Castlereagh *tete-a-tete*, Tennessee slaveholders seeking to have their human property returned from Canada were flatly refused. Increasingly in Canada, Africans were closer to equality than they were south of the border and were accorded full “citizenship” rights after a three-year residency, whereas the U.S. lagged far behind until after a bloody civil war. The Detroit River was coming to be seen as the “River Jordan” and, as one scholar put it, “white Canadians on the whole did not seem to evince the same degree of racial animosity toward blacks as did many white Americans.”⁴

British travelers continued pouring into the U.S., departing with ever more bitter appraisals of the republic, further complicating already fraught bilateral relations.⁵ Tart opinions of the republic were congruent with the growing abolitionism in London.⁶ Slavery was “truly appalling,” sniffed one Londoner, reflecting a growing consensus within the Empire.⁷ Flaying the republic, particularly concerning the impact of slavery on sexual mores,⁸ was becoming a national sport⁹ within the Empire.¹⁰

Canada was key to London’s position in North America, where a strategy of alliances with Africans—and to an extent indigenes—was employed as a means to contain the U.S. A self-described “British Traveler” explained this doctrine in 1816: it was “impossible for the Americans to guard against predatory incursions,” “even New York is not impregnable,” he boasted. Thus, if London held Canada “in a proper military condition, “no state in the Union could be secure from an irruption from thence into its very interior, if occasion required.” It was “now a fact well understood that the friendship of the Indians to this country, when engaged in American war, is of the most decided advantage,” and it made good sense for London to resist “American policy” that was “directed toward the total extermination of the Indians.” Hence, in addition to allying with indigenes, London must accelerate an entente with “fugitive Negroes, who absconded from the plantations in the Delaware and Chesapeake and who are now in Nova Scotia as British free subjects.” “[H]ire them as overseers,” he suggested. Their liberties being duly guaranteed, they would no doubt readily embrace London.¹¹

Despite the admonitions of these sojourners, many Britons were voting with their feet, hopping on board vessels heading westward with ever increasing enthusiasm. London’s Manhattan-based consul was told by the Foreign Office in late 1816 about an increase in the “number of British subjects migrating” to the U.S. He sought to redirect them to Canada,¹² with mild success at best. This was “Evil,” said Britain’s consul in Boston. In November 1818 he reported that “several vessels” had just landed in Massachusetts with “hundreds of passengers.” He added that “passengers appear to have been deceived as to the real destination,” for “mutinous passengers” had “threatened to murder the Captain, confine him to his cabin,” then “compelled the crew to steer for the United States”—even though Quebec was supposedly the destination. This was the result of a “secret understanding between the charterer and the passengers that the latter should mutiny at sea and take her by force into the United States.”¹³

But London’s desire to conciliate indigenes and appeal to Africans made it more problematic for these potential Canadians to obtain huge swathes

of land, stocked with Africans to do most of the hard labor. This probably caused London to push the abolitionist agenda even harder, making the best of a problematic situation. Moreover, with people constant departing from British ports, it became even more essential for the British Empire to effect an entente with Africans, particularly those in the backyard of their growing rival, the U.S. This sheds further light on the “Negro Fort.” In this context, British abolitionism made good moral and strategic sense. Opposition to the African Slave Trade, which the U.S. supposedly abjured, would deprive this rival of increased manpower.¹⁴

Euro-Americans did not accept this London critique lightly, as they had their own sharp differences with British policy.¹⁵ A fiery militancy¹⁶ had developed in the U.S. South particularly, borne not least by the violence needed to repel redcoats, subdue indigenes, and enslave Africans. As the sensitive Ghent negotiations were reaching their climax, for example, representatives of the Mississippi Territory—where these attitudes were in the ascendant—spoke bluntly of their “lively indignation” at the “haughty propositions made by the Ministers of the British government.”¹⁷ What was upsetting the Mississippians, in a sense, was infuriating others in the republic, for it was precisely at Ghent that Washington’s delegates expressed indignation at London “exciting a portion of the population of the United States, under the promise of military employment or of free settlement in the West Indies, to treachery and rebellion.” This rebuke was signed by John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Albert Gallatin in a remarkable display of cross-sectional unity.¹⁸

Yet this fury could not mask the weaknesses of the republic. For the leakage of enslaved Africans was not only northward to Canada: as the Rush-Castlereagh confrontation suggested, they were also fleeing southward. The British had primed the pump by deluging Africans along the Gulf Coast with handbills, offering them land in the West Indies when the fighting ended, and guaranteeing their freedom besides. Further, they trained and armed hundreds of indigenes and Africans for confrontation with U.S. forces,¹⁹ a point of pride among some Londoners.²⁰

Those known as the Seminoles of Florida represented the zenith of Negro-Indian cooperation, though they were hardly unique. For some time there had been a fluidity of identity between these two groups, some identifying as one or another, depending on the circumstances. Besides, persons of African descent at times acted generally as go-betweens and interpreters on behalf of indigenes in their dealings with others.²¹ The Seminoles also represented a high point in indigene collaboration with the British. In 1819, delegations were arriving in the Bahamas from Florida,²² as hostilities with U.S.

forces accelerated.²³ The leader of the Creek Nation, “Frances Hillishago,” had also been to London to lobby for restoration of lands thought to have been restored by Ghent. Spanish garrisons also had an interest in supporting indigenes against rampages by Euro-Americans.²⁴

The fabled “Negro Fort” was equipped on the Apalachicola River near Pensacola by the British during the 1812 war and rapidly was garrisoned by runaways,²⁵ aided by indigenes. This encampment was both a magnet for runaways and a suspected base for depredations against U.S. soil. It was thought that cities as far afield as Savannah were affected, and Pensacola, General Jackson was told, was “defenceless” and remained in “constant dread.”²⁶ Its sprawling presence was a magnet for various dissidents.²⁷

Located enticingly a mere 25 miles from the Gulf Coast, the fort²⁸ was well designed and strongly constructed, with a parapet about 25 feet high and 18 feet thick. On a high bluff, it had a riverlike moat in front and a large creek just below, a swamp in the rear and a small creek just above, which rendered it difficult—though not impossible—to attack.²⁹ It was the militant General Jackson who argued forcefully that the Negro Fort, erected near the junction of the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers, was being strengthened by London and that it represented a clear and present danger to Euro-American settlement.³⁰

The fort was a magnet for dissident Africans³¹—but many runaways fled further south to the Bahamas,³² some making it to Cuba where the Spanish also saw an advantage to winning over refugees from the Slave South.³³ The republic had to consider that unless they subdued Spain in Florida—minimally—the chances of their being crushed by Britain and these European powers’ African allies would increase. Distressing to the republicans in this context was that during the war the Royal Marines had raised three companies of Africans recruited from the ranks of runaways and slaves liberated in Pensacola. Also part of this equation were residents of indigenous Creek and Seminole nations, both known to have Africans within their ranks.³⁴ Jackson’s attack on Pensacola was seen not only as a prelude to the battle of New Orleans but also as a precondition, given the strength amassed there by the British.³⁵

Weeks after the formal end of the 1812 war, Madrid’s emissaries visited the Negro Fort and offered amnesty to 128 Africans there. But only 12 of the 250 there accepted, suggesting that force would be needed to evict them all.³⁶ “The Spanish Minister, De Onis, has a number of agents in this country,” said Thomas Sidney Jessup in August 1816, who were “organizing a revolution.”³⁷ He could have added that Spain contemplated fomenting a slave revolt in

the U.S. South to distract the republic's attention and impede its advance to Florida.³⁸ Surely, when James Monroe formulated his famed doctrine, it may have occurred to him that it had utility in hampering the ability of Europeans to catalyze revolts by the enslaved in North America.³⁹

British military leader George Woodbine, a man of European origin who had roots in Jamaica, took a direct role in drilling armed indigenes and Africans with the objective of merging what was occurring in Florida with the general wave of unrest that was then sweeping through Latin America. Major General Edmund Gaines of the U.S. forces complained that the "notorious Woodbine" was again at the "mouth of the Apalachicola," and had "an agent now among the Seminole Indians and Negroes in that quarter stirring them up to acts of hostility against this country."⁴⁰

At the Negro Fort⁴¹ were hundreds of Africans and some indigenes, notably Choctaws,⁴² buoyed by London which in turn was being pushed by abolitionists.⁴³

The (former) U.S. Negroes among them had settled along the river and were reported to have corn fields extending nearly fifty miles along it. A number of them were in active collaboration with the Seminoles.⁴⁴ They had cattle and corn and the means of subsistence. They also harvested potatoes, peas, beans, and rice and had neat gardens with plenty of fruit and vegetables.⁴⁵ Official Washington was vehement in its denunciation⁴⁶ of this setup.⁴⁷ British officials were accused of causing the desertion of enslaved Africans⁴⁸ from their misery.⁴⁹

In the summer of 1816 a contingent of U.S. troops detonated an awful explosion at the fort; the scene was "horrible without description," said one observer, as hundreds of indigenes and Africans perished. Also destroyed was an impressive cache of "three thousand stand of arms, from five to six hundred barrels of powder and a great quantity of fixed ammunition, shot[s], shells." A number of the Africans escaped at the last second to a nearby Seminole camp, living to fight again.⁵⁰

As Washington saw it, key to British plans in Florida were Robert Armbrister, son of a Carolina Tory, who had become a leading figure in the Bahamas, and Alexander Arbuthnot, who also hailed from this archipelago, which was emerging as a beachhead against the further expansion of the expanding U.S. In 1818 they were executed at the behest of Andrew Jackson.⁵¹ Reflecting the discontent in the streets of London about their death, Congress furiously debated these events.⁵²

Powerful U.S. slave traders in the Gulf region knew about Arbuthnot's activism. Early in 1817 he inquired on behalf of indigenes as to why Euro-

American settlers were descending into the Ochlockonee River basin and the southern reaches of the Chattahoochee River, and driving poor indigenes from their land. Taking the role of a tribune, he questioned what he saw as the inertia and passivity of London's delegate in the U.S. in the face of this encroachment.⁵³ He informed this diplomat directly of his scorn for the wanton aggression of Euro-Americans against the Creek Nation in particular.⁵⁴ He made no secret of his representation of this nation and requested that other British officials lay their complaints before His Majesty's government.⁵⁵ Then moving on to the territory of the Creek Nation, he denounced the fact that Euro-Americans were flocking to this land, provoking the indigenes into a violent response.⁵⁶ A few months later he was warning of the impending arrival of General Jackson, who, he said, wanted to destroy the African population of northern Florida.⁵⁷

Jackson saw things differently, informing the ostensible Spanish overlords of this region that the U.S. South was being exposed to attack from Florida by the Creek Nation and disgruntled Africans, who had fled enslavement. This provided justification for violation of the territorial integrity of what was to become an important state in the republic.⁵⁸ Arbuthnot objected vigorously.⁵⁹

Washington's suspicions about him would have been confirmed if they had been able to read his letters to Charles Cameron, governor of the Bahamas. In fact, said Arbuthnot, "Bowlegs, chief of the Sahwahnee," had "rendered equally essential services as any of the other chiefs to the British cause, while at war with America and was at New Orleans with a part of his warriors."⁶⁰ Indicative of the esteem in which he was held was the fact that Arbuthnot was granted "power of attorney" by ten indigenous leaders.⁶¹ Leaders of the Creek Nation, in response, petitioned the Bahamas about their "heavy complaints" against Washington.⁶²

Finally, Washington had had enough. When Arbuthnot was given a perfunctory trial—before his prompt execution—a chief prosecution witness threw gasoline on the already raging flames by stating that the defendant "appeared to be a person vested with authority among the Negro leaders and gave orders for their preparation for war, providing ammunition" and "that the leaders came to him for orders."⁶³ That these British subjects owed no allegiance to the U.S. and were on Spanish soil besides was viewed as an irrelevant detail, when the moment arrived to suppress them.⁶⁴ As for Armbrister, the Washington writer accused him of the ultimate sin: being pro-African. "In addition," he charged, seemingly stunned, "[Armbrister] commanded a corps of Negroes in person."⁶⁵ Few tears were shed in Washington⁶⁶ when he was executed peremptorily.⁶⁷

The 1812 war had flowed almost seamlessly into what came to be called the First Seminole War, suggesting to Washington that London⁶⁸ saw signing peace treaties as a simple tactic to keep a foe off balance,⁶⁹ while war was grinding on.⁷⁰ When Jackson descended on Florida in 1817 it was Spanish territory, though Washington's desire for this territory was an open secret. Florida had retained its status as a refuge for runaways and ending this status was one of his main goals—though Washington knew that London would not view with equanimity the U.S. creeping ever closer to the Bahamas and their colonies in the Caribbean. This realization contributed to Jackson's accusation that Armbrister, in particular, was the actual commander of the African and indigenous resistance in Florida.⁷¹ That this dustup ended with Florida becoming U.S. territory a few years after the destruction of the Negro Fort was indicative of how muscular foreign policy had not withered with the 1814 sacking of Washington, and that protecting African enslavement was a driving force behind that policy.⁷²

In early 1818 John C. Calhoun, whose hawkish views had helped to drive conflict with London, Africans, and indigenes alike, was informed about the peril presented by armed Negroes assembled near Amelia Island, off the coast of northeast Florida. But even more dangerous was the rumor that a regiment of Africans was about to be discharged in Jamaica and was to move to Tampa Bay.⁷³ Such dangerous possibilities had not eluded General Jackson's attention either.⁷⁴ Calhoun, who was named after an uncle murdered by loyalists in 1781, required little prodding when it came to confronting London and proceeded according to this script.⁷⁵

Returning the disfavor, the Foreign Office derisively referred to John Quincy Adams as “the Animal” who “bit” when “he thought he could do it with most effect.” Consul James Buchanan complained in 1818 about the “steady hostility that pervades” Washington's approach to his nation—and he was not exaggerating. There was “commercial warfare,” often a prelude to the military variety.⁷⁶

In this overheated context, London held certain advantages, not least its relations with Africans, including their preeminent representative in Hispaniola, which was not far distant from the prize that was Cuba. Wilberforce's close comrade in the abolitionist trenches, Thomas Clarkson, was in close touch with the U.S. Negro, Prince Saunders, who was a key figure in the attempt to expatriate many of his compatriots in Haiti. Clarkson suggested that he also consider establishment of “an *independent colony*, to the farthest limits of the United States,” or “sending them away thither to live by themselves but as *subjects of the United States* and to be *represented on the*

floor of Congress.” For, he stressed further subversively, the U.S. “is as *much their country* as it is that of any *white man whatever.*” But perhaps sensing the immediate impossibility of that which he proposed, he conceded that as a homeland “I should greatly prefer Haiti to Africa.” But he remained suspicious of the “real motive for sending the free people of colour out of the United States at all,” which then was the essence of the expatriation movement.⁷⁷ Saunders signaled where his allegiances rested when in 1816 he outlined his plans for expatriation in London, not New York or Philadelphia, and openly identified himself as an “agent” of Haiti. “O happy England!” he effused. “To thee most appropriately belong the exalted appellations of protectress of the Christian world; the stronghold of rational freedom; the liberatress as well as the genuine asylum for oppressed humanity.”⁷⁸

Clarkson’s counsel was heeded. The president of Haiti, Jean Pierre Boyer, welcomed U.S. Negroes “who are compelled to leave the country” since, “far from enjoying the rights of freemen, they have an existence, precarious and full of humiliation.” This, he said movingly, “entitles you to the gratitude of the Haytiens who cannot see with indifference the calamities which afflict their brethren.”⁷⁹ He also sought to aid those trapped behind enemy lines in North America. Reaching out to Charles Collins in New York, he directed his “Secretary of State to the Republic to send you fifty thousand weight of coffee, begging you to sell this commodity and after having realized the proceeds, to keep them on account of the Haytien government. This fund,” he said generously, “and others which shall be added to it, are destined to facilitate the emigration of such individuals of the African race, who, groaning in the United States, under the weight of prejudice and misery, should be disposed to come to Hayti.”⁸⁰ Bringing thousands of U.S. Negroes to Hispaniola—which is precisely what occurred—was not trivial in light of their brooding resentment of the U.S. and their new home’s impressive military traditions.

That Boyer’s interest was not merely abstract was revealed when he dispatched an agent to Philadelphia to stir interest in expatriation. This man, identified as “Citizen J. Granville,” told those assembled that he was well aware of the “several hundred thousand individuals of African blood, who on account of the dark hue of their complexions, are objects of all the prejudice and prepossession that can arise from difference of colour.” He lamented the “wretched existence” of “these unhappy victims of prejudice.”⁸¹ Tellingly, between 1820 and 1860 about 20 percent of the free Negro population of the U.S. exiled themselves from this nation (though most arrived in Canada).⁸²

The U.S., battered ferociously by the British only recently, could hardly ignore the enmity of Haiti, a fellow republic it adamantly refused to recog-

nize. Already British guns were pointed at the U.S. from the north in Canada, the east in Bermuda, and the south in the Bahamas, while the Caribbean Sea appeared to be a lake of London. Adding Hispaniola to this mix was not helpful, but acknowledging a nation that was born in a revolt against slavery was a bridge too far to cross at that time. A British traveler suggested the complexities faced by Washington when he visited the region in 1815 and asserted that “the Caribbean Sea is now dabbed all over like a painter’s palette with corsairs of all colours—black from St. Domingo, brown from Cartagena, white from North America and pea-green from the Cape de Verd islands [*sic*].”⁸³

This was the complex backdrop to the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, which if effectuated could have neutralized British intervention in the hemisphere, particularly as this action pertained to abolitionism. In 1826 Congress resounded with debates about the efficacy of participating in a hemispheric confab in Panama. Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina objected, since he saw this gathering as part of an attempt to internationalize the perceived domestic matter of slavery. “On this subject,” he intoned, “we committed an error when we entered into treaties with Great Britain and Colombia for the suppression of the *slave trade*,” which he now claimed had been negated. “Least of all ought we to touch the question of independence of Hayti,” he argued, for newly emerging regimes in the region were “looking to Hayti, even now, with feelings of the strongest confraternity.” This initiative contravened not only U.S. policy, but flagrantly contradicted the U.S. gestalt, its very *Weltanschauung*. Why, he said disbelievingly, “you find men of color at the head of their Armies, in their Legislative Halls and in their Executive Departments.” Hence, “our policy toward Hayti is plain. We never can acknowledge her independence,” and further, the U.S. must “*protest against the independence of Hayti*.”⁸⁴ “If we assent in the Congress of Panama, to a recognition, however qualified,” said the similarly powerful Carolinian, James Hamilton, “it shakes the South to its centre.” As for Haiti, its “independence is not to be tolerated in any form,” he said sneeringly.⁸⁵

In stark contrast, London sent as its top diplomat to Haiti a man of African descent—which, in U.S. eyes, gave the Empire the appearance of being engaged in racial treason or unforgivable opportunism. But for London it was smart politics,⁸⁶ and a bow to its ever increasing abolitionist movement.⁸⁷

It was becoming increasingly difficult for London to rationalize the enslavement of Africans in the Caribbean while bashing Washington on similar grounds, while seeking to appeal to U.S. Negroes. One way out was to mark U.S. slavery as a scandalously horrific thing apart, which is what par-

liamentarian John Gladstone alleged in 1824.⁸⁸ Mr. Gladstone may have been impelled to this conclusion by the unrest that was sweeping Britain's Caribbean possessions, which called into severe question the prevailing system of slavery and was driving London further⁸⁹ toward abolition.⁹⁰

Another tactic was to accede to the staffing difficulties of a far-flung empire by sending men of African descent to sensitive sites. Arriving in Haiti in the 1820s, Charles Mackenzie, a man who would have been defined as a Negro in the U.S., was impressed with the site of his posting. He encountered a "considerable number of emigrants from the United States." He met with about 60 of these expatriates, who had "been liberated from the Southern States by a Society of Quakers." They chose "to tell me freely, as I was an Englishman, all they thought and felt." They were "altogether a healthy set of black men, women and children." "Throughout the island I met with the greatest hospitality," he declared, "partly [due] to the general popularity of my country among them." The "liberality" of London, particularly in the charged realm of abolition, "had endeared it to the Haitians; and there is, I believe, no small portion of them who look up to Britain as the only power that could and would protect them in any difficulty. This impression I found very strong everywhere," he asserted.⁹¹

Haiti was becoming an early Pan-African symbol,⁹² attracting Africans from the hemisphere, virtually all imbued with an abiding hatred for slavery. This created an opportunity for Mackenzie and London, just as it posed a peril for Washington. It was not just free Negroes who were moving to the Caribbean republic, though the crackdown on them in cities like Washington were forcing many to flee.⁹³ As Mackenzie was settling in there, also arriving from Florida were—according to their erstwhile master—"six prime African men, my own slaves, liberated for th[e] express purpose" of sending them to Haiti.⁹⁴

Then in 1825 Loring Lyman of Oneida, New York, journeyed to Haiti. He too visited "several settlements of emigrants" drawn from Africans formerly residing in the U.S., who had been "provided with horses & companions for guides and interpretation by govt. officers." Impressed, he said, "I am treated in the most respectful and friendly manner and furnished with all I need, even money." The reason was evident: "[T]here is an interest taken in the emigration beyond my anticipation," and this warm embrace went beyond Lyman to encompass "the emigrants" who "too receive an attention they had no reason to expect & advantages for settlement far beyond" what they expected. Lyman and the Negro emigrants were received "with the familiarity of an intimate" by Haitian leaders, keen on attracting skilled Africans.

When he visited a local governor, Lyman found him “in his large hall, where he usually receives his guests, reading a pamphlet on the slave trade and Sierra Leone. It furnished the first topic of conversation and was dwelt upon by him with much interest,” a dialogue not designed to reflect positively upon Lyman’s native land. But the New Yorker was heartened to find in Haiti “many who [have] taken an interest in the subject of the slave trade to such a degree as to excite my admiration. I did not anticipate so much and it has been most gratifying to me.” Coming from the colossus of the North, despite his progressive sentiments, Lyman was surprised to find that the leader he was addressing had a “complexion” that was “quite dark and nearly genuine black.” But the impression he made on him was overwhelmingly positive: “I cannot repeat the various expressions of friendship I receive[d].”⁹⁵

Thus, in the contestation between London and Washington, the former was advantaged in that it had positive relations with what amounted to the ultimate “Negro Fort,” that of Hispaniola. Nevertheless, Hispaniola was being augmented regularly by a steady stream of Africans from the U.S. itself. This was weakening the latter nation, which responded by turning a blind eye to the importation of more Africans from the continent and elsewhere. As a result, abolitionist sentiment in London was heightened, thus accelerating what amounted to an irrepressible conflict.