The South's annoyance at the disruption of its agricultural labor force, as occasioned by the exodus, was received with grim satisfaction among northern reformers. Those whose hatred for the proud southern Bourbons burned as brightly as ever and those who suspected that a military victory had been thrown away in the political compromises that resulted from the disputed election of 1876 took comfort in any ill fortune that befell the southern white establishment. Old-time abolitionists, many of whom shared the belief that emancipation, as a war aim, had become the real "Lost Cause," were convinced that these suspicions were correct, particularly as they watched what they called the Confederate Brigadiers in the Democratically controlled Congress try to repeal the "force bills" enacted during the Republican-dominated Reconstruction years. The flight of the blacks in the spring of 1879 was yet another proof to them that the former slaves were victims of a new kind of bondage, if, indeed, they had ever escaped from the old.

Shortly after the close of the Civil War the American Anti-slavery Society terminated its operations, but that did not place these militant reformers in limbo. With the emergence of the Reform League in 1870, personnel from the old group now joined in the movement to aid the American Indians. This new interest did not mean that they had given up their fight in behalf of the Negroes. Such men as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, both of whom devoted a good part of their later years to the plight of the Indians, continued to be remembered first and foremost as abolitionists. Garrison died in 1879; Phillips, five years later;
but to the very end they were faithful to the original crusade, that of the American Negro. It was a fitting conclusion to Garrison's career that in the final months of his life he was active in stirring his followers to espouse the cause of the Exodusters.

Boston, a place where moral nerve ends lay extraordinarily close to the surface, responded quickly to reports of fresh black discontent in the South. When Gov. Thomas Talbot called for a meeting at Faneuil Hall, to be held at noon on April 24, the concerned—both black and white—flocked to that venerable meeting place, ready once more to take up the cudgels in the cause of right. Former political luminaries occupied places of honor on the platform. Nathaniel P. Banks, one of the Civil War's better known "political" generals, was there; so was George S. Boutwell, who had served in Grant's cabinet as secretary of the treasury. Both men formerly had been congressmen and governors of Massachusetts. Banks had retired from Congress only a month earlier, having been defeated after serving nine terms. Boutwell was an out-and-out Republican Radical; Banks was not, but he had come perilously close to being converted.

Boutwell, who was the main speaker at the Faneuil Hall meeting, recalled an earlier occasion in that same building, a September, 1864, gathering called to celebrate recent victories at Atlanta and Mobile Bay. "No one then foresaw or imagined that in less than fifteen years those victories would be followed by the enforced expatriation from their homes, from the scenes of their childhood, from the graves of their ancestors... of those who... gave cups of water to famished heroes by whose toils, sacrifices and suffering the victories were won," he now told an emotionally charged audience.

Banks, whose public career was at an end and who stood on the precipice of a rapid slide into obscurity, must have found solace in the excitement of the moment. The old politician, who had begun his career as a Democrat and who had once shunned the Garrisonian abolitionists, now stood before them, ready to lend a hand to the former slaves. Those who were not in flight, he charged, were victims of southern cruelty and persecution, poor Americans who needed a helping hand in their quest for new and better homes. He praised these unhappy people, saying that they were a strengthening element in society, one that would contribute to any part of the land to which they might go, and he congratulated the old Slave State of Missouri, and St. Louis in particular, for helping them on their way. How could Boston fail to do any less than St. Louis in the good work at hand? he asked the cheering crowd. Warming to the applause, Banks made his final gesture to the veteran abolitionists. It was true, he told them, that the former slaves had been emancipated; but
they were not yet completely free. He suggested that the cause was not dead, the battle not yet decided, and he inferred that he was ready to join the troops in their continuing war on inequality.

He was a little late. Those who heard him might have remembered a time, a quarter of a century earlier, when the Massachusetts congressman had told his colleagues that with regard to slavery, "We will give it the protection it has by covenant." Perhaps some of them had not forgotten that he had opposed Eli Thayer's idea for Free State emigration to Kansas and that he had openly denied any connection with the under­ground railroad. But now it was 1879, and the intervening years had taught the speaker much about the political potency of the abolitionist cause. He assured those who crowded into Faneuil Hall, once more to take up moral arms, that there was nothing wrong with an emigration to Kansas; it was a movement of black Americans who were following a "peculiar American example" of choosing the place in which one preferred to live, of leaving old haunts where conditions had become intolerable.

Members of the audience who represented the hard-core radical group, extremists who consistently had opposed the "soft" treatment accorded to southerners and now feared that, indeed, the South was rising again, took satisfaction in the attacks leveled at the enemy. The atmosphere was reminiscent of the old days when Garrison shot his verbal thunderbolts into the Devil's camp and martyrs sprang full-blown from New England's soil. Although the aging Garrison was not present in the flesh, he was there in spirit. In a letter addressed to the gathering, he called for action. "Let the edict go forth trumpet-tongued," wrote the old agitator, "that there shall be a speedy end put to all this bloody misrule; that no disorgan­izing southern theory of states rights shall defiantly dominate the federal government to the subversion of the Constitution; that millions of loyal colored citizens at the South, now under ban and virtually disfranchised, shall be put in the safe enjoyment of their rights—shall freely vote and be fairly represented just where they are located." Although Garrison publicly thanked individuals who had contributed relief money for those "afflicted colored refugees from southern barbarity and oppression" and personally contributed twenty dollars to the cause, he did not regard flight as the answer to the southern Negro's problem. That would have been to run away from the fight and to have surrendered the ground to the white establishment. Such could never be a Garrisonian solution. A month later, on May 24, the old warrior was dead.

Absent also was John Greenleaf Whittier, whose trenchant pen had found its place in the front line of the abolitionist literary battle. Writing from his home at nearby Danvers, he had asked that his name be added to
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the meeting called “in aid of the colored emigrants from the bulldozed South.” Although he was never to take an active part in the exodus movement, he approved of Governor St. John’s efforts, calling the Kansan a man of whom any nation might be proud and one who deserved “the thanks and commendation of all good and human men.”

Those who were disappointed by the absence of another veteran campaigner, Wendell Phillips, would have their chance to hear him soon. On the evening of June 24 he spoke to some twelve hundred whites and blacks gathered in Boston’s Tremont Temple. As in days of old, he drove the crowd into a frenzy as he taunted the South, criticized a do-nothing Congress, and waved the bloody shirt. “Are the Negroes free? Was there ever a rebellion? Did Lee really drive Grant out of Virginia, and was it Jefferson Davis who pardoned Abraham Lincoln?” he asked. What of the war dead? Had their sacrifices gained anything? Did the American flag really fly over the land between the Lakes and the Gulf, or had the South won? Then, turning to what he regarded as the South’s latest crime against the Negroes, he asserted that in an earlier day, New England had saved Kansas from “a pirate nation conspiring to sell her to shame,” and he asked his listeners if they thought that the sons of such men would be wanting in this similar emergency. No, he answered for them, “We shall save the nation in spite of Washington. The flag does mean liberty, and the half a million men who once carried it to the Gulf still live to see that the Negro shall yet find it so.” It was, as a New York newspaper commented, a speech that rang “with the old eloquence that denounced the murder of [abolitionist Elijah P.] Lovejoy, and demanded the emancipation of the blacks long before the North had begun to dream that emancipation was possible.”

The northeastern press picked up the excitement generated by the emotional scenes at Boston, and it whipped righteous indignation into firm resolves that the flight must go on until total emancipation was achieved. Once again the New England conscience was pricked, and financial contributions began to accumulate to carry on the next campaign in bleeding Kansas. An Augusta, Maine, editor, who was still at war with the southern white establishment, editorially charged southern congressmen with holding the blacks in thralldom, and reminiscent of William Seward’s “higher law,” he predicted that “a wiser power than theirs is preparing the way of deliverance.” Let the exodus continue, he recommended, for surely it would result in a curtailment of southern political power and wealth. In words as militant as those used by abolitionists a generation earlier, he told his readers: “This must be a free country, in fact as well as in name, and they who fight against it will be ground to
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powder in the conflict.” He recalled that in the 1850s Kansas had helped
to focus national attention upon the problem of slavery, and events there
tended to eliminate northern indifference to the plight of the blacks. Once
again, he reminded his readers, the nation was moved by the condition
of southern Negroes and their attempts to find refuge in “free” Kansas.
The present movement, he concluded, “seems to be directed by the same
hand that led the Israelites out of Egypt.”

His colleagues found no argument with such strong talk. Southern
field hands indeed were fleeing from persecution and violence, from
“political and social proscription,” wrote another Maine editor. It was
a clear case of political bulldozing and a generally iniquitous treatment of
the blacks, said another; but the heartless southerners had overshot their
mark, and now their victims were fleeing the scene of such cruelties.

In the months to come, these editorials, supplemented by lengthy
news items that described various indignation meetings, stirred the soul
of New England. Mrs. George L. Stearns, of Medford, Massachusetts,
contributed one hundred dollars for “these victims of Southern oppression
and madness.” She recalled that in 1856 her husband had worked without
rest eighteen hours a day to secure the soil of Kansas from the clutch of
the slaveholders, “little dreaming that the day would ever come when the
slaves themselves would be seeking an asylum within its hospitable bor­
ders.” A spinster from North Brookfield, Massachusetts, found release
in the renewed crusade. Admitting that her spirit had been stirred to its
depths after reading about the refugees, she offered to enlist for the dura­
tion. With reference to her home state, she told Governor St. John: “We
are liberal, we are wealthy, we have strong sympathy with suffering and I
feel we are ready to help.” In fact, the lady already had gone to war. She
haunted the offices of a local boot and shoe manufacturer, demanding
that shipments of footwear be dispatched at once to Kansas for the unfor­
tunate blacks. Philanthropic movements of such magnitude rarely came
along, she thought, and this one was of the very highest order, one that
bore the celestial seal of approval. “Is not the hand of the Lord in it?”
she asked St. John.

The Reverend Joseph Cook, of Boston, could have given her a reas­
suring answer. Yes, indeed, the hand of the Lord was in it, the minister
had decided. All the biblical implications of the exodus made it a fit
subject for one of his regular Monday-night lectures. He asked Governor
St. John for documentation of the suffering then being experienced in
Kansas, anything that would show “what extortions the refugees had
suffered.” He understood that the governor “had a bushel or so” of such
papers. They would be put to good use, Cook promised, for about one
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hundred thousand copies of his addresses regularly appeared in newspapers.18

Boston's Republican newspapers readily printed any items that related to the exodus. For example, they were quick to publicize activities of local Negroes, such as the meeting of black women held at a neighborhood Baptist church late in April "for the purpose of organizing aid to the refugees."19 Also given notice was a heavily attended gathering of Negroes at the African Methodist Church, where speakers condemned post-Civil War governmental policies that, among other things, allowed men to serve in Congress "who long since should have paid the penalty for treason at the end of a rope." When a minister from Chelsea averred that all southern lands should have been confiscated at the end of the war and then divided among soldiers and freedmen, he received a storm of applause. More cheers followed when he approved of the exodus on the ground that the outward flow of southern blacks was bound to reduce southern representation in Congress.20

Both critics and supporters of the movement had to admit that Boston was an excellent cockpit in which to conduct the fight. When Charlton Tandy, of St. Louis, and Richard T. Greener, the first Negro graduate of Harvard who was later dean of Howard University's law school, went to Boston to collect money for the refugees, a St. Louis paper said that they had picked the right place to start, since it was there that remnants of the old New England Anti-slavery Society still lingered. The editor mentioned Garrison and Phillips, and he suggested that the collectors might well stop off at Brooklyn and tap "Brother [Henry Ward] Beecher" for a few dollars.21 It was true, Boston for years had been a good hunting ground, but as a rule, it is not the orators who have money, as was now shown when H. P. Kidder of Kidder, Peabody & Company produced one thousand dollars for the cause.22

As the exodus continued and stories of suffering in Kansas became a steady fare for newspaper readers, there was a general response from New England and the eastern seaboard states. The action taken by a mass meeting held at Topsham, Maine, early in May, 1879, typified the concern of New Englanders. Contending that the North had an obligation to aid those whom it had set free, that group created a committee "to extend assistance to the freedmen struggling for true liberty."23 At other meetings held in Maine, important names were brought forward to indicate the significance of the cause. Former Vice-Pres. Hannibal Hamlin and Sen. James G. Blaine were identified as officers of a society whose aim it was to "help the Negroes run away from the South and to collect money to support them in the North."24 William Scott, identified as a black resident
of the South, described conditions in his area and told a large and attentive audience of the resultant exodus. The publicity and the emotional impact produced by these meetings yielded some surprising results. Ann F. Jameson, of Rockland, Maine, offered to give all of her worldly possessions to the cause. She informed Governor St. John that she had willed any money realized from her property to a fund that would be used to purchase land and homes for the Negro refugees in Kansas.

Not everyone was prepared to make a philanthropic gesture of this dimension, but stout hearts marched in the ranks of the Christian soldiers, and they did their bit. William Chase, a Quaker from Salem, Massachusetts, was so moved by newspaper stories about Mrs. Comstock's efforts that he began to collect all the clothing he could lay hands on for use by the freezing blacks in the West. "I have had the great satisfaction," he told St. John, "of packing with my own hands twenty-three large sugar barrels, and six flour barrels well filled with good clothing, new and old, boots, shoes, hats, stockings, mittens, gloves etc." for the needy. In addition, he and his friends sent forward $434. A contributor from New Milford, Connecticut, gave $25 to help "the poor abused people," in the hope that it would help them to "escape from the bondage they have endured."

The academic world, whose normal response to any problem is the formation of a committee, was in true form at New Haven. Eugene D. Bassett wrote to St. John, saying that he and Leonard Bacon and Cyrus Northrup, of Yale, formed a group appointed to solicit aid for the Exodusers. He wanted to know how many people were to be helped, if their need was urgent, and what kind of assistance was wanted. Brown University was represented in the movement by its president, who presided over a mass meeting held in the Statehouse at Providence, Rhode Island, in mid May, 1879. The effort produced a sheaf of resolutions and some promises, but no money. However, the Congregationalists of Newport, Rhode Island, later helped to rectify this deficiency by collecting $149.62, as well as nine barrels and two boxes of clothing. The Reverend Van Horn, who sent the contributions to Kansas, assured St. John that the people of New England were "in full sympathy with you and your praiseworthy efforts in looking out for these needy people."

While Van Horn did not speak for all New Englanders, he represented the opinion of a militant and vocal portion of them, a group whose cause was taken up by, or at least recognized by, certain elements of the press. The Boston Evening Transcript, for example, seized upon the exodus as an example of southern indifference to the plight of black farmers. It warned that "the employers of labor [in] the South have, or soon may
have, the alternative before them to treat the blacks as though they were whites, in respect to legal and political rights, or their fields may be left unto them desolate.” It predicted that the movement “will do more to set affairs right in the bulldozed localities than anything that has occurred.” To the editor the migration was explained by the fact that when conditions become intolerable, people move, in the belief that conditions can be no worse, no matter how strange the new land of their choice. It was a story not confined to black Americans.

In addition to a series of pro-exodus editorials, the Transcript gave a prominent place to an article written by David Ross Locke, who, under the pen name Petroleum V. Nasby, had gained fame as a humorist. One of the most notable of his followers was Abraham Lincoln, who was fond of quoting Nasby. In this case, Nasby wrote from a mythical location known as “Confedrit X Roads, Kentucky,” explaining that “the entire colored populashen hev been notified that they can’t go and must live with us, and enjoy here the blessings of freedom. But they keep slippin’ off all the time, and there is the doleful prospeck of the Corners becomin’ deserted from the want uv labor.” Although the Transcript gladly gave the piece a full column, to underscore its belief that the South was being stripped of its labor by the exodus, Kentucky was not the best place for the author to have located “Confedrit X Roads.” A good many Kentucky Negroes had moved to the West, but this movement owed more to the promotional efforts of “Pap” Singleton than to unhappy conditions at home. Most of those from Kentucky had money with which to buy land, and those who did so, at such places as Nicodemus, Kansas, would have resented any inferred connection with the impoverished refugees of Mississippi and Louisiana who were so heavily represented among the Exodusters.

The willingness of the Radical Republicans, particularly those in the Northeast, to espouse the plight of the Exodusters suggests the existence of a collective sponsor in search of a cause. In 1877 George W. Julian, the Indiana Radical Republican, had lamented that “there is no moral tone in either party and the spectacle is sickening.” In his book The Radical Republicans (1969), Hans L. Trefousse quoted Julian and concluded that “it was evident that the crusade against slavery and its aftermath was over.” Not quite. Some of the old warriors still were around, unconvinced that the North had won the war. Their restlessness at the political resurgence of the South, as shown by events that followed the contested election of 1876, was shared by the Republicans in general. Thoughtful politicians wondered if the old abolitionist refrain might not be dusted off and played once more, this time in the election of 1880.
Moral concern, that powerful weapon so well understood by practical politicians, was resurfacing before the exodus began. That movement now was used by proponents of black civil rights as proof that a form of slavery still existed in the South. In February, 1879, J. D. Hayes, who was described as a "young colored orator and Vice President of the Young Men's Christian Association," argued the case in a lecture delivered at the Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City. The title of his address was "The Modern House of Bondage; or, The New Enslavement of the American Negro." While he did not advocate emigration as a solution to the problem, but rather argued that the members of his race ought to elevate themselves through education and technical training, his concern for black Americans was given a prominent place in the city's press.34

Those who supported the lecturer's contentions as to reenslavement openly admitted their fears of a resurgence of southern whites. The New York Tribune lamented the fact that in 1879 nineteen former Confederate officers sat in the United States Senate, as opposed to only four from the Union ranks. If the Union soldiers, while fighting to put down the Rebellion, could have foreseen this, how unhappy they would have been, said the editor.35 During that spring, northern papers repeatedly alluded to the congressional power of the "Confederate Brigadiers," and they urged voters to support Republican candidates.

In effect, a militant body of northerners, led by the old-time abolitionists, for some time had been awaiting a change in order to administer an emotional recharge to their cause. The exodus provided it. In April, 1879, as stories of suffering along a new "Trail of Tears," this time to Kansas, began to be publicized in the Northeast, very little drumbeating was necessary to get a turnout at indignation meetings. That month, nearly a thousand people, most of whom were black, attended a gathering sponsored by the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City, where speakers gave their views on the hegira. Listeners heard devastating criticisms of southern conditions, of reenslavement, of bloodhounds and murder in the night. One speaker, who asked the audience to remember the Fort Pillow massacre during the war, where a number of black Union soldiers had been slaughtered, openly called the assemblage an antislavery meeting. Another urged blacks to emigrate westward—to Kansas, or even Arizona and New Mexico. In the last-named, he predicted they would find employment in railroad construction and in other fields. Black settlers, argued the speaker, not only would benefit both the race and the country to which they went, but they would help to keep out the Chinese, who were then regarded as a threat to American labor.36

Thus, in late April, the New York stage was set for an old-time re-
form gathering. Appropriately it was held at Cooper Institute, where many a cause had been launched. A New England newspaper recognized the historical import of the scene when it commented that "something of the old sympathy for the oppressed and devotion to human rights begins to make itself heard and felt throughout the loyal North, and it is inspiring to read of the great gatherings in Cooper Institute, New York . . . and Faneuil Hall, Boston . . . to give expression to public sympathy for the persecuted colored people of the South who are now fleeing from what has been to them worse than a land of bondage."

The Cooper Institute meeting was replete with performers and props. Thurlow Weed, the hardened old Republican war-horse from Albany, was on hand to "ask the assistance of the whole northern people, without regard to color, in this great struggle of the colored race to better their condition and find for themselves homes and liberty." Present also were Charlton Tandy, of St. Louis, and Professor Richard Greener of Howard University, who were then making the rounds of the East to collect money. Wendell Phillips, in poor health, sent his regrets, along with a few literary hand grenades to be tossed in battle. "Leave the tyrants and bullies to till their own soil or starve while they do nothing but wrong and rob their laborers," he wrote. "Without laborers the Southern acres are worth nothing." So far as Phillips was concerned, the tyrants and bullies were lucky to have any land to till. He thought that treason ought to have been punished by confiscation and that southern lands "should have been divided among the Negroes, forty acres to each family, and tools—poor pay for the unpaid toil of six generations on that very soil." Considering the degree to which the Negro had been reenslaved by the former Confederate, Phillips concluded that "we all see now that magnanimity went as far as it safely could when it granted the traitor his life."

A fellow trooper, William Lloyd Garrison, also was unable to attend. But in his final weeks on earth he was still waging war, and he wrote a bitter attack upon the South for the benefit of the audience. "It is clear that the battle of liberty and equal rights is to be fought over again," he predicted. "The American Government is but a mockery and deserves to be overthrown, if they are to be left without protection as sheep in the midst of wolves." This was heady stuff, and the audience loved it, as had audiences of old. Thurlow Weed, moved by the blasts from Boston, arose and told the crowd that Garrison's letter "warms my old blood."37

At a time when the political scene was dull, when a national election that would have no real issues lay just ahead, fire and flame from the rostrum of Cooper Institute was welcomed by the city's newspapers. The Tribune, in particular, was happy to report it. Unreconstructed Confeder-
ate bulldozers were wrecking the South, it charged. Not only were their terror tactics lining the banks of the Mississippi with blacks who were desperately anxious to escape to the North, but they were also, indirectly, driving out any prospective white settlers who might want to migrate to the cotton fields. But justice would triumph, the paper predicted, and when the persecuted blacks had left for a new land where political and civil rights were assured, southern communities would suffer for their sins though economic retrogression and decay. Beyond that, suggested the Tribune, lay the moral question. In an editorial entitled "The Negroes Still Slaves" it depicted southern conditions as being no better than those of ante-bellum days and wondered if southern planters were sufficiently intelligent to institute necessary reforms before it was too late.  

In the beginning, the Tribune had expressed high hopes that Kansas would provide the necessary sanctuary for the refugees. It assumed that the movement not only would aid the black immigrants but also would be highly beneficial for Kansas. In an article entitled "An Opportunity for Kansas" the editor took the view that emigration societies had made Kansas what it was and that in the present circumstance, such organizations, if well directed, could "easily secure for that State . . . a marvellous increase in population and in wealth." He called upon all readers to join the crusade and to open their hearts and their purses to this new philanthropic opportunity. In another editorial, "What the Negroes Need," he lamented that "there is no Promised Land for them; there is no pillar of fire and cloud to lead them; no bread from Heaven to feed them; but, in Heaven's name, while there are kind-hearted men and women among us who can spare a dollar from their own scanty stores, do not let it be said that God's help has failed for them out of the world!" A Tribune correspondent, out in Kansas, answered that the state would "not go back upon her principles nor back upon the colored man," and it would save fleeing Negroes from the horror that was the South. Months later the Tribune backed its appeal by sending Governor St. John five dollars "in aid of colored emigrants in your state."  

As time passed, the Tribune began to have second thoughts about Kansas as a Mecca for blacks. Realistically it admitted that "it will not do to dump them in great masses on Western prairies, even if each man is provided with land to work." Without capital or skills needed for northern farming, the newcomers would remain paupers among strangers. But if the western reaches of Kansas, then being tested by white farmers, were unsuitable, the newspaper had a solution: give the blacks land in the more-settled eastern regions of the state. It reasoned that "the Negro always succeeds better when he has the white man to imitate and to lean upon," there-
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fore "let it be land in the neighborhood of white settlements." But when it appeared that such suggestions had not been followed, the Tribune editor descended from Olympus and admitted that things just were not working out. "There is scant welcome for them in any of the towns," he complained, but admitted that "naturally no struggling community wishes to be drowned in a flood of pauperism." He thought that this could have been avoided had northerners contributed more generously to the cause. "There is a great deal of windy sympathy for them among the people who make it a point of conscience to indorse the negro, right or wrong, but so far very little money or practical help has been sent from this class," he charged, adding that the accused looked "on the misery of these innocent blacks with an unaccountably chilly apathy." 40

The barbs pricked a few consciences in New York. During the summer of 1879 one businessman challenged St. John's remark that while Cleveland had sent sixteen hundred dollars, New York had not contributed sixteen cents. St. John responded quickly, saying the letter in which he had made the statement had not been intended for publication. In fact, he admitted, some five to six hundred dollars had come in from New York in recent weeks. The Odd Fellows, for example, had made a fine contribution. And more was to come. John Dwight and Company, of New York City, sent a hundred dollars, with the request that the firm's name not be published and that the contribution not be acknowledged. Benjamin B. Sherman, president of the Mechanic's National Bank, sent a check for five hundred dollars in the name of the city's relief committee, of which he was the treasurer. Help came also from the little people. George S. McWatters, who identified himself as a working man, offered to give a dollar a month from his wages and volunteered to meet with all who would join him to discuss the wage-withholding plan. 41

New York City donors who wished to help the Exodusters had no difficulty in finding a place to make contributions. Most of the city's important papers, such as the Herald, the Times, the Tribune, the Evening Post, and the Mail, expressed a willingness to receive money and forward it. The Times deprecated efforts by others to use the movement for partisan purposes or to encourage an indiscriminate emigration to the West, but its views rode the mainstream of eastern opinion when it attacked the conditions under which southern black labor existed. If the flow of white emigrants was toward new western lands, said the paper, it was logical that blacks, who were victims of unfulfilled promises, ought to join it. Moralizing, a reporter called the exodus "one that in its essential spirit and quality must be honored by thoughtful lovers of liberty and progress." 42

One of those who long had advocated liberty and progress for black
Americans was Joseph Hayne Rainey, the first Negro to be elected to the House of Representatives. His tenure, dating from 1870, ended on March 3, 1879, after which he became a special agent for the United States Treasury. Described as courteous and suave, he was well known for his endorsement of black participation in politics. Early in April, 1879, he sent five dollars to J. Milton Turner at St. Louis to aid “the poor and destitute of our oppressed race, who have been compelled to seek an asylum of peace and safety in the Far West.” While five dollars was only a drop in the bucket, Rainey’s name was much more important, and sponsors of the refugees welcomed it. More substantial aid, as always, came from groups, and one of these, known as the Emigrant Aid Society, was organized at Washington. During 1879 its secretary, A. M. Clapp, collected about two thousand dollars, most of which was used for westward transporting of coastal blacks, principally from the Carolinas.

From Philadelphia, deep in the heart of Quakerdom, came applause and substantial financial support for the courageous stand taken by those blacks who had declared independence by packing up and going west. Early in May, 1879, the usual civic meeting was called by the mayor, and a committee of twenty prominent people was appointed to get about the task of helping the refugees. Individual businessmen sent as much as fifty dollars each, but in one case it was reported that an elderly Philadelphia Quaker personally contributed ten thousand dollars to help provide western homes for fleeing blacks. G. W. Carey, vice-president of the Kansas Freedmen’s Relief Association, later stated that ninety to ninety-five percent of the money that his organization at Topeka received came from Elizabeth Comstock’s Quaker friends.

Meetings similar to those held along the eastern seaboard were called in upper midwestern cities. During April, prominent men of Columbus, Ohio, met and formed the usual committee to raise money in aid of “the wanderers,” to use their term. Within a few days, William G. Deshler, of Columbus’s Deshler Bank, mailed a check for $250 to St. John, promising that more would follow. He asked the governor for some details about the itinerant blacks so that he might spread the word and raise even more money in his part of Ohio. George H. Eby, treasurer of the Cleveland group, sent forward a total of $1,381.50 in a period of three months. He remarked to St. John that while most of these movements were of doubtful wisdom, this one stood apart “because of its nature and the good cause it stands for.” He praised St. John’s state, saying, “Kansas is the heart & hope of these black men, is the historic land of freedom.” Murat Halstead, the widely known editor of the Cincinnati Commercial, informed St. John that “we have raised over twelve hundred dollars for
the fugitive slaves of the day." In his remark he reaffirmed the belief, held by a good many of the old abolitionists, that slavery still existed, if only in another form.

In Illinois the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* became the leading spokesman for the Exodusters. It also took the view that the Emancipation Proclamation had become an unfulfilled promise of freedom and that, accordingly, the flight from a substitute form of slavery was both necessary and justifiable. The only alternative, asserted that newspaper, was a return to the South of federal troops in order to ensure order and justice in an unrepentant part of the land. When one of its Kansas correspondents quoted the land commissioner of the Kansas Pacific Railway as saying that there was no room for the black immigrants because they had no money with which to buy land, the editor reacted sharply. The commissioner, he said, was an Irishman with a broad brogue and less than a dozen years of residence in that sacred land of Kansas, "where these colored people first saw the light of day." He referred to S. J. Gilmore, who had written a form letter to all Negro applicants, in which he told them that there was no place for black labor in the state, that most of the work was done by machinery, and that only by going into the far-western counties, where there was no wood and little water, could they find any government land. It irritated the *Inter-Ocean* to think that the St. Louis Mullanphy fund initially had given these poor refugees a mere $100, when it had, upon occasion, awarded a single Irish family as much as $350 to continue its westward trek. Poverty should be no bar to western settlement, said the editor. These field hands surely were no poorer than the penniless multitudes arriving by the boatload from Europe. Their blackness should not be held against them; they were, according to the Kansas correspondent, far above the average immigrant in intelligence and cleanliness; to fail to help them would be evidence of nothing less than racial prejudice.

Relief efforts in Chicago developed a little more slowly than in other cities. By late April the *Inter-Ocean* said that since there was, as yet, no organized movement in the city to raise money, it would serve as a repository for contributions. By then $160.97 had been collected. The newspaper was convinced, however, that among Chicago papers there was sufficient interest in the migrant blacks so as to start some kind of organized movement in their behalf.

It guessed correctly. On the evening of May 1, 1879, the Exodus Aid Association was organized at Thomas’s Hall, and prospective contributors were given an address to which they could send money. In the next day or so it was reported that George L. Armour, a wealthy Chicago grain dealer, had contributed two thousand dollars to assist in the colonization
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movement. He had just returned from the "front" in Kansas, where he had been much moved by conditions among the refugees. "It has always been considered a sort of Negro heaven since the days of old John Brown," he said in praise of Kansas. The blacks with whom he had talked said that they had fled from southern persecution, and, what was even worse in his Republican eyes, they had been forced to vote the Democratic ticket. This disturbing news moved him to make a healthy contribution, one that the Inter-Ocean was only too happy to publicize.50

The Inter-Ocean's interest in the Exodusters was further stimulated by the Quaker blood that coursed through the veins of its editor, William Penn Nixon. Mixed with that heritage was the influence of his mother, who had descended from the Cherokees. Nixon, who had earned his LL.B. at the University of Pennsylvania, turned to journalism after a few years of practicing law in Cincinnati. With his brother, O. W. Nixon, he had founded the Cincinnati Daily Chronicle, and in 1872, William moved to Chicago, where he joined the staff of the moribund Inter-Ocean. Before long he controlled the paper and became its general manager and editor. Politically the journal was labeled as "reliably Republican."

Nixon himself might well have been called a "reliably Radical Republican," for he entertained the strongest of sympathies toward those whom he regarded as oppressed. In promising aid to St. John, he assured the governor: "The Inter-Ocean desires to aid in all good works, and it believes it to be a great and good work to help people from a land of wrong and servitude to a land of freedom and plenty."51 Editorially, Nixon told his readers that he had no apologies for the amount of space he devoted to the Exodusters. "It involves questions of grave importance, and cannot be dismissed with a word, even if we were so inclined," he wrote. Although Nixon, along with a great many others, had no knowledge of the movement's origins, he had no trouble in fixing the blame upon southerners. In his view, these cruel, unthinking bigots had not changed one iota; Uncle Tom's people still were crossing the figurative river, pursued by whip-wielding masters. In order to seek out more details and thus, presumably, to discover the truth, Nixon sent John F. Ballantine, of his editorial staff, on a junket to Kansas. Ballantine did his job; he sent back a long, emotional report from Wyandotte, designed to tear at Chicago heartstrings and purses. Nixon also printed a letter from John Brown, Jr., in which the son of the martyr implored readers to help the new slaves. He asked that a latterday "New England Emigrant Aid Society" be set up at Chicago.52

The Inter-Ocean did not have a corner on Exoduster stock in Chicago. The Tribune also published editorials favoring the movement and, in good
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Republican style, denounced southern bulldozers. When it praised Kansas as the home of black freedom, the Missouri Republican editorially inquired as to why the Chicago editor was so generous with Kansas lands. It was curious, remarked the St. Louis paper, that Republican journals always wanted these unfortunate people to go west. Why not invite a few blacks to Chicago? it asked.53

Chicago did not respond to the challenge by inviting these discontented southerners to the city, but some of its philanthropists, urged on by St. John, offered to help disperse the migration among northern states or send it deeper into the West. The objects of such kindness frequently demurred, arguing that not all places were as "natural" a home as Kansas, and it took some coaxing to get them to accept the invitations.

Despite bitter remarks from Missouri, the Inter-Ocean demonstrated that it pays to advertise. It not only flushed a covey of wealthy sympathizers, among whom George Armour had the fattest wallet; it also brought into the ranks the redoubtable Horatio N. Rust, who was to become a warm supporter of and constant correspondent with St. John. In mid May, 1879, he wrote to the Kansas governor, asking for information. He wanted to buy four or more sections of land to begin a colony for the emigrating Negroes, and the heading of his stationery—Horatio N. Rust & Company Warehouse—suggested that he had the means with which to purchase prairie real estate. He had in mind the cherished forty acres for each family, and he was willing to include the familiar "and a mule" for motive power. To do this, he intended to form a company in Chicago, one that would provide financial backing and would provide each section, or 640 acres, with one man who would be furnished the tools and teams necessary to break forty-acre plots as families occupied them.54

During the summer of 1879 Rust's campaign apparently lay dormant, for St. John heard little from him during these months. But early in September he told the governor that he had seen his latest appeal for help in the columns of the Inter-Ocean, and once more he was offering his assistance. Cold weather was coming on, said Rust, and warm clothing would be needed in Kansas. He agreed to receive any such items at Chicago and to use the facilities of his warehouse for storage until St. John asked that they be sent forward. Rather timidly he suggested that he wanted to be of assistance, and apparently fearing that St. John might for some reason find him suspect, Rust named the First National Bank of Chicago as a reference, adding that he knew John Brown, Jr., personally. The Chicago volunteer was enlisted in the ranks, and soon he was writing to St. John on stationery headed Southern Refugee Relief Association, of which he was the secretary and former governor John L. Beveridge was

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president. The stationery also announced that the organization had been formed on February 9, 1880, “for the purpose of relieving the great want growing out of the Negro Exodus.” Before many months had passed, Rust had become St. John’s right-hand man in Chicago. The Kansas governor’s appeal was heard in faraway places, and he might be said to have acquired a small “foreign legion” in his battle for the southern refugees. For example, Louis Nagel, a pastor in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, contributed three hundred francs. He had heard Thomas Rustling, of the Jubilee Singers, talk, and he had concluded that if all blacks were as worthy as Rustling, the cause must be a good one. A response came also from Richard Allen, of Dublin, who had known Elizabeth Comstock when she worked in Ireland. While Allen did not make a monetary contribution, he congratulated St. John for his work in aid of “the liberated coloured population of the South who are fleeing from the land of oppression.” It would have grieved the sensitive Irishman to know that while he was extending his best wishes, his countrymen in Illinois were assaulting—even killing—blacks who were sent there to work in the coal mines. Irish labor was extremely sensitive about black competition.

Although the strident notes of Garrison’s “trumpet-tongued edict” rolled across the land and were echoed from as far away as Europe, the volunteers who responded were hard-core fighters, many of whom simply had reenlisted. As in ante-bellum days, their actual numbers were less than the decibel count that they registered suggested. Among those who were not moved by the clarion call, some were openly hostile to the new crusade, but the majority of nonparticipants simply were indifferent or cautiously dubious about its merits.

As it is with many philanthropic movements, there were mixed emotions about this one in Chicago’s business community. One who signed himself “Selby” wrote from that city in May, 1879, reporting that the local Board of Trade had begun a subscription to aid refugees from southern oppression. Among the heavy contributors, said Selby, was a leading Chicago packer, some of whose friends cautioned him that his generosity might have a long-range detrimental effect. Not only might it convince southern blacks that they had only to flee, and someone else would feed them, but if southern cotton and sugar fields were laid waste for want of labor, who in the South would buy meat from Chicago packers? Also, should these emigrants succeed in Kansas, surely they would raise their own hogs, and Chicago sales would suffer yet another blow.

While the plea of self-interest may not have been practical, or one seriously to be contemplated, it was not unique to Chicago businessmen.
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The Boston Advertiser warned that in New England the exodus was "beginning to arouse attention in business circles, for it is realized that if it continues the cotton, sugar, tobacco and rice crops will be jeopardized on account of insufficient labor for cultivation and harvesting." This, said the paper, would strike directly at the Northeast's economy, and it would particularly affect such an industry as the Boston shoe trade. That trade, it pointed out, "has closer relations with the thrift and steadiness of southern blacks than any other industry, and it has had occasion to note the extent of this migration by very numerous counter demand on duplicate orders for brogans and plantation shoes for Louisiana and Mississippi dealers." Additionally, cotton prices were rising in anticipation of shortages resulting from prospective southern labor difficulties, and that was going to have an influence on New England's milling industry. Even worse, cautioned another Boston newspaper, was the possible effect that the movement might have upon discontented factory employees. If, asked the editor, unhappy workers in the South were encouraged to depart, what would be the attitude of "the mill operatives of New England in case they are pushed too far?" Might they not be encouraged to head for a promised land of their own? The idea, he concluded, should be "a suggestive one to capitalists and corporations as well." A Portland, Maine, editor warned that any kind of hegira, from any place dependent upon labor, "would unsettle the business of the whole country, for it would throw into complete confusion the industries of a section large enough to create serious disturbance in every branch of trade." Quite candidly he expressed the hope that there would be enough suffering in Kansas to slow the exodus and to discourage restless workers elsewhere from seeking a similar panacea for their economic problems.

Chicago businessmen, who sold their goods not only to southern farmers but to western farmers as well, did not object to the westward movement so long as their city promised to be an entrepôt of plains-country trade. However, if Illinois farmers moved to Kansas and then bought their supplies from St. Louis, Chicago could be the loser. A Tribune correspondent visited Kansas in the spring of 1879, and although he noted that the new state's population had increased by about 150,000 in the preceding year, still the Tribune was forced to conclude that it was a mistake for Illinois and Indiana farmers to pull up stakes and emigrate to Kansas or Nebraska. Hard times and recent crop failures on the plains were the reasons given for staying at home. The problem of the "Kansas mania" was exacerbated by the "Leadville excitement" of 1879, and papers all the way from Chicago to New England worried about the drainage of laborers to the mines of Colorado. In this respect, businessmen were
cautious about applauding any kind of labor hegira, black or white. Frank Leslie, owner of New York's widely read illustrated newspaper, spoke for the eastern business establishment when he talked of the improved conditions under which Virginia Negroes lived and when he concluded that "there can be no doubt but that they are far better off than those of their race now curled up for shelter beneath the platform of the railroad depot at Wyandotte." In other words, New York merchants and wholesalers were not particularly concerned about the flight of labor from Louisiana, but if Virginia farmers joined the rush, the result could touch closer to home.

Perhaps, thought New Yorkers, the idea of a black exodus might be used to solve a local white problem. Their city had accumulated a good many European immigrants who had not found places in the labor force and who had joined other people in an army of unemployed. "We have on several occasions suggested that it might be well to try the experiment of transferring them in colonies, under a system of modified guardianship, to the unoccupied lands of the South and West," suggested Frank Leslie. Already, he said, there existed a group known as the Co-operative Colony Aid Association of New York, whose object was to colonize the poor and thereby to get rid of them. He wondered if the private sector could not commit both a profitable and a philanthropic act by financing a couple of colonies of one hundred to two hundred persons, provided that the government would grant the needed land. In this manner the offscourings of society could be shipped out, leaving the better class of laborers to take their places in industry. Chicago had a similar organization called the Kansas and Immigration Society, a committee of which visited Kansas and recommended Davis County, in the northeastern part of the state, as a place where land could be had on ten years' credit at four dollars an acre. While the group was not organized for the purpose of getting rid of the poor, it did provide a means of controlled emigration from Chicago, and it could be used for the benefit of the city as well as for that of the individuals involved.

The notion of exporting unemployed laborers whose support troubled city fathers appealed to civic leaders in Washington, D.C. The National Emigration Aid Society of that city already had helped some southern field hands to move north, and now the Washington Post wondered if it could not better direct its efforts toward solving a local problem. "There is no other locality in the Union where the colored people are suffering so terribly as they are here," the paper announced, "and the only practical remedy for their manifold miseries is emigration. The supply of unskilled labor here is enormously in excess of present or prospective demand."
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Why move southern farmers who were not necessarily in want? wondered the editor. “Will the National Emigration Aid society begin its work at home? Or will it prefer to waste its energies where its efforts are not needed?” he asked.64

Another solution to the problem of discontented southern Negroes that was talked about in eastern and northern circles during 1879 was that of establishing colonies for them. What would have happened if President Grant’s desire for Santo Domingo had been realized? pondered the Chicago Tribune. Had it become a reality, the United States by now could have had a thriving black colony on that island. Despite Grant’s frustration, thought the editor, there was no reason why the government still should not promote black colonization, but not necessarily in Kansas.65

Where, then? Indian Territory, or what later became Oklahoma, appeared to be a likely place. Despite the fact that Indians already had been deposited there, under the earlier removal program, it appeared to eastern journals that this should pose no problems, “for there the Government can locate freedmen by explicit provision of the treaty in the same way as Indians,” in the words of one editor. This ought to be mutually satisfactory, he concluded, for “the two races fraternize easily.”66

The idea delighted southerners. “Black men may be able to slip into Indian Territory,” said the New Orleans Picayune. “Let the black exodus go for the red man’s land.”67 Apparently the process of “slipping in” already had commenced. Early in 1879 a delegation of Negroes living among the Cherokees, in Indian Territory, appeared before the commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington and asked for protection of their people, about three thousand in number. “The delegation described a lamentable condition of injustice, embracing the denial by the Cherokees to the blacks of a share in the orphan fund and the fund for schools for the insane,” reported a New York newspaper. “They assert that they are advertised as intruders, summoned before mock courts of justice and their property threatened with confiscation if they do not remove from the Cherokee territory within sixty days.”68

So, the races did not “fraternize easily.” One answer to that problem was the establishment of an all-black colony in some western area that had not already been set aside for Indians. In the spring of 1879 a Boston organization called the National Farmers’ Association obtained sixty-five alternate sections of land in northern Texas from the Dallas and Wichita Railroad at a cost of $1.50 an acre. The railroad had received the land from Texas in the form of a subsidy for construction. Shares valued at one hundred dollars each, convertible into land, now were offered to Negro families desirous of emigrating from their present homes. Some two hun-
dred thousand men, about a third of them with families, were expected to respond to the offer. There was talk that the area would become a black state, named Lincoln, to take its place alongside other states in the union.69

The New York Times gave prominence to the story about the proposed state of Lincoln, because the idea coincided with that journal's view of southern Negro migrations. For some time, said the paper in a lengthy editorial, these people had moved from the Southeast to newer southern states, a movement within the South that the editor saw as natural. However, for these people to flee to colder climates in order to get away from their problems was looked upon as inadvisable. Comments such as “the poor blacks expect practical sympathy, and they will get very little of it in Kansas, or in any new region where every man is struggling in his own behalf,” typified the argument. The Negroes, said the Times, simply were not equal to the trials endured by Scandinavians in such places as Kansas.70 Those who did not favor the state of Lincoln theory might well have argued that northern Texas was no land of milk and honey. Rather, it was a place that white farmers did not find particularly attractive. That the Texans themselves were not enthusiastic about black immigration to their state was suggested in a dispatch from Mexico City a few years later, one that told of two colored emigration commissioners from Texas who had gone there to talk about procuring Mexican lands for a large colony of black cotton-raisers from Texas. If arrangements could be made for the move, said the commissioners, some ten thousand people would migrate to the new location. “There is not the same prejudice in Mexico against the colored men as there is in the United States,” commented the dispatch.71

Democratic papers in New England tended to share the view that cold Kansas was no place for wandering southern field hands. “The money comes hard to help the Negroes deluded into Kansas,” remarked one of them, charging that a few politicians who sensed the political value of the movement had made contributions, “but other people, while they pity, think it a duty to help the poor at home before sending money to agents who may let it go astray.” The editor, who was from Maine, was convinced that the Exodusters were “of the idle, shiftless class who are tolerably content to live anywhere . . . if they don’t have to work.” His theory was that the 40th parallel was the “line of greatness” and that only those who lived in a temperate climate ever amounted to anything. If a man grew up under a tropical sun, he maintained, “you may be sure that he is not remarkably furnished in the upper story. Equatorial great men are not common.”72
Other eastern papers indicated a similar lack of enthusiasm for the emotional endorsement accorded to the refugees by the region’s liberals. A Democratic Boston newspaper expressed great sympathy for the labor problems of southern whites and chided New Englanders for contributing “their hard earned shekels for the benefit of the exodus movement.” A cross-town colleague criticized the “noble, but misdirected, charity of the East,” and charged that the Kansas relief committees often were in the hands of “knaves and politicians.” From Washington, D.C., came the guess that nine-tenths of the Negroes then in Kansas were essentially paupers and that ninety percent of them would find the matter of making a living so difficult that they would move on.73 The New York Tribune, an early supporter of the movement, stuck to its editorial guns, but confessed that in all probability the Negro never would work as hard as the German or Scottish immigrant, for “it is not in his blood.” Nevertheless, thought that newspaper, the blacks could be trained to support themselves, and given a chance, they would find their own niche.74

As the war of emotions was fought in the nation’s press and as contributions of all kinds flowed into Kansas, the contest tended to veer more and more toward the political arena. Charges and countercharges erupted with increasing frequency, to the effect that the flight of the blacks was being used for purely political purposes, at both state and national levels. Both sides looked ahead to the election of 1880, and increasingly, the Democrats charged that Republican support of the exodus was nothing more than a political ploy, an age-old device, once more dragged out to excite the fears of the voters, who would be moved to return the G.O.P. to power for yet another term. The Republicans denied all—and continued to attack the “Confederate Brigadiers” in Congress with increasing ferocity.