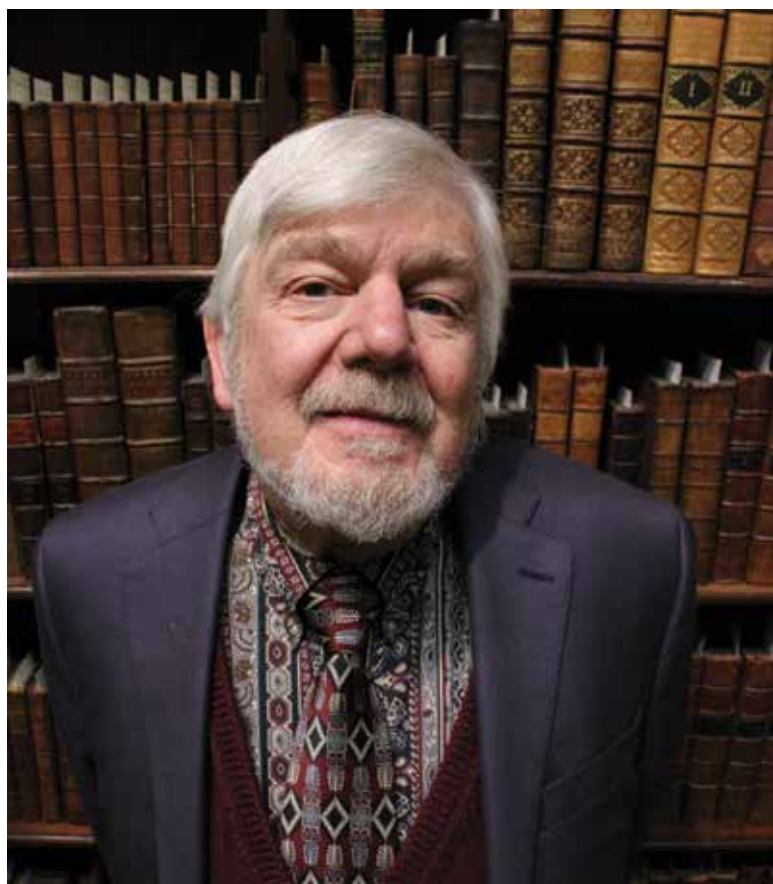


# Phil Lapsansky: Appreciations

A collection of essays honoring Phillip S. Lapsansky on  
his retirement after more than forty years of service to the  
Library Company of Philadelphia, 1971–2012



# Phil Lapsansky: Appreciations

A collection of essays honoring Phillip S. Lapsansky on  
his retirement after more than forty years of service to the  
Library Company of Philadelphia, 1971–2012

Presented June 15, 2012



*PHILADELPHIA:*  
The Library Company of Philadelphia  
1314 Locust Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

The Library Company gratefully acknowledges the generous support of  
The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation  
The Pennsylvania Abolition Society  
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Publication Fund

Cover illustration: *Reading the Emancipation Proclamation*, engraving by James W. Watts  
after painting by Henry W. Herrick [(Hartford, Conn.): Lucius Stebbins, 1864).

Copyright © 2012 by The Library Company of Philadelphia  
All rights reserved.  
ISBN 0-914076-21-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| PREFACE                                    | 7  |
| Works by Phillip Lapsansky                 | 9  |
| ESSAYS                                     |    |
| Dee E. Andrews                             | 15 |
| Stephanie M. H. Camp                       | 18 |
| Corey Capers                               | 23 |
| Ric Caric                                  | 28 |
| Matthew J. Clavin                          | 31 |
| Jasmine Nichole Cobb                       | 33 |
| Lara Langer Cohen & Jordan Alexander Stein | 36 |
| James W. Cook                              | 39 |
| Jeannine DeLombard                         | 42 |
| Marcy J. Dinius                            | 45 |
| Murray Dubin                               | 48 |
| Laurent Dubois                             | 50 |
| James Alexander Dun                        | 54 |
| Erica Armstrong Dunbar                     | 58 |
| Yvonne Fabella                             | 61 |
| David Faflik                               | 64 |
| Oliver St. C. Franklin                     | 67 |
| Scott Gac                                  | 69 |
| Jenna M. Gibbs                             | 71 |
| Wendy Gonaver                              | 74 |
| Jerome S. Handler                          | 76 |
| Maurice Jackson                            | 80 |
| Martha S. Jones                            | 84 |
| Laura Keim                                 | 89 |
| Saadia N. Lawton                           | 91 |
| Lori Leavell                               | 94 |

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| W. T. Lhamon            | 96  |
| Joanne Pope Melish      | 97  |
| Randall M. Miller       | 100 |
| David Murray            | 104 |
| Amrita Myers            | 105 |
| Gary Nash               | 108 |
| Heather S. Nathans      | 112 |
| Dana Nelson             | 115 |
| Richard S. Newman       | 117 |
| Samuel Otter            | 120 |
| Carla L. Peterson       | 123 |
| David R. Prior          | 126 |
| Patrick Rael            | 129 |
| Peter P. Reed           | 133 |
| Marcia C. Robinson      | 137 |
| Molly Rogers            | 140 |
| Augusta Rohrbach        | 143 |
| Nick Salvatore          | 145 |
| Carroll Smith-Rosenberg | 148 |
| John W. Sweet           | 154 |
| Beverly Tomek           | 158 |
| James Walvin            | 160 |
| Ashli White             | 165 |
| Marcus Wood             | 168 |
| Jean Fagan Yellin       | 177 |

## PREFACE

It is not often that we have an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of someone who has served the Library Company for more than four decades.

Phillip S. Lapsansky came to the Library Company in July of 1971 to work on a major project to identify and catalog the African Americana holdings of the Library Company and the neighboring Historical Society of Pennsylvania under the auspices of grants from the Ford Foundation and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. That project was itself the very natural outgrowth of the major 1969 exhibition “Negro History, 1553–1903” mounted by those two institutions, a pioneering work in the nascent field of African American history. In the preface to the 1973 published bibliography that resulted from the work of Phil and others, *Afro-Americana, 1553–1906: Author Catalog of the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, then-Librarian Edwin Wolf 2nd noted that the success of the project was due in large measure to Phil’s “quiet diligence.”

After the conclusion of that project Phil stayed on at the Library Company, working on such other critical undertakings as cataloging our extensive newspaper and pamphlet collections. In 1979 Phil began to work in the Reading Room; as our *Annual Report* for that year explains, “He seems to like being where the action is, and his store of information is being shared on a day-to-day basis with our readers.”

In the years following Phil became more and more steeped in the knowledge of the 10,000 books, pamphlets, and broadsides comprising the African Americana Collection. And when we re-cataloged the collection by computer beginning in the mid-1980s, he looked at every imprint once again with a more experienced eye, adding subject headings, which we did not have in the old catalog, and even creating some new headings where the standard ones were not adequate.

For most of the twenty-nine years from 1979 to 2008 Phil presided over the Reading Room as Chief of Reference, and for the past four years in partial retirement he has worked half-time as Curator of African American History. Each year he has written an account of African Americana acquisitions for the *Annual Report*, and he periodically mounts an

exhibition, such as the 1996 retrospective of his first quarter-century of collecting, and last year's exhibition "John A. McAllister's Civil War: The Philadelphia Home Front." Phil's prowess as a curator was made manifest in 2008, when we published a revised edition of *Afro-Americana, 1553–1906* that records the 2,500 rare books and pamphlets that he has brought into our collection since the publication of the first edition in 1973—mostly one at a time through the careful and timely scrutiny of dealer and auction catalogs and through the maintenance of excellent relationships with dealers and collectors. The Library Company has recently embarked on a project that will increase access to our African Americana Collection exponentially—the scanning of the entire contents of more than 12,000 rare books, pamphlets, and broadsides for a fully-searchable digital edition that will be published by Readex, a division of NewsBank.

Over the years Phil has shared his deep knowledge of the Library Company's collections with hundreds, probably even thousands, of readers, many of whom acknowledged their indebtedness in the books they published. When the time came recently to think about how best to pay tribute to all that Phil has done for the Library Company and for scholarship, it occurred to us that a typical *Festschrift* would just not be adequate to convey the extent of Phil's influence. So rather than invite a relatively small number of scholars to prepare substantial essays, we took a different tack and asked a much larger number of scholars to prepare pithy essays that contain both their reflections about Phil and their discussions of particular works in our collections—whether rare books, pamphlets, graphics, manuscripts, or ephemera—that have played an important part in their own research.

More than fifty scholars answered this call, testimony in itself of the universally high regard in which Phil is held. We hope you enjoy reading the heartfelt appreciations that follow.

John C. Van Horne  
Director



# Works by Phillip S. Lapsansky

## Books:

Compiler, *Afro-Americana, 1553–1906: Author Catalog of the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973; revised edition Newark, Del.: Oak Knoll Books, 2008).

Co-editor (with Richard S. Newman and Patrick Rael), *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of African American Protest Literature, 1790–1860* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

## Articles:

“‘Deism’: An Unpublished Poem by Phillis Wheatley,” *New England Quarterly* 50 (September 1977): 517–20.

Review of Wendy Ball and Tony Martin, *Rare Afro-Americana: A Reconstruction of the Adger Library*, in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 77, no. 1 (1983): 91–93.

“Bias in Art Has a Long Tradition,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 1988.

“Passmore Williamson in Moyamensing Prison,” in *Legacy in Light: Photographic Treasures from Philadelphia Area Public Collections* (Philadelphia: Photography Centennial Project / Philadelphia Museum of Art in Cooperation with the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1990), 36–37.

“Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images,” in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 201–30.

“Abigail, a Negress: The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic,” in “*A Melancholy Scene of Devastation*”: *The*

*Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*, ed. J. Worth Estes & Billie G. Smith (Philadelphia: For the College of Physicians of Philadelphia & The Library Company of Philadelphia by Science History Publications, 1997), 61–78.

### **Library Company Exhibitions:**

*Of Slavery and Race* (1983). An exhibition of 150 books, pamphlets, etc. on these issues in American society, selected from recent acquisitions to the Library Company's Afro-Americana Collection.

*Africa and the Africans* (1985). An exhibition of 200 works on the discovery and exploitation of Africa and of African American opinion on Africa.

*The Cartoon Campaigns* (1988). An exhibition of early American political cartoons juxtaposed with original cartoons by Tony Auth, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, exploring themes and styles in American political cartoons.

*"We Abolition Women Are Turning the World Upside Down!"* (1989). An exhibition commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Anti-Slavery Conventions of American Women, 1837, 1838, 1839, many of whose participants were founding mothers of the modern women's rights movement.

*Déjà Vieux: A Celebration of Philadelphia Politics* (1991). An exhibition of political and campaign pamphlets, cartoons, and ephemera spanning three centuries of Philadelphia political life, juxtaposed with original cartoons on Philadelphia political issues by Signe Wilkinson, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist for *The Philadelphia Daily News*.

*An African American Miscellany: Selections from a Quarter Century of Collecting, 1970–1995* (1996). An exhibition of 120 books, pamphlets, prints, photographs, and paintings added to the Afro-Americana Collection over the previous twenty-five years.

*Amistad* (1998). An exhibition of books, pamphlets, and illustrations on

the American adventures of the Africans of the slave ship *Amistad*.

*Philadelphia's African American Writers—and Readers* (1999). An exhibition of 18th- and 19th-century works by Philadelphia African Americans and documents on 19th-century local black literary societies and cultural organizations.

*The Genesis of Republicanism: The Birth and Growth of the Grand Old Party, 1854–1872* (2000). An exhibition of nearly 300 pamphlets, books, cartoons, broadsides, and campaign ephemera relating to the collapse of the party system in the 1850s and the rise of the Republican movement. On-line version available at [www.librarycompany.org/Republican/exhibition/ExhibitionIntro.htm](http://www.librarycompany.org/Republican/exhibition/ExhibitionIntro.htm).

*Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic* (2008). An exhibition of over 100 printed works, graphics, and portraits documenting the emergence of the first generation of free African Americans in the North in the years following the American Revolution. On-line version available at [www.librarycompany.org/blackfounders](http://www.librarycompany.org/blackfounders)

*John A. McAllister's Civil War: The Philadelphia Home Front* (2011). An exhibition drawing on the 50,000 items of Civil War-era ephemera in the John A. McAllister Collection. On-line version available at [www.librarycompany.org/mcallisterexhibition/](http://www.librarycompany.org/mcallisterexhibition/)

### **Electronic resources:**

*The Crisis of the Union: Causes, Conduct and Consequences of the U.S. Civil War*, Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image, University of Pennsylvania Libraries (a by-product of the exhibition *The Genesis of Republicanism*): <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/civilwar/about>.

*The Liberation of Jane Johnson*. On-line exhibition available at [www.librarycompany.org/janejohnson/](http://www.librarycompany.org/janejohnson/)

An illustrated talk delivered in November 2011 about two dozen significant acquisitions made during Phil Lapsansky's tenure at the Library Company, available at <http://www.librarycompany.org/digitalmedia>.

### **Service:**

Consultant and panelist for *Reframing the Color Line: Race and Visual Culture of the Atlantic World*, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, October, 2009, an exhibition and conference on 19th-century American racial graphics.

Consultant to Rosenbach Museum & Library (Philadelphia, Pa.) program "Collecting at the Cutting Edge," a program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop African American collections and exhibitions at the Rosenbach, 2006.

Consultant/Guest Curator, *Of Color, Humanities and Statehood: The Black Experience in Pennsylvania over Three Centuries, 1681–1981*. The African American Museum in Philadelphia, 1981.

Consultant/Guest Curator, *Pennsylvania Abolition Society and the Pennsylvania Black: 200th Anniversary Exhibition*. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1974.

"The Underground Railroad: Sources and Resources," panel presentation at the Underground Railroad Conference sponsored by the National Park Service. Philadelphia, August, 2008.

"Early African American Writing," a series of lectures before national gatherings of college and university faculty and high school teachers, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Library Company of Philadelphia, 2006, 2007, 2008.

"The Liberation of Jane Johnson," slide lecture before the South of South St. community organization and the Rosenbach Museum & Library, accompanying Lorene Cary, reading from her novel, *The Price of*

*a Child*, February and March, 2003.

“The Underground Railroad in Center City Philadelphia,” lecture before the annual meeting of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, May, 2002.

“Aboard William Still’s Underground Railroad,” slide lecture, Drexel University, February, 2002.

“Absalom Jones: Slave and Citizen,” keynote address at the 250th Anniversary commemoration of the birth of Absalom Jones, Balch Institute, Philadelphia, November 6, 1996.

“Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Anti-abolitionist Images of the 1830s,” lecture for the symposium *Talking Radicalism in a Greenhouse: Women Writers & Women’s Rights*, Daughters of the American Revolution Museum, Washington, D.C., March 29, 1996.

“The Liberation of Jane Johnson & Sons: An Episode on the Urban Underground Railroad,” Moore College of Art & Design, November 12, 1995.

“‘Abigail, a Negress:’ The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic,” lecture for the symposium “*A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*,” The Library Company of Philadelphia and College of Physicians of Philadelphia, October 1, 1993.

“Aboard William Still’s Underground Railroad: Celebrating an Afro-American Classic,” the Edwin Wolf 2nd Memorial Lecture before the Philobiblon Club of Philadelphia, 1993.

“Young Tanner’s Philadelphia,” lecture on the Philadelphia career of Henry Ossawa Tanner, at a symposium on Tanner’s life and work accompanying a retrospective exhibition of his paintings, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1991.

“Early American Newspapers,” series of talks on 18th- and early 19th-century newspapers. Directed research for Temple University History of Journalism students using Library Company newspaper resources, 1979–1989.

“Sources in Afro-American History,” series of talks on African American historical sources for Philadelphia school teachers participating in the school system’s PATHS program, a summer study session at various local cultural institutions, 1984–1988.

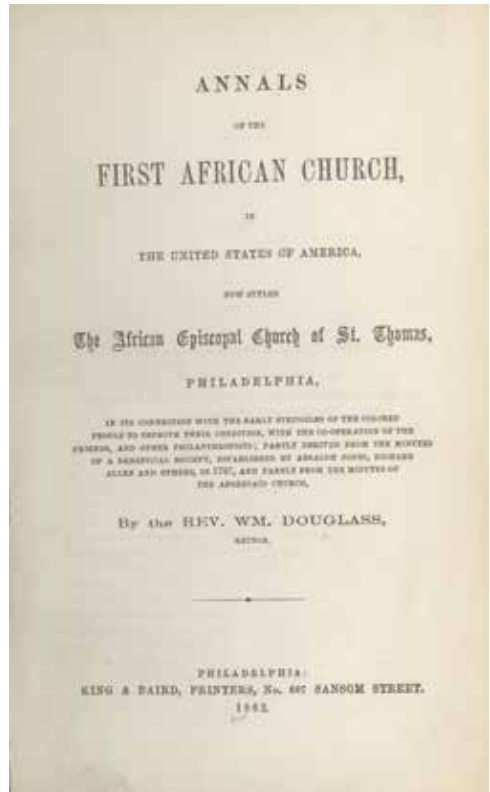
“Discovering Afro-Americans in the Popular Mind,” series of classes developed for the Philadelphia School System’s Parkway Program for high school students involving directed research with early newspapers and journals to discover, examine, and critically evaluate popularly disseminated information on blacks, 1979–1981.

“‘Life in Philadelphia:’ Early Caricatures of Afro-Americans,” lecture at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, 1975.

## Dee E. Andrews

I probably first met Phil before I knew I met Phil. For several years before entering the History Ph.D. program at Penn, I was a low-level employee at the American Philosophical Society, a part of the wide circle of Philadelphia's learned society employees at the end of the 1970s who hobnobbed at various social occasions with those higher up the scale. But I distinctly remember when I was first *aware* of meeting Phil.

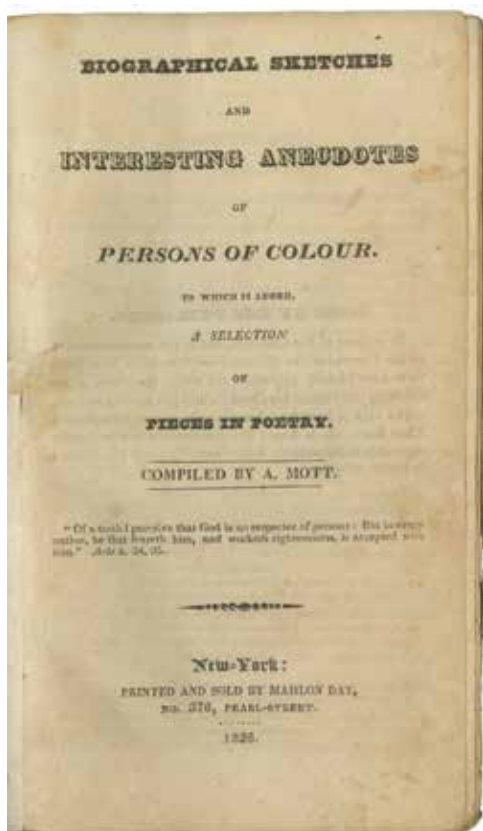
I was a student in Anthony Wallace's "Revitalization Movement" seminar at Penn, this was in 1979, and had decided to do a paper on the African Methodists. The best place to start—and of course to continue—was the Library Company, with its massive and ever-evolving collection of Afro-Americana. So I set off for my very first scholarly visit to the Library Company. It was a memorable experience. For one thing, Edwin Wolf frequented the reading room with his energetic presence and booming voice. This is different, I thought: where's the "silence" sign? Then there was Phil: like no other librarian I'd ever met. He was unassuming and soft-spoken, as are many book people, but he also almost immediately presented himself as a kind of fellow explorer in the then relatively uncharted land called Black History, whose treasures he was unearthing on a seemingly daily basis. And all he expected in return was your



William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church in the United States, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1862).

dedication to the field.

Phil set me down with William Douglass's *Annals of the First African Church*, and I was hooked. He could see as well as I how a sometimes dry but always pioneering church history contained the elements of something much bigger: the beginnings of an African American culture embedded in the evangelical society and church structures of the 18th century. I was quickly persuaded that understanding Black Methodists was the entrée to understanding not just African Americans in the founding era but also the Methodist movement as a whole and the impact of evangelicalism on American life in general: the core of what became my dissertation and book, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*.



Abigail Mott, *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Color* (New York: M. Day, 1838).

Since that visit many years ago, I have depended on Phil's acumen repeatedly. Case in point: as a Mellon Fellow several years ago I was once again browsing through the offerings of the Library Company's Afro-Americana, at a loss for inspiration, when Phil came up to me and asked if I'd ever seen the book he had in hand, written by one A. Mott, called *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Color*. No, I said. Well, he said, with his customary taciturnity: take a look. I did, and now Abigail Mott's fascinating work forms a significant part of what has turned into a new area of endeavor for me: the history of abolitionist authorship and publishing.

In short, Phil's scholarly insights led me directly to the



fields that will likely be the scholarly bookends of my professional life: religion and the American Revolution and antislavery and its authors. Now, that's what I'd call one successful librarian.

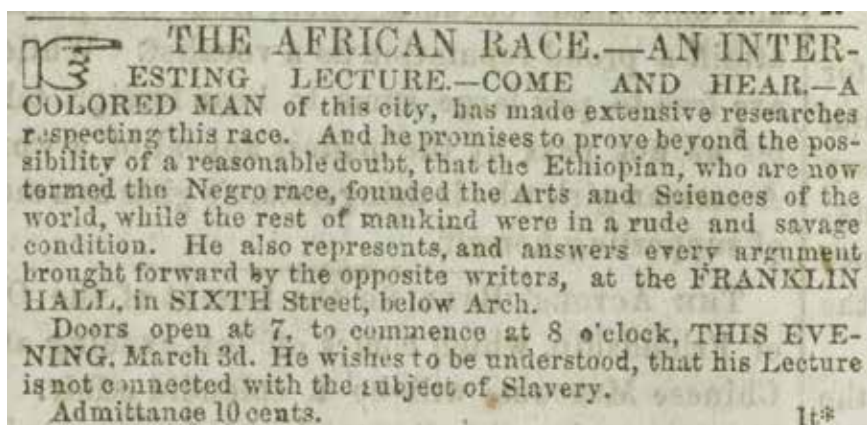
**Dee E. Andrews** is Professor of History at California State University-East Bay and the author of *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760–1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton University Press, 2000), which was awarded the Hans Rosenhaupt Memorial Book Award by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.



## Stephanie M. H. Camp

I am working on a history of the idea of black beauty from the era of the slave trade to Michelle Obama. Because I'm examining public debates, I have been spending time with published texts. Until a few years ago, in order to read these kinds of texts, one travelled to university libraries and rare book libraries—the Huntington in Los Angeles, the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, and, best of all, the Library Company of Philadelphia. But since about the mid-aughts, Google Books and other digitalization projects changed all of that. Now, downloadable copies of many rare books (indeed, most of the ones I have needed lately) are available to anyone with high-speed internet access, anywhere. That kind of access has been enormously beneficial for my research. I have been able to read far more books, pamphlets, and newspapers than I ever would have been able to, even in a number of research trips. But that kind of access comes at a cost.

What has become more difficult to obtain is connection with experts on collections: the curators. Phil Lapsansky's retirement comes at a moment when the curator is both more needed than before, and more elusive. More elusive because collections now travel widely through digital media, while curators are not nearly as mobile as the texts (though this need not necessarily be the case). But the curator's expertise in collections



Advertisement for a lecture by John H. Johnson in *The Sun* (Philadelphia), March 1 and 3, 1851.

remains at least as necessary as ever before, and perhaps more so precisely due to the volume of circulating texts. Collaborative discovery of documents—not just access to known texts—happens through dialogue. In my experience, some of my richest “discoveries” were items handed to me by a curator. No one has been more generous with his time and his knowledge than Phil. Phil’s longstanding interest in visual culture and cultural history shaped important parts of my first book on enslaved women. He led me to visual material I might have shied away from, not being sure how to interpret it. Phil shared his own research and publications with me, offering ways of analyzing the material through a cultural historical lens, and I began to learn how to work with visual material.

A few years ago, during a research trip for my current project on beauty, Phil once again had a number of items for me to look at, items I never would have found if not for his sleuthing over the past four decades. The items included one particularly intriguing piece in the collection of the neighboring Historical Society of Pennsylvania: the beginnings of a book drafted in 1851 by an otherwise unknown free black man named John H. Johnson, of Philadelphia. The book would never be published but, according to advertisements Phil dug up, Johnson delivered at least two speeches based on this material. Johnson intended for the book to be called “Argumentative Observations on the Ancient Civilization of the Ethiopian or African Race.” At least, that’s what the surviving portion of his manuscript was entitled. Just as it sounds, the essay is a defense of the black race.

The race, of course, needed much defending in the 1850s. Racial science was in its heyday, and the commonsense understanding of the nature of race was a scientific one: the world’s peoples were innately, biologically distinct—hierarchically so. And whatever many differences existed among racial writers, they all agreed that “the negro” was the lowest form of human, *if* he (the negro was generally a “he”) was human at all. Arguably, the most important part of the negro’s difference was his physiognomy: his chin, jaw, hair, limbs were all malformed, sure signs of the negro’s extreme inferiority.

Nineteenth-century black thought on black beauty was consumed with addressing racial science. What choice did a black writer really have? Everywhere you looked, Johnson wrote, people (“men”) who otherwise

“manifest[ed] a considerable share of intelligence,” started to “talk like simple blockheads when they converse upon the intellectual and moral character of the blacks.” As “Argumentative Observations” explained, the stereotype was that blacks were the antithesis of the “noble” white race: they were “rediculous” and slouched characters, figures of “debasement servility” and “slavish manners.” Stereotypical blacks carried themselves with little dignity and much bowing. These stereotypes peopled racist dogma in science, popular culture (minstrelsy earned blacks’ special ire), and everyday interaction with black people. They simply had to be responded to.

As critical as he was of white supremacist thought, though, Johnson was not wholly free of it, either. Like many 19th-century black American writers, Johnson’s antiracism was tangled up in the very white supremacy it sought to combat. Nineteenth-century racist thought depicted black people as simian in their physical nature: long-limbed, small-jawed, bent. And when it came to *Southern* black people, Johnson was not so sure the stereotype was entirely wrong. Northern blacks, for sure, did not typically have the despicably “cowardly manners that the majority of Southern blacks are remarkable for.” Among prideful Northern blacks, “that debasing servility” and the “slavish manners” were rare. Johnson insisted on marking a clear boundary within the black race between South and North.

Johnson’s boundary points to an important difference between black racist thought like Johnson’s and white supremacist thought. The nature of race was understood very differently. White supremacists believed the differences between the globe’s peoples were biological and unchanging, that race existed outside of history. Black racist thought, on the other hand, however contemptuous it could be of Southern blacks (in Johnson’s writing) and non-elite blacks (in the writings of others, such as Frederick Douglass), understood unbecoming racial “character” to be instilled, not innate. “The degraded and monkeyfied manners” of Southern blacks were “formed by training them to it.” Slaveholders “have done all in their power to brutalize and monkeyfy them.”

Johnson insisted that “any other race could have been trained in the same manner.” Rejecting the consensus of American science, Johnson declared that behavior believed by many to be specific to black people was

neither racial nor “natural.”

Far from being proof of blacks’ biologically-determined nature, Southern blacks’ “monkeyfied” manners were performances, “Argumentative Observations” argued. They were forms of “deportment” that were “chiefly artificial if not entirely so.” Southern blacks who had “servile manners and apish bows and tricks” were “merely acting a part in order to adapt themselves to the prejudice of those [they are] trying to please.” Such “rediculous” behavior was no more natural to the Southern black person than it was to the Irishman, Johnson argued. Like so many other 19th-century black activists, Johnson clung to an older way of thinking about race, a way that had been common among Europeans and white Americans until the early 19th century. Black race thinkers in the 19th century were environmentalists who did not deny the existence of racial differences, but rather denied that those differences were innate to the body. Instead, racial differences—the differences in bodies and behaviors between the world’s peoples—arose from environmental and cultural variation. Environmentalism allowed black race thinkers to challenge the essentialism of racial science while also retaining the idea that black people were distinctive, perhaps special, perhaps superior. It allowed black activists to critique American slavery and the profound injury it gave to the enslaved while also denying that the injury was race-wide and permanent, that all black people were and would be forevermore “servile” and “monkeyfied,” to use Johnson’s strong words. People could change. Their circumstances could change and with them their behavior. Even their bodies could change to reflect their progress.

John H. Johnson’s manuscript shows, however, that he was exploring another possibility, too: the possibility that there were more than two choices, biological essentialism or progressive environmentalism. To make this point, Johnson found the Irish to be a very productive point of comparison. Whereas the “slavish” behavior of Southern blacks became proof of their natural inferiority, the same did not apply to the Irish. Though “it is a well known fact that a large portion of the Irish race are as stupid and rediculous in their manners and customs as any of the Southern slaves,” Irish ridiculousness did not prevent the nation from being “considered as a branch of the great Caucasian race.” The stereotype of Irish behavior was not understood to be fixed in Irish blood or bodies;

the problem was a cultural one, and it did not prevent the Irish from being recognized as white. The problem for black people, Johnson thought, went beyond whites' greater inclination to stereotype blacks more than the Irish. The problem got back to the nature of race. Neither born of the negro's nature nor easily shed like a pure performance, Southern blacks' "monkeyfied" manners did have the ability to become, through repeated use, a "second nature." And that could look dangerously like a first nature. Black writers argued for an essential black nature, or a social human nature that changed with time and circumstance, or a combination of the two (as did Johnson).

John H. Johnson's defense of the black race is one of many texts by black writers who attempted, in the words of Johnson's contemporary, the Brooklyn journalist William J. Wilson, "to tell our own story, write our own lecture, paint our own picture, chisel our own bust, (I demand not caricatures but correct emanations), acknowledge and love our own peculiarities if we have any." "Argumentative Observations" typifies the fraught nature of so many of these efforts. "Paint[ing] our own picture" was anything but a straightforward job. The work was burdened with the hegemony of racial science and white supremacy. Weighed down by the need to constantly defend black physiognomy as human and at least potentially beautiful, few black activists were in the mood to celebrate black beauty, even when they believed in it.

**Stephanie M. H. Camp** is the Dio Richardson Endowed Associate Professor of History, University of Washington, Seattle. She is the author of *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and a co-editor of *New Studies in the History of American Slavery* (University of Georgia Press, 2006).



# Corey Capers

Phil Lapsansky is generally known as an archivist and expert in the narrative and documentary history of African Americans. One need only examine the acknowledgements in the relevant scholarship to see his influence. Though he might scowl at the pretense of the appellation, Phil should also be known as a practitioner of “race critical theory,” or the effort to understand the uses and abuse of classed and gendered black bodies (in the flesh or in print) for enacting and maintaining a particular hierarchical social order. The evidence for such a claim is in writing. For example, in his essay “Inventing Black Folks” in the Library Company’s *Annual Report* for 1997, Lapsansky writes, “Our three acquisitions suggest that what is at work here [in antebellum racial caricatures and cartoons] is the *invention* of black folks by white folks, the *creation* of blacks as metaphors for social ills, and an *attack* on the role and presence of real



*A Peep into the Antifederal Club*, engraving (New York, 1793).

African Americans in American life” (emphasis added). As it intersects with other disciplinary fields and scholars, Lapsansky’s writing provides a matrix for getting at how and why many in the antebellum United States came to enact free black bodies—in print through caricature and on the street through rioting—as sources of political and social corruption. In what follows, my focus moves from fictive free black bodies to freedom generally, and from the Revolution and Early Republic to the antebellum United States.

Despite the lowly position of most people of African descent in revolutionary British North America, it was possible to figure them as part of the American polity. A 1765 anti-Stamp Act joke in *The Boston Gazette* does just that, narrating a fictive account of the “*most reputable* STAMP-MAN,” who is on his way from Boston to his native Connecticut with a colleague from Massachusetts. As they went through Roxbury, they “lost their way . . . but by the help of Sambo an innocent Negro Man, they were convey’d [to the] great Road again, leading to Watertown”—in the opposite direction of Connecticut. Sambo’s place in the joke is ambiguous. In the world figured in the printed joke, he is an unwitting *agent* of colonial resistance. The Sambo figure does service to the American cause by accidentally leading the stamp-men astray. Moreover, the fact that the two British officials had to rely on a person held to service calls their independence and self-mastery into question. On the other hand, in the world where the joke would be read, he is an *instrument* of colonial resistance. Sambo is created by a writer/printer and disseminated in print as a means of humiliating the stamp-men, who are themselves tools of the British government. Both events, the one figured in print and the one occurring upon reading the fictive account, enact and spread the humiliation of Sambo and the people on whom he is patterned.

There is no such ambivalence in *A Peep into the Antifederal Club*. Published in 1793 as an attack against emergent Democrat-Republican societies, the print *fabricates* a democratic club, Satan, and a black servant addressed *à la française* as Citizen Mungo. When asked what he thinks of the liberty talk in the “antifederal club,” he replies “Tink! Fine Ting Broder Bockrah our turn nex.” Other commentators have noted how this aspect of the print likely refers to the revolution in Saint-Domingue and its connection to the French Revolution, and I agree. However, the



other printed bodies in the image betray an additional Federalist concern with unruliness and disorder as expressed in the club members' bodies and gestures and the figure of a seductively reclining Satan lying opposite Citizen Mungo. The club's creed (shown at the upper left) materializes these graphic threats into clear political language: (1) The people are All and we are the People; (2) All power in one body and that body ourselves; . . . and (4) Liberty is the power of doing anything we like. In short, then, *A Peep into the Antifederal Club* enacts black freedom, seduction by Satan, and democratic societies as dangerous steps on the road to anarchy.

Federalist jeremiads against Democratic Republicans and anarchy continued until the War of 1812, when attacks such as those embodied in *A Peep* proved politically ineffective and unwise. So, instead, printers sympathetic to the Friends of Order increasingly targeted what they defined as unruly behavior, often figured in the form of free and enslaved black folks. One of the chief vehicles for such attacks was a genre of popular prints that (in part through Lapsansky's labor) has come to be associated with the term "Bobalition," an intentional mangling of "abolition" attributed to the speech of free African Americans in the North.

*Dreadful Riot on Negro Hill!* is among the earliest prints in the Bobalition genre. Patterned after an actual 1815 riot against a "disorderly house" in Boston's West End neighborhood known as "Negro Hill," the print first appeared in 1816 featuring a mob of white truckermen (which I understand to be teamsters) attacking a black family consisting of two parents named Phillis and Pompey and their daughter Kate. Because Pompey has been wounded and is on crutches, Phillis defends the family with a broom while Pompey walks away holding the hand of their infant child Kate.

Despite its relationship to a real riot, and like *A Peep into the Antifederal Club*, *Dreadful Riot* is an allegory of the corruption of the body politic under the anarchy of "democracy" rendered in racial terms. In the world of *Dreadful Riot*, African American families are too weak to defend their liberty against the predations of the mobbish multitude, leaving Phillis to take on what would conventionally be Pompey's masculine position. In turn, the print renders the white mob tyrannical in that it preys upon an injured and innocent black family in a manner parallel to "the hand of power" haunting liberty in Bernard Bailyn's account of



*Dreadful Riot on Negro Hill!*, woodcut detail of larger broadside that includes letterpress ([Boston], 1827).

the American Revolution. Together both groups stand in for a corrupt society—the black family for an ill-defended liberty and the mob for a tyrannical power.

Through its graphic portrayal of the transgression of social and political ideals, *Dreadful Riot* foregrounds the emergent boundaries between public and private space, virtue and vice, and black and white bodies in the Northern early American republic. The dissonance in the United States between black freedom, working-class white acts of popular punishment, and elite notions of propriety would continue to play out throughout the 19th century. By the 1830s, as Phil has written in his essay “Graphic Discord,” the conflict had taken shape between “immediatist abolitionists and their opponents” and “was fought with pictures as well as words.” In them, in graphic discord, there is a significant body of literature on the issues of slavery and antislavery, the role of women in society and social movements, and the place of blacks in 19th-century America. If, like Phil, we attend more closely to the *relationships* articulated among these issues, roles, and people, instead of the spectacular performances

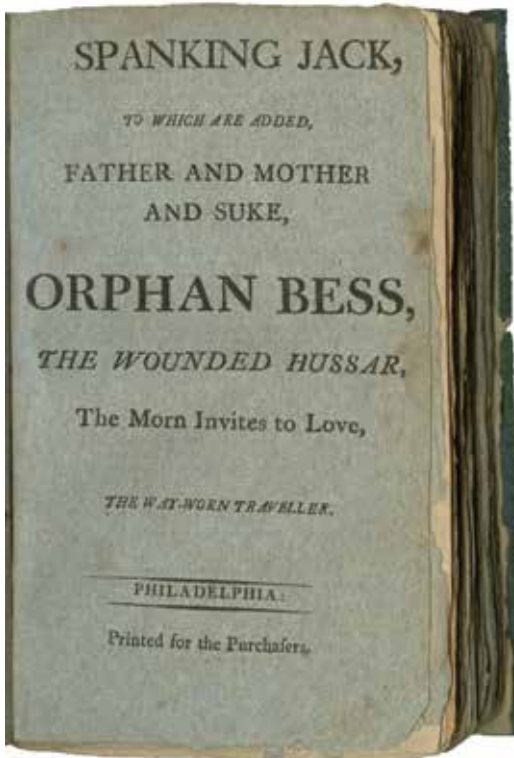
of disorder and corruption enacted through fictive black bodies, we can continue to learn more about the making and use of racial difference in the history of American politics.

**Corey Capers** is an Assistant Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He is currently working on a book entitled “Public Blackness, Printed Bodies and Vernacular Governance: Racial Practice, Publicity and Citizenship in the U.S. North, 1776–1828.”



## Ric Caric

My history with Phil Lapsansky goes back further than I remember precisely, but must have begun in May 1983 when I arrived at the Library Company with a travel grant and a dissertation proposal for psychoanalytic research on Philadelphia popular culture. Never having done archival research, my project went about as well as could be expected, and I floundered for a solid six months before finding anything useful in the stacks of archival materials. One of the first and most important of my early needles was a song entitled “Spanking Jack” in a Library Company songbook collection listed as “Songs” from 1805. “Spanking Jack” was extremely significant for my research because it was one of the first sources



*Spanking Jack, to Which Are Added, Father and Mother and Suke, Orphan Bess, The Wounded Hussar, The Morn Invites to Love, The Way-worn Traveller* (Philadelphia: Printed for the purchasers, [1805?]).

indicating that traditional artisans represented their practical problems in terms of attacks on their bodies, such as “Spanking Jack” being swept to his death, “Bonnie Ben” being eaten by sharks, and “Whiffing Tom” having his head blown off in battle.

“Spanking Jack” was so important to my research that I used it to introduce one of my first published articles—“Blustering Brags, Dueling Inventors, and Corn-Square Geniuses: Processes of Recognition among Philadelphia Artisans and Workers, 1785-1825” (*American Journal of Semiotics* 12 (1998):

323–41). By that time, I had abandoned psychoanalysis as a framework for analyzing popular culture but was still focused very much on the vulnerability of male bodies as a crucial element for understanding traditional popular culture during the early years of commercial expansion and industrialization. Every time I came back to the Library Company, there was more digging into images of male bodies under siege—John Fitch imagining himself being burned alive, rioting firemen being shot and knifed, workingmen being preyed on by vampires, the bloated, disease-ridden faces of heavy drinkers in Washingtonian temperance speeches, and the hallucinatory paranoia of *delirium tremens*. At some point in 2007 or 2008, Phil had seen enough of my research interests that he decided to introduce me to the materials in African American history that he had been curating even longer than I had been researching. I always assumed that Phil brought these materials to me because I was “the weird body guy,” but perhaps he also thought that I might bring a different kind of insight to the African American materials he knew so well.

Phil’s first initiative was to bring out some materials on the Bobalition broadsides from 1818 through the late 1820s and tell me that he thought I would be interested in them. Sure enough, the bodily themes were there. The men portrayed in the Bobalition broadsides were dark-skinned, thick, wearing dress military uniforms, and drawn to create an image of seriousness and ridiculousness in their grim determination, with the connotation that seriousness among black people was an absurdity. The Edward W. Clay “Life in Philadelphia” lithographs also represented African Americans as absurdly out of place. How could these attacks be connected with the exclusion of blacks from civic institutions like fire companies and the representation of bodily vulnerability among white participants in popular culture? I had been arguing that post-Revolutionary popular culture was organized around competitive performances in which participants sought to overcome their anxieties concerning their bodies through displays of their abilities and cleverness in leisure competitions. It was obvious that the encounters between white participants in leisure activities and African Americans were very different, but I did not have an argument concerning how the increasingly prominent racial dimension of popular culture fit in with the rest of the picture.

As was the case with “Spanking Jack,” the key evidence turned out to

be an item that Phil brought to my attention more than once, an 1836 songbook entitled *Jim Crow's Collection of Songs to Drive Away the Blue Devils*. What was striking about the title here was that it was primarily the figure of Jim Crow—T. D. Rice dressed up in blackface and acting out a particular image of a black man who drove away the “Blue Devils” (a long-standing image for the attacks that men feared on their bodies). By 1836, the anxieties associated with early industrialization had increased to such an extent that white artisans, clerks, and operatives represented themselves as under attack from a seeming army of vampires, incubi, hydras, and other kinds of monsters. What, then, gave blackface representations like Jim Crow such symbolic power that they could “Drive Away the Blue Devils” of antebellum melancholy? I believe the most likely answer goes back to the “Bobalition” broadsides and Edward W. Clay lithographs where African Americans were represented as singularly ridiculous figures. By representing himself as a black man, Rice enhanced the comic value of “blackness” to such an extent that white participants in popular culture could experience the laughter associated with Rice’s Jim Crow figure as driving away the blue devils of melancholy. The same can be said about the emergence of blackface bands like the Virginia Minstrels during the 1840s. Adapting a small ensemble format as the basis for organizing their songs, jokes, stories, and skits, the blackface bands were able to enhance the comic value of “blackness” even further.

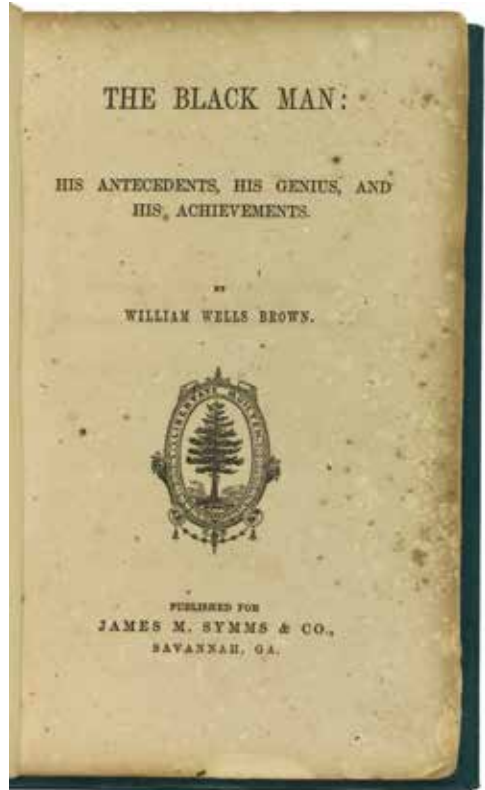
Having received a short-term fellowship in 2010, I returned to the Library Company and received special attention from Phil as he showed me collections of Walnut Street Theatre playbills, newspaper listings for Rice performances, and comic almanacs. What had started with his showing me a few sources on blackface representation had developed much to my surprise into an extensive research project on blackface culture in Philadelphia. But perhaps Phil was not as surprised by this as I was.

**Ric Caric** is a Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Morehead State University. His articles have appeared in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, *Pennsylvania History*, *The American Journal of Semiotics*, and *Contemporary Philosophy*.



## Matthew J. Clavin

In the summer of 2003 as the recipient of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship, I had the honor of spending several weeks at the Library Company of Philadelphia, performing crucial research for my doctoral dissertation that would become eventually my first monograph, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution*. Both the dissertation and book contain nearly fifty pages of footnotes; however, in only one of those footnotes did I thank an individual explicitly for having provided a truly exceptional source. That individual, of course, was Phil Lapsansky. He had informed me that after the Civil War James Simms, a former slave who was a minister and educator in Savannah, Georgia, published a Savannah edition of William Wells Brown's *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*—a collective biography of great African Americans that included a biographical sketch of Toussaint Louverture. It was, for me, a remarkable discovery: rock-solid proof that black Southerners knew about Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution. This is only one example of the many contributions Phil made to my project. While I was at the Library Company, Phil constantly provided me with materials we both suspected would be beneficial to my research; but what set Phil apart was that he routinely brought



William Wells Brown, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (Savannah, [1865]).

me sources that I was not aware of and never came across in the online catalog. He knew they were absolutely essential to what I was trying to prove.

If that were not enough, it quickly became clear to me that Phil had prepared in advance for my arrival. Noting a similarity in our particular areas of scholarly interest, he had stockpiled newspapers, pamphlets, and images for me and shared them with me shortly after my arrival. I was only a graduate student with a month-long fellowship. Yet Phil made me feel like a seasoned professional. I must admit that I wasn't used to being treated like royalty! I have since had the pleasure of working with some of the most accomplished and hardest-working curators in the United States. None is more deserving of my respect and admiration than Phil. Maybe most impressive—and most distinguishing—of all of his accomplishments, is the original scholarship he has produced, based on the very collections he has assembled and protected over the years. While most archivists might leave the writing and interpretation to historians and other experts in the field, Phil took it upon himself to explain what many of the unrivaled sources housed behind the Library Company's walls reveal of early American and African American history. In such important scholarly works as *Pamphlets of Protest, 1790–1860* and an essay in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, for example, he illuminated the power that black print and visual culture exerted on the abolitionist movement in the United States. I have for nearly a decade now considered him a kindred spirit. He and I share something beyond a deep love of African American history—a passion for sharing this love with others. Phil will have retired by the next time I get to Philadelphia. He will, however, never be forgotten.

**Matthew J. Clavin** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Houston in Houston, Texas. A scholar of early American and Atlantic history, he is the author of *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).





## Jasmine Nichole Cobb

I started visiting the Library Company in 2004 to view the Amy Cassey album for a project on African American women's antislavery rhetoric in the early 19th century. By 2006, I had come to rely on Phil's expertise regarding free blacks in antebellum Philadelphia, and so I accepted his suggestion to look at Edward W. Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" series. At first glance, I hated these items; they disturbed me. This colorful set of prints made me squirm in my seat in the reading room on many occasions. Scenes like that of "Minta and Cato," depicted among many other fashionable African American couples convened at a blacks-only social gathering, mocked newly emancipated blacks as unfit for freedom. Using aquatint on lithograph, Clay relied on bright hues to show Minta as ridiculously dressed in a loud pink ball gown with lace detail and a pink floral headdress. Depicted in conversation with her companion, the equally dapper Mr. Cato bows in her direction, dressed in a blue tailcoat, white pantaloons, and ruffled shirt. For readers who may be unsure about the critical nature of this portrayal, Clay featured the malapropic conversation between Minta and Cato at the bottom of the page. To Cato's question, "Shall I hab de honour to dance de next quadrille wid you," Minta explained: "Tank you, Mr. Cato—wid much pleasure, only I'm engaged for de next nine set!" With crude drawings and improper speech, Clay ridiculed the idea of black freedom in scenes that showed emancipated African Americans as socially inept and with no self-awareness.

Clay layered these offensive portrayals with compound meanings that I needed to understand, even if only to feel comfortable with moving on from them. Phil's expertise helped me contextualize these contemptuous images of black freedom within historical accounts of Philadelphia, like John Fanning Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia: Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes & Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants*. I eventually came to accept that these antiblack caricatures were integral to the story about representations of freedom and visual culture in the slaving era that I wanted to tell. These problematic depictions of free black women of antebellum Philadelphia, with their comic attempts at middle-class belonging, represented the opposite of women like Cassey and the historic black women I first wanted to study. Clay's caricatures provided



“Shall I hab de honour . . .,” hand-colored etching in Edward W. Clay’s “Life in Philadelphia” series (Philadelphia: W. Simpson, 1828).

an important foil to the way elite black women of Philadelphia represented themselves in the friendship album, and to larger visions of African American emancipation in the early 1830s.

The breadth of knowledge and fecundity with which Phil makes connections among the Library Company’s vast collections has helped produce a variety of projects in disciplines beyond the field of history. His ability to call upon an array of resources, especially those that do not

immediately seem connected, is invaluable. Despite all of this prior help, I became most aware of Phil's significance when I asked him about the international reception of "Life in Philadelphia." He had already shown me the *New Comic Annual for 1831*, a leather-bound joke book published in London that used Clay's original images to reissue "Life in Philadelphia" as an illustrated story. In addition to these British materials, Phil shared with me a photograph of "Vues d'Amérique du Nord," the scenic wallpaper of French manufacture, 1834, installed at the Nightingale-Brown House in Providence, Rhode Island (now the home of the John Nicholas Brown Center at Brown University). Among its vignettes of life in America, this wallpaper incorporated the Minta and Cato scene from Clay's original series.

From my one random question, Phil gave me a whole new set of materials to consider, including a scholarly article published on the inclusion of Clay's caricature within the wallpaper. Both Phil's awareness of this collection within a collection—the original lithograph, its reproduction as wallpaper, and the journal article about the pieces—as well as his curiosity about these themes allowed him to share them with me. In this exchange, I realized that Phil's knowledge extended beyond the Library Company to make connections between its holdings and other archival institutions throughout the country. His intellectual curiosity about the items in the Afro-Americana Collection has made him more than a curator; he is also an interlocutor—a person with whom to consult about linkages between histories and materials. Thanks to Phil, these items became some of the most important pieces in my study, helping to crystallize the significance of pictures of freedom to disparate audiences in history, cultural studies, and visual studies.

**Jasmine Nichole Cobb**, who earned a Ph.D. at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on black visual culture, including a book in progress, "Picturing Freedom: Black Visuality in the Transatlantic Home," which explores interracial and intraracial visual cultures as transformed by African American emancipation during the slaving era.

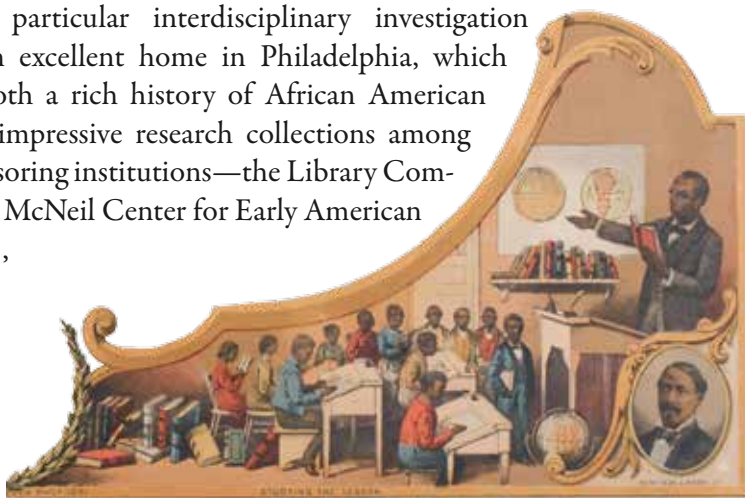


## Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein

In March of 2010, we organized a conference in Philadelphia called “Early African American Print Culture in Theory and Practice.” The location was no accident. We’d been dreaming up the conference for almost two years, and we knew the Library Company’s rich holdings in African American texts would make it an ideal partner. Having only met Phil Lapsansky briefly, in September 2008, we sent him a tentative email proposing our idea. “Consider us on board,” he replied.

The resulting three-day conference assembled scholars working across the disciplinary borders of African American studies and book history. Among the many conclusions we reached was the idea that African Americans had been important to book history not only as authors, but also as printers, readers, laborers, teachers, engravers, artists, and producers of both verbal and visual media. The range of these vocations reflects both the experiential variety within African American history and the topical diversity of book history scholarship. Linking such varied concerns in an extended intellectual conversation, the conference demonstrated how much these fields have to offer one another.

Our particular interdisciplinary investigation found an excellent home in Philadelphia, which boasts both a rich history of African American life and impressive research collections among our sponsoring institutions—the Library Company, the McNeil Center for Early American Studies,



Detail from *Heroes of the Colored Race*, hand-colored chromolithograph (Philadelphia: J. Hoover, ca. 1881).

and the Temple University Libraries. In the months leading up to the conference, as we planned posters and programs, we were eager to represent our event with images that would reflect both the history of Philadelphia's African American communities and the Library Company's holdings. The image for which we were searching was one of African American figures engaged in acts we associated with the research that would be presented at the conference—reading, perhaps, or operating a printing press. Yet over and over again, we found images of African American figures engaged in acts of writing. It became clear that authorship—and not printing or reading, engraving or teaching—was the prevalent mode in which free African Americans were depicted in 19th-century visual media. And while many of these images were beautiful and evocative, none of them represented the kinds of concerns that we anticipated our conference would foreground. Finally, we concluded, it was time to call Phil again.

Acknowledging the unusualness of the image we sought, Phil nevertheless quickly found us three contenders. The one we chose was a detail from an 1881 hand-colored chromolithograph print called *Heroes of the Colored Race*. Published on Arch Street and sold by Joseph Hoover, the image commemorated men prominent in and representative of the advancement of African American civil rights. It depicts a central vignette composed of bust portraits of ex-Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce of Mississippi, abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and ex-Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi. Surrounding this central vignette are four scenes of pre- and post-Civil War African American life, including scenes titled “Receiving the News of the Emancipation” and “Studying the Lesson.” Adorning the borders of the central vignette are a portrait of John Brown flanked by a horn of plenty and school books, and an American eagle holding American flags embellished with portraits of Lincoln, Sherman, and Grant. Other scenes depict slaves picking cotton and African American Civil War soldiers fighting a battle. In the corners are portraits of African American legislators John R. Lynch of Mississippi, Joseph H. Rainey of Massachusetts, Robert Smalls of South Carolina, and Charles E. Nash of Louisiana. From this commemorative tableau, we chose a detail of the scene of instruction, in which an anonymous African American man, standing at the head of what at the time would have been considered a

“promiscuous” classroom with both male and female students, holds a book in his left hand and gestures grandly with his right, presumably regaling his class with a thrilling story detailing some of the history with which he is surrounded. Significantly for our purposes, the image located a book—a printed object—at the center of a scene of reading and teaching. It emblemized our concerns perfectly, and thanks to Phil’s sharp eye and the design work of Nicole Scalessa, it became our conference’s logo.

The image was wonderful, but we very nearly did not find it in time. Images depicting African Americans and print turned out to be as hard to find as a needle in a haystack—and this proved to be the case despite the vast evidence our conference participants assembled of African Americans’ extensive involvement with print. If there is a lesson here, however, it would be that just because something is hard to find does not mean that it does not or did not exist. Rather, history is only as good as the objects we have with which to reconstruct it. The careful curation of historical objects is the enabling condition for the creation of new knowledge about the past. Indeed, our conference, and the book that came out of it, would have been impossible without Phil’s work—and not just his logistical work of bringing the Library Company on board, but the intellectual labor on which he has built his career. In all the acknowledgments delivered at the conference, Phil’s name was the one most often cited, simply because nearly every participant’s archive owed something to him. Phil’s career has been about building collections and cataloging them in a way that makes the kind of work we do not only possible, but conceivable.

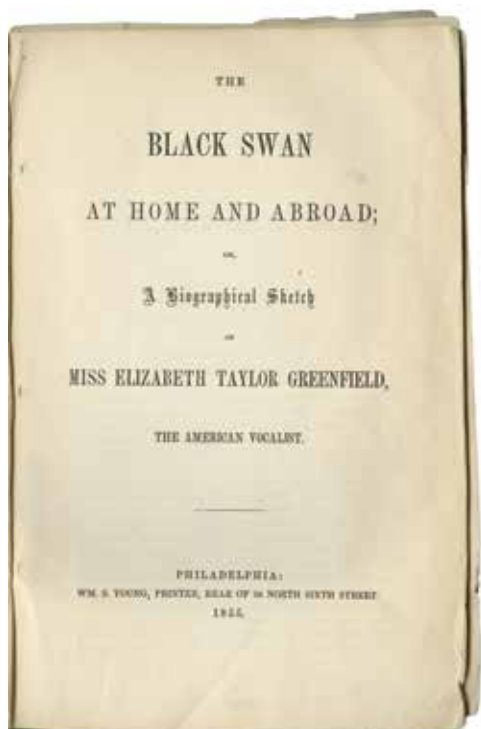
**Lara Langer Cohen** is Assistant Professor of English at Wayne State University. She is the author of *The Fabrication of American Literature: Fraudulence and Antebellum Print Culture* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). **Jordan Alexander Stein** teaches in the English Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Together they have edited *Early African American Print Culture*, to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in cooperation with the Library Company in 2012.



## James W. Cook

I first met Phil Lapsansky during the spring of 1994. At the time, I was a Berkeley Ph.D. student, visiting the Library Company for the very first time. My purpose in Philadelphia (or so I thought) was simply to complete a month of research for an emerging dissertation on the early American culture industries. Although I was open to new leads, I hadn't really thought of the early "show trade" as a commercial domain open to African American performers. To the extent that "blackness" even figured in the leading scholarship, it was usually as the object of racial ridicule—the vulgar caricatures of the minstrel show, or the "living curiosities" of P. T. Barnum's American Museum. Imagine my surprise, then, when Phil wandered over to my desk and presented me with *The Black Swan at Home and Abroad* (1855), a transatlantic memoir from Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (aka "the Black Swan"). Even today, few scholars are aware of this memoir. Fewer still have taken stock of its significance. In many respects, though, Greenfield's savvy promotional tract is a seminal text similar in importance to Phillis Wheatley's poetry or Sojourner Truth's autobiography.

I should explain that Phil's efforts here were entirely typical in their calculated mischief. As someone immersed in the cultural landscape of the 1840s and 50s, I had seen dozens of similar promotions for an eclectic range of stars: P.



*The Black Swan at Home and Abroad; or, A Biographical Sketch of Miss Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the American Vocalist* (Philadelphia: Wm. S. Young, 1855).

T. Barnum, Fanny Kemble, General Tom Thumb, Jenny Lind, Ole Bull. But an antebellum memoir from an African American concert singer was something entirely new to me. How, I began to wonder, had this former slave from Natchez, Mississippi, made her way to leading concert stages of England, Ireland, and Scotland? How had she put herself in position to collaborate with Harriet Beecher Stowe; to manage her own touring companies; to deliver command performances for Queen Victoria; to appear on the same bills with Frederick Douglass and John Mercer Langston? The memoir itself was chock full of glowing reviews from Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Milwaukee to Buffalo, Boston, and Providence. But these, too, quickly begged additional questions. How was such touring even possible in an age of relentless racial stricture? The fact that Greenfield was among the very first American women—black or white—to conduct these sorts of tours only added to the larger mystery.

It took me awhile to understand the full implications of what Phil was showing me. Early on, I was intrigued by Greenfield's story, but continued to think of it as singular—an odd exception to the racial rules. Still, the very existence of Greenfield's memoir continued to shape my curiosity. A few years later, as I was looking for a second book project, I found myself gravitating to other seminal black artists whose remarkable careers (like Greenfield's) seemed to fly in the face of conventional wisdom: the musician and composer Francis Johnson; the dramatic actor Ira Aldridge; the popular dancer William Henry Lane (aka "Master Juba"); the multiple companies of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In virtually all of these cases, Phil became an essential guide and provocateur. It was not until Phil introduced me to Johnson's 1820 composition book, for example, that I felt compelled to explain the broader logics of his touring—a four-decade career that included jail time in St. Louis and near fatal mob attacks in Pittsburgh, but also spectacularly successful runs through New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Providence, Detroit, Saratoga Springs, Buffalo, Toronto, and London (among many other tour stops). Here again, it was conversations with Phil that made me want to answer the nagging questions. How, at the very dawn of emancipation, had someone like Johnson gained access to the nation's leading music publishers? How was it possible for Johnson's all-black bands to tour extensively on *both* sides of the Mason-Dixon line? What were the broader impacts of Johnson's



1837–38 tour to Europe—the very first by a U.S. orchestra?

Again and again, then, Phil Lapsansky has pushed me to account for lives, careers, and star turns that simply didn't seem possible until he placed their traces upon my desk. Phil has also helped me to see these scattered traces as the basis for something larger: a global history of black celebrity that began many decades before the Jazz Age; before ragtime and records; even before the Civil War. My most recent exchanges with Phil were among the most memorable of the entire project. Last fall, as I was finishing up work in one of the Library Company's largest collections, I found myself startled yet again. There before me was an 1849 letter from Elizabeth Greenfield's mother, sent back to Philadelphia from her new home in Liberia. My first impulse, of course, was to show the letter to Phil, who, even after all these years, seemed just about as delighted as I was. In many respects, it felt as if we were rounding out a much older conversation, one whose entire shape, scope, and substance was made possible by Phil's extraordinary career.

**James W. Cook** is a Professor of History at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Harvard University Press, 2001) and *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe* (University of Illinois Press, 2005) and is currently finishing a book on the first waves of African American artists, intellectuals, and activists to move through global markets.

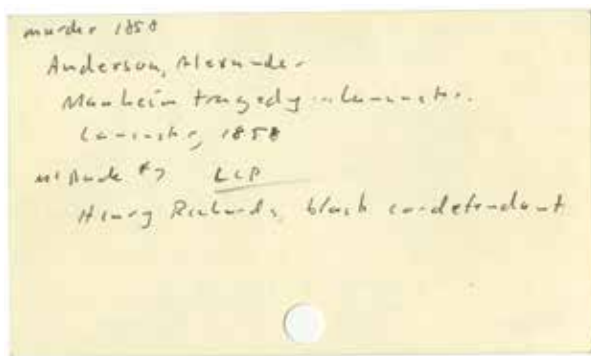


## Jeannine DeLombard

Many dissertation students enter the archives with a degree of trepidation. For few, if any, are these anxieties the result of being ejected from the same building a decade earlier. Technically, I had been thrown out of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, not the Library Company of Philadelphia—and probably by a middle-school teacher, not an HSP staff member. But still, approaching the adjacent entrance to the Library Company at 13th and Locust in the mid-1990s, I had to reassure myself that I was a Penn grad student, not a disaffected teenager on a field trip. Inside, the photocopied list of rules didn't help. Nor did the spindly Windsor chairs, which prompted instant muscle memory of hours spent squirming in the headmaster's office at the Quaker school across town. By the time the tall, spare, no-nonsense man with the white hair and the bright tie approached, I was ready to bolt.

Anyone who knows Phil Lapsansky will not expect this story to resolve itself in the swelling music of affirmation and redemption. When, a few moments later, I explained my interest in the juridical rhetoric of slave narratives—such as Frederick Douglass's pronouncement in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) that “slavery is on trial”—Phil cut me off with the gruff assertion that they were freedom narratives, not slave narratives. His correction reverberated around the silent, but suddenly quite full, reading room. Things looked even worse when I ventured to add that, for the dissertation's second chapter, I was particularly curious about African American gallows confessions as precursors to the slave-I-mean-freedom

narrative. Without another word, Phil abruptly strode back to his desk. Mortified, I pretended to be engrossed in my notes, wondering if I needed to go through the motions of requesting a book from the



One of Phil Lapsansky's “catalog” cards.

stacks. Maybe I could just leave right away.

Then he was back, a thick stack of worn 3" x 5" cards in his hand. They didn't come from the card catalog. And they were handwritten, not typed. Dropping them in front of me, Phil said that he'd been compiling a list of early American publications devoted to African American criminals. Each card designated a pamphlet execution sermon or a broadside purporting to give "the Last and Dying Words" of the black condemned. A remarkable number were in the Library Company's collections. Some of the cards said things like "not in McDade" or "not in Evans." It would be a while before I understood the references to Charles Evans's *American Bibliography* and Thomas M. McDade's *Annals of Murders: A Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets on American Murders from Colonial Times to 1900*. What I did know was that Chapter 2 just got a lot more involved.

Two decades later, that second dissertation chapter became my second book, *In the Shadow of the Gallows*, a prequel of sorts to *Slavery on Trial*. In 2008, killing time on a conference trip to Philly, I stopped into the Library Company, determined to tie up some last loose ends so I could finally send what seemed like an endlessly revised manuscript off to the publisher. Chatting happily with Phil, I mentioned in passing that my fifth chapter centered on white abolitionist



A gallows scene salt print photograph by H. M. Locker, in H. A. Rockafeld, *The Manheim Tragedy: A Complete History of the Double Murder of Mrs. Garber & Mrs. Ream, with the Only Authentic Life and Confession of Alexander Anderson. Together with a Correct Account of the Arrest, Trial . . . and Execution of Anderson and Henry Richards, His Accomplice* (Lancaster: Printed at the Evening Express Office, 1858).

lawyer William Seward's groundbreaking insanity defense for William Freeman, the black former Auburn State Prison inmate tried for murdering a prominent Central New York family in 1846. By way of reply, Phil asked what I thought of the 1840 Census. I returned to my seat (and my laptop wi-fi connection) with some dispatch. Documenting mental illness in the nation for the first time, the notorious Sixth Census created a political and scientific firestorm by erroneously finding African Americans in the free states eleven times more likely to be insane than their Southern (and predominantly enslaved) counterparts. Editing came to a halt. A new round of research and writing began. It would be another full year before I mailed the manuscript to the press.

Scholars often say that talking to a good archivist for five minutes can save you hours, even months, of work; in my experience, conversations with Phil Lapsansky have had exactly the opposite effect. That, I suppose, is how you know you've been talking to a *great* archivist.

**Jeannine DeLombard** is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Toronto, where she is affiliated faculty with the Centre for the Study of the United States and the Program in Book History and Print Culture. She is the author of *Slavery on Trial: Law, Print, and Abolitionism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and *In the Shadow of the Gallows: Race, Crime, and American Civic Identity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).



## Marcy J. Dinius

Scholarly research in the digital age is all about speed. Keyword searches in digital archives yield a massive amount of information instantaneously. The needle no longer requires a lifetime to be discovered in the haystack. Or so it seems when we're sitting in front of our computers, in the office or at home. Follow the thread in the needle, though, and it inevitably leads you from the virtual to an actual archive like the Library Company. And if you work in African American studies, Phil Lapsansky is almost surely holding the end of that thread.

One day, while researching and writing about Frederick Douglass and early photography, I decided that reviewing every mention of daguerreotypy in *The North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* might provide some additional insight into Douglass's thoughts on the medium. Such a task would be nearly impossible with newspapers or even microfilm, but in the scholarly here and now, it was as easy as directing my browser to a database and entering "Douglass" and "daguerreotypy" into the keyword search boxes. A few short seconds later, I was sifting through the articles, advertisements, and editorials that the database had instantly assembled. Indeed, it found good stuff. But amid the misses, who was this Robert Douglass that my search had turned up among its hits? An African American daguerreotypist? From Philadelphia? Surely not a relative of Frederick Douglass, since Douglass had renamed himself, right? How had I never encountered him before? With this, my digital search had found a different needle, with a thread that seemed well worth following.

As one might imagine, African American daguerreotypists were few in the antebellum period. In Hartford, Augustus Washington ran



"The Boroom Slave," pen-and-ink and wash drawing by Robert Douglass, after original by Henry Thomson, 1834, in Mary Anne Dickerson's *Album* (1833–82).

a successful studio, imaging John Brown among his many patrons, and Cincinnati's James Presley Ball established a national reputation as a daguerreotypist. The works of both have been collected, studied, and exhibited in recent years. But Robert Douglass didn't seem to be on anyone's radar, and this was exciting. I began to piece together what I could of his story by searching specifically for him in the database. What I found seemed almost too good to be true: he was born into a prominent family in Philadelphia's African American community. He was well-educated—the first black student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts—and trained as an artist with Thomas Sully in England. He operated The Arch Street Gallery of the Daguerreotype. He and his family opposed the efforts of the American Colonization Society, yet he was interested in relocating to Jamaica or Haiti, in the interest of finding both greater freedom and better opportunities as a painter and a daguerreotypist. And all of these activities were important enough for newspapers like Frederick Douglass's and William Lloyd Garrison's to report. How had such an important figure gone not just undiscovered by me, but seemingly unstudied by anyone?

I next turned to the Library Company's online catalogs, which yielded records for an album belonging to Mary Anne Dickerson and another belonging to her sister Martina Dickerson. In the detailed summaries of each album, Robert Douglass is mentioned as being a contributor of poetry and watercolor images and the brother of the Dickersons' teacher, Sarah Mapps Douglass. I emailed the Print Department's Sarah Weatherwax, asking if the Library Company held any of Douglass's daguerreotypes, or if she knew where any of them might be located. She immediately pointed me to Phil and to his essay in the Library Company's 1993 *Annual Report* on the acquisition of the albums, which contains important biographical information about Douglass. When I received her reply, I remember laughing and saying to myself, "Of course Phil knows Robert Douglass Jr.! All roads lead to Phil Lapsansky!"

Phil's essay details Douglass's extensive network as an activist and his career as an artist, noting that he was "the first African American photographer in Philadelphia, producing daguerreotypes by the early 1840s," but that "very little of Douglass's work survives." Describing the contents of the Dickerson albums, the essay suggests that "it is likely that six or so

of the daguerreotypes accompanying the albums are Douglass's works." Here was good reason to move from the virtual to the actual for a first-hand look at these promising images! Phil's email reply—chock full of even more information and provocative possibilities and written with his characteristic enthusiasm and generosity—began, "Robert Douglass Jr. has been an abiding obsession of mine for a couple of decades." He mentioned that the American Antiquarian Society holds one of Douglass's daguerreotypes (a portrait of abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster), but also noted that the Library Company's possible attribution of several daguerreotypes to Douglass is "speculative wishful thinking." One sentence in Phil's message especially attracted my attention: "He may have picked up photography from Louis D. [Daguerre] himself, as Robert was on his grand tour (his version, Haiti, West Indies, London & Paris) when D. announced his discovery." What a possibility! But alas, even Phil lacks definitive proof of the connection. He closed by noting that he has "a big fat research file on Douglass," offering to answer any further questions I might have about him, and declaring, "I'm so pleased to find someone interested in him."

Unfortunately, the pressures of time prevented me from introducing a new character into my book—even one as interesting as Douglass. I was especially concerned that I wouldn't be able to do either him or Phil justice; hopefully I will one day in an article or in another book. I'm sure that what I had discovered in less than a day's worth of digital research adds up to just a few pages in that "big fat research file" that Phil has been assembling over the past two decades. His depth of knowledge will never be fully accessible through keyword searches and similar technologies. Robert Douglass and Phil's many other obsessions, fed and shared over a lifetime of acquiring, reading, and conversation, all assure us that the human will remain at the heart of even digital-age humanities.

**Marcy J. Dinius** is an Assistant Professor of English at DePaul University. Her book *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* is forthcoming from the University of Pennsylvania Press. She held a Library Company fellowship in 2012 to begin work on a new project about radical African American print culture in the 19th and 20th centuries.

## Murray Dubin

Sure would be nice to know that something monumental was about to happen before it actually occurs.

But I had no such warning, not even a glimmer that my life was going to change.

I had just asked Phil Lapsansky for help.

I believe it was 2004, but I can't remember the weather or the date or what either of us wore. Phil may very well have been dressed in a plaid shirt and striped tie. I bet I was wearing sneakers and jeans. Dan Biddle and I were a little lost, struggling to find information about Octavius Catto beyond the two articles written decades before by Harry Silcox and Andy Waskie. Both of those pieces were fine, but there was much more we wanted to know. How were we going to write a biography if we couldn't answer basic questions?

When did the Catto family move north from South Carolina? Why did they move? How did they travel? Why wasn't Catto's mother listed in the 1850 Census in Philadelphia?



Portrait of Octavius V. Catto, *Harper's Weekly*, October 28, 1871.

Phil had helped me a great deal in the 1990s when I was doing research on a book about the history of South Philadelphia. He was the one who had first told me about Catto at that time, and there's a smidgeon of Catto in the subsequent book I wrote. But it was clear to me even then that Catto was worth more than a few paragraphs.

So I found myself in the Library Company's reading room once again, hoping that Phil had a Catto drawer



somewhere that he could unlock and the answers to my questions would tumble out.

Well, it was not a drawer exactly, but a resource that Phil unlocked for me on the computer, a database with a name I was not familiar with—Accessible Archives. On it I found *The North Star*, the Frederick Douglass newspaper. And the newspaper, to my delight, was word searchable. It wasn't too many false starts before I found a story written in 1848 by Douglass himself about Octavius Catto's father, William, a man newly arrived in Philadelphia.

The family had arrived in 1848! The other questions fell like bowling pins. That one story made me believe we would find more, and we did, in Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina, next door at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and at other institutions in the city and the nation. But nowhere did we find more than at the Library Company, and no one held our hands and guided us more than Dr. Phil.

I remember how I felt the day I left the Library Company after finding the Douglass story on Accessible Archives.

*We're actually going to be able to do this. Wow!*

**Murray Dubin** is the co-author, with Dan Biddle, of *Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America* (Temple University Press, 2010). He was a reporter and editor at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for thirty-four years and is the author of *South Philadelphia: Mummies, Memories and the Melrose Diner* (Temple University Press, 1996).



## Laurent Dubois

I went to the Library Company one fine day in 2006, looking for banjos. Within a few hours—in addition to several of those—I found myself face-to-face with some of the most remarkable archival documents about Haiti I have ever seen. That was the magic of Phil Lapsansky. In his modest, inimitable, cheery way he could transform your research in a matter of minutes.

It began routinely enough: hearing me talk about my project on the history of the banjo, UNC historian John Wood Sweet told me he'd seen interesting images of musicians at the Library Company of Philadelphia. He added that I should get in touch with a particular librarian there to help me. I'd heard the name Phil Lapsansky before—whispered with a mix of awe and appreciation—but hadn't had the pleasure of meeting him. I wrote ahead to ask if I might have a moment with him to get situated in my research, and he answered graciously that he would make the time. I learned that day what so many others have known who have worked with him much more than I: that Phil seamlessly combined his roles as researcher, curator, and host and was a font of endless generosity and curiosity.

When I arrived, he quickly pointed me to a series of avenues for my research. There were interesting materials about musicians, he told me, in something called the Pierre Eugène Du Simitière Collection—a sort of Enlightenment cabinet of curiosities made up of a vast and eclectic mix of documents brought together by a Swiss naturalist over the course of travels in the Americas. Knowing that I had recently written a book about the Haitian Revolution, however, Phil also suggested I might want to take a look at some other materials in the collection. There were, he



An Arabic phrase written by an African in Haiti, 1773, in the Pierre Eugène Du Simitière Collection.

told me, a few scattered documents from Haiti in the Du Simitière Collection that had fascinated him for years, but that he'd never quite been able to decipher. I was, of course, intrigued.

As he showed the documents to me, each turned out to be a bit more remarkable than the next. The first was a small slip of paper that had a short Arabic phrase on it, along with a note from Du Simitière: "This above was written by a negro Mondinga in my presence at Leogane in January 1773." This small paper was the product of an encounter between an Islamic slave and Du Simitière, who probably requested it as a demonstration, a proof, of the man's education at a Koranic school in West Africa. Several such Islamic texts, written by enslaved people (notably in Brazil), exist and have been studied over the past decades. Historians of Haiti have long noted scattered traces of Islam: there are mentions of the rebel Makandal, who was active in the 1750s, invoking Allah, mentions of rebels wearing Islamic talismans during the Haitian Revolution, and some traces of Islamic phrases and symbols in Haitian Vodou. But this was the first Arabic text I had ever come across from Haiti in my research. I was astounded.

Ignorant of Arabic, I couldn't read it at the time. I consulted with various colleagues, experts in Islam, to gain a better sense of why the "Mondinga" had obliged Du Simitière with this particular phrase. As my Duke colleague Bruce Hall explained to me, this is an extremely important sura from the Koran, one commonly used in daily prayer. It reads: "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate/ He is Allah, the One/ The Self-Sufficient Master/ He begets not, nor was he begotten/ And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him." It would probably have been one of the first such phrases a student in a Koranic school would have learned, and there are a few small errors that suggest the individual had not completed his schooling, which was perhaps interrupted by his capture and enslavement.

Remarkably, though, that was not all Phil had to show me. Elsewhere in the collection was another, much longer Arabic document, with many extracts from the Koran, written alternately in black and red ink. This, too, was likely written by an Islamic slave in Haiti. The document is breathtakingly beautiful, and in combination with the smaller piece of paper, offers a significant amount of text for analysis. Bruce Hall has

also translated these for me. They are the work of a much more expert hand, and repeat a series of less well-known suras from the Koran. One line—perhaps a not-so-coded retort to the slave-traders and slave-owners of the world—was repeated several times: “Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and backbiter, / Who pileth up wealth.” The document was produced by someone richly familiar with the Koranic tradition, and because of its length opens up the remarkable, and unique, possibility of delving into the spiritual world of an enslaved individual from West Africa in 18th-century Saint-Domingue. How did Du Simitière find these individuals? Why did they choose to write what they did? What was the purpose of the longer text? Such complex questions will need to be answered over time, through collaboration between specialists of Islam and of the Caribbean. There is much more to be done.

As if that was not enough, however, Phil then showed me something else—a few short pages of text he was curious to see whether I might be able to tell him something about. He’d shown them, he told me, to various researchers working on Haiti who’d been through the Library Company, but none had been able to satisfy his curiosity about the document. The pages were, to be sure, a bit elliptical: there was no label, just what looked like lines from a play, spoken by a series of characters, including one named Jeannot and one named Thérèse. And the language was not French, but Creole.

As it happened, I immediately knew what I was looking at. For the previous months, I’d been working with a colleague in Guadeloupe, Bernard Camier, on the history of theater in colonial Saint-Domingue. Part of our work focused on a popular play performed in Saint-Domingue starting in the late 1750s. It was a remarkably hybrid, Atlantic work: a rewriting of Rousseau’s comedic romantic opera *Le Devin du Village* (the most popular opera of the 18th century in France), set on a plantation in Saint-Domingue. The rural French “magician” of the original had been transformed into an African slave and healer named Papa Simon. And the sexual politics of class in a small French town depicted by Rousseau had been layered, in the Saint-Domingue version, with the sexual politics of color so crucial to the colonial world.

The play was written, as far as we know, by an actor named Clément—probably a French migrant to the colony, and not a Creole himself—but

the work quickly got away from him. Someone, Clément later explained, had taken the manuscript from him, and copies of it began to circulate, spawning unauthorized presentations in most of the many theatres of colonial Saint-Domingue. It eventually made its way to North America, performed in New Orleans in 1807. Haitian historian Jean Fouchard had noted the existence of the play in the 1950s, but didn't know precisely what it was about. Bernard Camier, however, tracked down a copy of it in the British National Archives in London, in a series of papers confiscated by the British from captured French planters. He suspected, however, that given its popularity there might be other copies floating around.

He was right, as I realized as soon as Phil placed those mysterious sheets in front of me that day. During his visit in Haiti, the enterprising Du Simitière had, it turned out, gotten his hands on a manuscript of the play. There was Jeannot, there was Thérèse, and there was Papa Simon. All speaking Creole. All talking back at me from a page in the Library Company of Philadelphia. Wondrous, I explained all this to Phil.

A few months later, again with Phil's help, another researcher—Yvonne Fabella, doing work on colonial Saint-Domingue—found a full manuscript of the play, also in the Du Simitière Collection. Taken together these two documents, like the Arabic texts, are of huge importance to the study of Haitian and Atlantic cultural history. Having multiple copies of this remarkable play makes it possible to carry out rich explorations of the literary, cultural, and linguistic history of Haiti. Phil had, with his intuition and curiosity, opened up a vast terrain of interpretation and discussion. Some of us are now dreaming about putting on a production of the play some day. If we manage to do it, on opening night an unassuming librarian from Philadelphia will of course be a guest of honor.

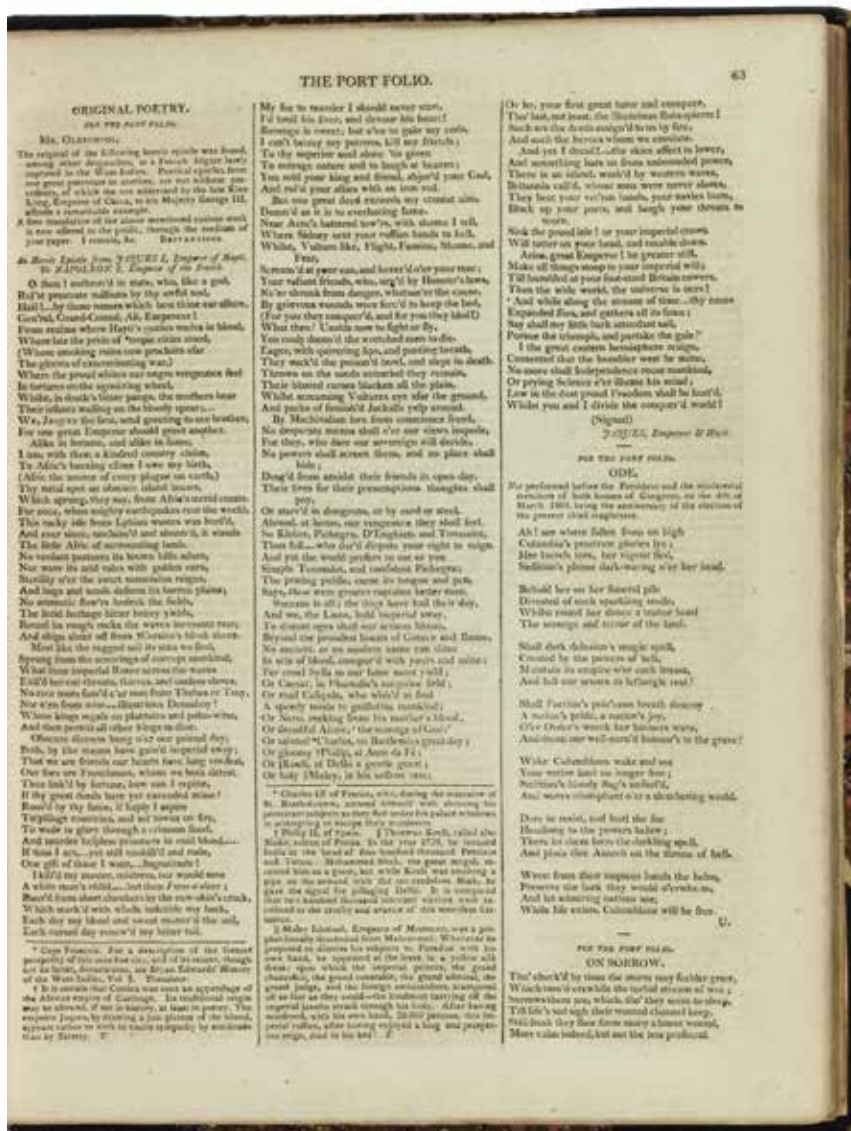
**Laurent Dubois** is the Marcello Lotti Professor of French Studies and History and Director of the Center for French & Francophone Studies at Duke University. He is the author of *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 2004); *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (Henry Holt and Co., 2012).

## James Alexander Dun

As a young dissertator proposing to study the impact in Philadelphia of the events historians eventually deemed the Haitian Revolution, I imagine I fell into a particular vein of scholarly interest that Phil Lapsansky encountered and influenced over the years. To my mind, and given the timing of its compilation and publication, the *Afro-Americana* catalog emblemized the scope and depth of the possibilities for doing new social history. Of course, the holdings it highlighted included many that touched on figures and areas well outside North America, but, in my feverish page flipping as I prepared to work at the Library Company in 2002, I was struck by how much could be done to study the “Atlantic world” from a Philadelphian vantage point. That sense redoubled upon meeting Phil in person. During my two fellowship sojourns to Philadelphia, he repeatedly tossed (figuratively) sources my way. The items he suggested—a navigation book that charted the approaches to Saint-Domingue, the writings of an émigré and supercargo on the “massacres of Hayti,” various pamphlets and sermons, and more—seemed to come to him easily, and regularly, as if my interests were simply prompting him to access his encyclopedic sensibility of the pulse of African American life in the city in a new way. I’m sure this wasn’t the case, but Phil’s interest and participation was as inspiring as it was useful.

One of his suggestions was to read through issues of Joseph Dennie’s literary magazine, the *Port Folio*. There, in an early March 1805 issue, I found an oddity, one that came to typify the kinds of evidence I found most useful in thinking about the ways Haitian events entered into American discourse over race and politics. Dennie was an ardent Federalist, reeling in the wake of Thomas Jefferson’s reelection and the decline of his party’s fortunes. The *Port Folio*, building on the scurrilous writings of James T. Callender, had increasingly become filled with tidbits having to do with the President’s escapades with “Black Sall,” or Sally Hemings as we have come to know her. In Dennie’s hands, Jefferson’s sexual deviance was made to serve as a window onto his general depravity and lack of principle. Amid this venomous running gag Dennie presented a “heroic epistle”—a poem purportedly found on a captured French frigate that had been written by Haitian leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines to Napoleon

Bonaparte. The fact that Dennie himself identified this piece as a "curious work" caught my eye. This was more than a joke. Or, better, it was a joke I could parse apart because its intents were clear. Dennie was speaking to his readers indirectly, winking at them as he made points using premises



"An Heroic Epistle from JAKUES I, Emperor of Hayti, to NAPOLEON I, Emperor of the French," *Port Folio*, vol. 5, p. 63 (March 2, 1805).

and a logic that he could assume they all shared. My goal, Geertz-like, was to unravel the thinking behind the wink.

What was in form a poem was in fact an agile satire that was designed to cut in two ways. Dessalines was the lynchpin of both jokes. The Haitian leader's florid style was meant to expose his affectations, lampooning his blood-drenched accomplishments and blighted land as the equivalents of European heroics. Readers were meant to balk at his self-described greatness, derived as it was from the late "exterminating war" in Haiti, fueled by "negro vengeance" against "proud whites" and exemplified by scenes of tortured "infants wailing on the bloody spear." This sanguine history, however, was the foundation of the poem's message; with Dessalines' topsy-turvy empire as assumed knowledge, its real target—Bonaparte, himself recently installed as emperor of France—could be skewered. "WE, J<sup>A</sup>QUES the first, send greeting to our brother," the Haitian leader was made to proclaim, "For one great Emperor should greet another." This fraternity was both figurative and literal. Both emperors were to be compared for their bloody paths to power, but Dessalines' lines hinted that he and Bonaparte might also plausibly be related by blood. "To Afric's burning clime I owe my birth," Dessalines reminded Bonaparte, just as Corsica, "thy natal spot" had sprung "from Afric's torrid coasts." If this was a stretch, the poem's "translator" wrote in a note, it showed that "the emperor Jaques . . . appears rather to wish to excite sympathy by similitude than by flattery." Corsica, a "little Afric," was a corrupted seat of exiles and human refuse, a point that revealed the true nature of the rise of one of its sons as leader of France. If the poetic Dessalines stretched credibility to make his point, to the reader his logic was meant to be infallible. Haiti, after all, was also a corrupt and defiled place. The actual blackness of the one emperor served to reveal the figurative blackness of the other. The joke made perfect sense.

Of course, Jean-Jacques Dessalines was no joke, nor was this moment in American political discourse lighthearted. Blackness in leadership was serious business. In the United States, as Dennie's writings about Jefferson exemplified, evoking it was the height of defamation. Throwing Jefferson's relationship with Hemings and his Francophilia in his face was a one-two punch, a combination whose force came from a singular critique of Republicans as corrupt and unprincipled—as men whose defilement



of the American Revolution's heritage was proven by their relationship to the events in Haiti. This particular piece of evidence eventually took its place at the end of my argument. Its sweeping and blunt force qualities represented an attenuation of the myriad interpretive possibilities events in Saint-Domingue had offered to watching Americans. At the time of Phil's suggestion, however, those possibilities remained to be explored. In pointing me towards this sort of evidence, however, he had helped start me down an intriguing road.

**James Alexander Dun** is an Assistant Professor in the History Department at Princeton University. He is currently completing a manuscript entitled "Dangerous Neighbors: Slavery, Race, and the Making of the Haitian Revolution in the Early American Republic."

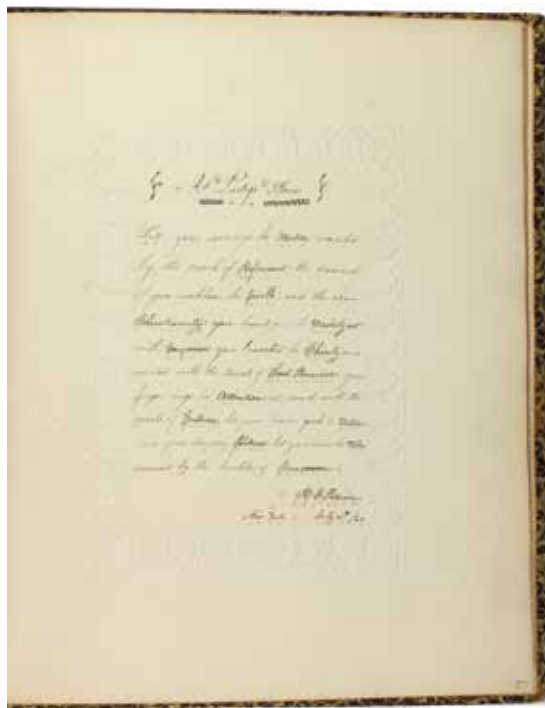


## Erica Armstrong Dunbar

In the summer of 1999, I began a one-month fellowship at the Library Company of Philadelphia. Deep in the throes of dissertation research and writing, I set up residence at one of the large tables in the reading room and quickly immersed myself in early-19th-century African American history. As I began to look through the superb collection in Afro-Americana for anything that related to African American women, Phil Lapsansky approached me and said, “I think I have something that you may want to see.” Phil left the reading room and returned with a treasure trove. He presented me with a beautifully bound friendship album belonging to Amy Matilda Cassey, a well-known member of Philadelphia’s African American elite. Phil opened a window into the private lives of 19th-century free women of color. These albums, and the men and women

who submitted personal entries, proved central in almost all of my own scholarly work.

Only four friendship albums belonging to African American women of the antebellum era remain intact. The Library Company owns three of these albums. Amy Matilda Cassey and the sisters Martina and Mary Anne Dickerson left behind albums that not only reveal the personal writings and feelings of members of the black elite in Philadelphia, but also the expressions of white and black abo-



An entry inscribed by Rebecca F. Peterson of New York, July 16, 1840, in Martina Dickerson’s *Album* (1840–46).

litionists throughout the urban North. These albums are extremely important, as scholars of African American women are often left with very scarce primary source materials, many of which are in the form of public writings. Newspaper articles, pamphlets, as well as minutes and records from mutual aid and religious institutions usually serve as the only watering hole from which historians can drink, piecing together the lives of free African American women. These friendship albums explore the intimate relationships and community-building practices among friends and acquaintances along the Northeast corridor, providing new views of the worlds of black kinship and friendship.

As a historian of women, I was particularly interested in the ways that friendship albums allowed black women to express themselves regarding both personal and public issues. These albums stand at the midpoint between the public and private arena among the African American elite. Amy Cassey, Martina Dickerson, and her sister Mary Anne stood as the self-proclaimed representatives of their race, and their words and actions would most certainly be interpreted as a representation of elite blackness. Their friendship albums allow scholars entry into the guarded, more intimate lives of African American women as they wrote to one another about motherhood, marriage, friendship, and politics.

Rebecca F. Peterson of New York copied into the friendship album belonging to Martina Dickerson in 1840 "A Lady's Dress," a poem that appeared frequently in periodicals around that time.

Let your earrings be Attention encircled  
by the pearls of Refinement: the diamond  
of your necklace be Truth; and the chain  
Christianity, your breast-pin be Modesty set  
with Compassion, your bracelets be Charity orna-  
mented with the tassels of Good Humour. Your  
finger rings be Attention set round with the  
pearls of Gentleness, let your thicker garb be Virtue  
and your drapery Politeness: let your shoes be Wisdom  
secured by the buckles of Perseverance.

The sentiments Peterson chose to record stood as a signpost for Afri-

can American respectability in the 19th century. Christianity, modesty, compassion, and refinement were but a few of the necessary characteristics for elite women both white and black. The road toward respectability for free African Americans was complicated and riddled with racist stereotyping. Sketch artist Edward W. Clay constantly challenged black equality. In his infamous series “Life in Philadelphia,” which appeared in the late 1820s and 1830s, Clay targeted both black men and women. The depiction of free African American women, however, was particularly vicious. Clay (and other artists of the period) portrayed black women as ridiculous, undereducated, inappropriate, hyper-sexed, and ape-like. In many ways, the beautifully written friendship albums, complete with splendid watercolors, refuted the popular image of black women while simultaneously reminding the black elite of the responsibilities of respectability.

Phil Lapsansky has opened many windows to scholars interested in the lives of 18th- and 19th-century African Americans. He has left an indelible impression on much of the scholarly work pertaining to Northern African Americans, and for that I am truly grateful.

**Erica Armstrong Dunbar** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Delaware and the Director of the Library Company’s Program in African American History. She is the author of *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City* (Yale University Press, 2008).



## Yvonne Fabella

In the summer of 2007 I was fortunate to have a fellowship at the Library Company as I completed my doctoral research. I study race and slavery in the French Caribbean, and I depended on Phil to help me navigate the collection. Phil introduced me to the Pierre Eugène Du Simitière Collection early on. Du Simitière was a Swiss naturalist who traveled around the Caribbean region in the mid-18th century before settling in Philadelphia in 1774. As he traveled he collected insects, fossils, newspaper clippings, broadsides, sketches, and manuscripts while recording his own observations about the plants, animals, and people of the West Indies, especially Saint-Domingue. Among his papers are some real treasures: a glossary of Creole words and proverbs, translated by Du Simitière into French; a recipe for a poison antidote, allegedly from the notorious maroon leader of Saint-Domingue, Makandal; and a description of plantation management in the Léogane region of Saint-Domingue. But the most exciting piece may be a manuscript of a comic opera titled *Jeannot et Thérèse* (see illustration on p. 134), a popular parody of an opera by Jean-Jacques Rousseau called *Le Devin du Village*. Rousseau's original version tells the story of a young woman who solicits the help of a village soothsayer to win back her lover, who has fallen for a woman of higher social standing. *Jeannot et Thérèse*, written by one Sieur Clément and first produced in Saint-Domingue in 1758, is a colonial adaptation of this European tale. In the Creole version, the young lovers are black, and the soothsayer is transformed into an African-born *kaperlata* (vodou sorcerer). In keeping with the racial stereotypes of the time, the woman to whom the young man has strayed is a mixed-race "*mulatresse*." Yet the most interesting adaptation may be Clément's choice of language: *Jeannot et Thérèse* is written entirely in Creole. It is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Creole literary text, according to Bernard Camier and Laurent Dubois' article in the December 2007 issue of *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* on theater and the Enlightenment in the French Atlantic world. And while the earliest complete version of the opera (dated 1783) resides in the British National Archives, the Du Simitière Collection is home to an even earlier fragment (see pp. 52-53). Du Simitière almost certainly acquired this copy of *Jeannot et Thérèse* during his West Indian

Devin Du Village

Lamira moy ly perdy  
moy par Conné ou ty ly  
moy allé crie' sans cene. (ria)

que fais tu dabas debout comme moi  
Janot vous allé, qui sa vous gagné  
a Wellas moy dans misere  
pour quoy vous party, vous quité' moy si  
qui sa moy allé faire  
aubord d'un chais nouveau

Ces change' de change  
mais si-las qui la core  
ly doit pour meme chose  
faas pas lan ly carcé  
si Janot quité' moy

quand meme toy pi' belle  
Dabond si infidelle  
de pi' Ben guille' toy  
votre fear aimable carace

Dret moy mioré' d'y tout proche  
ma boubille ly Ben for

travels, meaning that it was recorded no later than 1773. At this particular moment, enslaved Africans were arriving in Saint-Domingue by the thousands every year from west and central Africa. The colony was a linguistic and cultural melting pot, mixing French and a variety of African languages into a new language that would become Haitian Creole. Such an early example of Creole theater in Saint-Domingue provides us with a snapshot of this language at a critical point in its formation.

When I brought the manuscript to Phil's attention, he reacted with characteristic enthusiasm. "Holy shit!" he exclaimed, breaking the silence of the hushed reading room. We discussed the source's broader significance, and Phil then contacted Dubois, who happened to be writing the article mentioned above. Since then, interest in the cultural history of Saint-Domingue /Haiti has continued to grow, and it seems likely that the opera will figure prominently in this new body of scholarly literature.

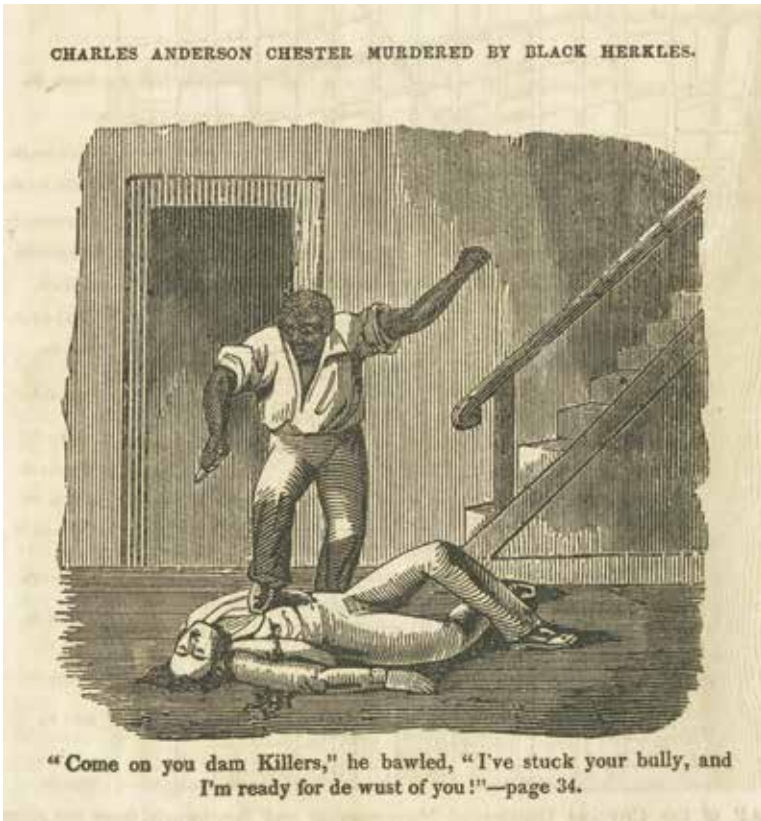
**Yvonne Fabella** received her Ph.D. from Stony Brook University with a dissertation on "Inventing the Creole Citizen: Race, Sexuality and the Colonial Order in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue." She is Undergraduate Advisor in the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania.



## David Faflik

I might not be here without Phil Lapsansky. “Here” is the New England college town of Kingston, where I teach in the English Department at the University of Rhode Island. The long and winding road of my continuing academic journey very much runs through Phil.

Phil and I met in the summer of 2004, while I held an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Dissertation Fellowship at the Library Company of Philadelphia. My month’s residence at the Library Company found me conducting regional archival research—some urban local color, if you



“Black Herkles,” in [George Lippard], *Life and Adventures of Charles Anderson Chester: The Notorious Leader of the Philadelphia “Killers.” Who Was Murdered, While Engaged in the Destruction of the California House, on Election Night, October 11, 1849* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Publishers, 1850).



will—on the antebellum city in literature. Specifically, I arrived at the Library Company with the intention of furthering my work on American author George Lippard, whose sensational city-mysteries fiction from the 1840s and 1850s was to feature in a Philadelphia-inflected chapter of my dissertation.

Only several days into my stay, Phil drew me into a different kind of city mystery, one that he himself had already unraveled. Embracing my project, Phil set before me an obscure, period pamphlet novel—one that had been offhandedly attributed to Lippard, but whose provenance remained anything but settled. Phil's own research had unearthed enough evidence to suggest that the ties between Lippard and *Chester*—the pamphlet's primary title is *The Life and Adventures of Charles Anderson Chester* (1849)—were more than circumstantial. Indeed, Phil had written to the noted Lippard scholar David S. Reynolds to reveal his findings, in the process sharing a well-kept bibliographic secret.

Phil shared this secret with me as well, inviting me—challenging me—to confirm what he already knew: in short, that George Lippard was the author of *Chester*. Thus began my investigations. The next few weeks found me following *Chester's* trail back into a 19th-century urban world of print, politics, and publishing. Working with Phil and Librarian Jim Green, Phil's colleague, I was able on the one hand to conclude that the text from *Chester* had in fact been transferred intact from the columns of a newspaper that Lippard himself edited—the content for which Lippard himself also regularly penned. On the other hand, I was meanwhile able to take yet another cue from Phil, and thereby confirm *Chester's* authorship by means of the visual evidence that the work in its final published form provided.

The storyline of *Chester* was and is at least as tangled as the history of its publication. But at its core *Chester* is “about” the election night race riots that visited Philadelphia in October 1849. An authority on the city's evolving racial dynamic, Phil early on had drawn my attention to one of several crude wood engravings that fittingly grace the illustrated pages of *Chester*. This particular image depicted a defiant “Black Herkles”—the combative African American owner of a mixed-race tavern in the city's Moyamensing district—with his foot upon the chest of a slain Charles Anderson Chester, the narrative's eponymous protagonist. In Black

Herkles's hand is a dagger, the weapon he has used to slay his white adversary. If the content of *Chester* is otherwise forgettable, this particular image is quite memorable, and for reasons other than its casual representation of violence. Phil assured me that this is one of the few illustrations of black-white confrontation from the period, and so I naturally came to contemplate *Chester* by close study of the literal and figurative blacks and whites that constitute this, the most graphic of racially charged graphics. Long contemplation, mixed with equal parts frustration and fascination, led me at one stage to rotate the image clockwise. It was an instinctive gesture built firmly on Phil's instincts.

For in altering my point of view, I came to see Black Herkles not through my eyes alone, but Phil's eyes. There, in the blood spilling from Chester's open chest wound, was a cursive signature that read "Darley." Prior research allowed me to realize that "Darley" referred to F. O. C. Darley, the prominent illustrator who completed the frontispiece for one of Lippard's earlier works, the author's runaway sales success *The Quaker City* (1845). Here, "Darley" was at once a partially concealed artist's signature and a telling piece of evidence tying Lippard to *Chester*. I could only have reached this conclusion by way of Phil.

In solving this city-mystery, with much indispensable assistance, I have been doubly lucky, then. The journal *Book History* ran an essay that I wrote on the subject. I accordingly owe at least one of my publications to Phil. But I owe him much more than a scholar's acknowledgment. Most fortunate have I been in the mysterious *Chester* episode simply to find a timely—and inspiring—friend in Phil. It was Phil who knew the city I was exploring. It was Phil who understood the way that racial relations figured into the story I was telling. It was Phil, finally, who offered me a reason, and a way, to read for mysteries that I had not even known existed.

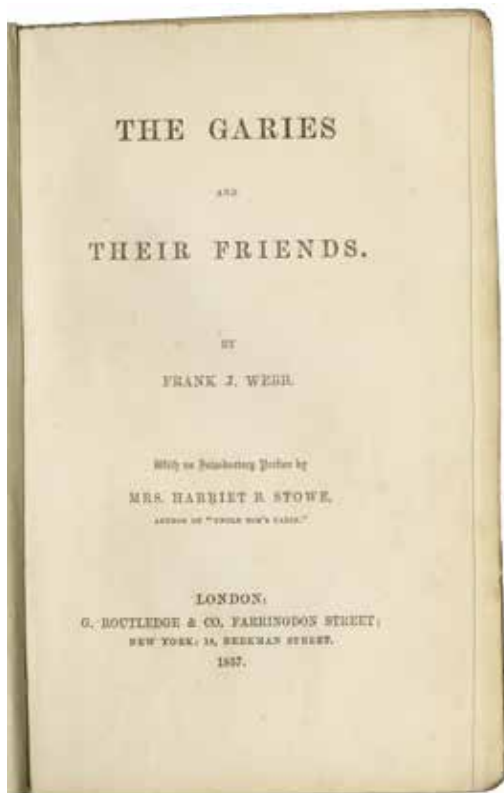
Thank you, Phil, for being Phil.

**David Faflik** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, University of Rhode Island. He is the author of *Boarding Out: Inhabiting the American Urban Literary Imagination, 1840–1860* (Northwestern University Press, 2012).



## Oliver St. C. Franklin

I met Phil through Charles Blockson, the collector who spawned several generations of Afro-Americana collectors. Blockson's evangelical strategy was unique: he presented me with a first edition of *The Street* by Ann Petry and inscribed it thusly: "May this be the first in your growing collection of Afro-American first editions." Over the next few months Blockson would always ask what I recently acquired, and then he'd proceed to tell me about his recent acquisitions. Phil Lapsansky's name came up often and I was urged to contact him. And so I did. Phil was more soft-spoken than I'd imagined and, for some reason, had a slight resemblance to D. H. Lawrence and a shy way of speaking over his left shoulder when he got enthusiastic.



Frank J. Webb, *The Garies and Their Friends. With an Introductory Preface by Mrs. Harriet B. Stowe* (London: G. Routledge & Co.; and New York, 1857).

Phil engaged me in a deep conversation about the Library Company's collection and went on to present a few of the objects. His knowledge and passion were infectious. It was then that the twinkle in the eye began to shine through. He was consistently encouraging to hobby collectors and would always say, without a hint of irony, "don't worry, we don't have everything. There's a lot out there." My best encounters with Phil were actually on the street, outside of the hallowed halls of the Library Company. I'd usually see Phil first and yell out, "Yo Phil!" We'd talk shop for

a few minutes, always future-oriented about the collection and what he hoped to acquire. Then one day I encountered Phil in the African American Museum and he was beatific. “I got it; I got it,” he said, much louder than usual. It was the 1857 first edition of *The Garies and Their Friends* by Frank J. Webb. I had vaguely heard about the novel but was quite unfamiliar with it. Phil urged me to read it, which I did on a business trip and was so taken with the contemporariness of the writing that I doubted it was authentic, until I remembered that Phil had a first edition. Over the years I’ve wondered where I’d be in my collecting without Phil. Well, I’d have a fairly decent amateur collection but without the insightful human drama and history that Phil would always add.

In the age of Internet marketing, it’s difficult to conduct the chase of “rescuing” these objects from unknowledgeable sellers. One—well, me at least—has to be satisfied with fewer books but with a deeper knowledge of each one. Phil has taught me that each book, pamphlet, or object has its own historical power of thoughts and imaginations—of real lives lived, and therefore it imparts a permanence that keeps us human.

Yo Phil! —THANKS!

**Oliver St. C. Franklin** is Honorary British Consul in Philadelphia and Vice Chairman of Electronic Ink, a global business consultancy. He graduated from Lincoln University and was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Oxford (Balliol College), where he read Politics and Philosophy.



## Scott Gac

This starts in silence and ends with an image: My ears stood alert. The room was quiet but for the occasional shuffle of a researcher's shoes. My eyes and hands danced across pages from long ago; my body ached from the reading room chair. Three weeks into a research fellowship and you start to smell like the archive. I earned my Library Company of Philadelphia scent in the fall of 2001.

Endless days of reading and note-taking had not yet sapped my enthusiasm for the Hutchinson Family Singers, the 19th-century antislavery musicians. The first to combine commercial spirit and American protest music, the Hutchinsons launched abolition deep into the Northern conscience. In the 1940s several scholars had told the group's story, but I suspected there was more—that the Hutchinson Family Singers could demonstrate how the two distinct explanations historians used for the rise of antebellum reform had actually worked in tandem. It wasn't the market revolution *or* the rising religiosity of the age. It was the market revolution *and* the religiosity. The books on my table were piled high. I knew that the Hutchinsons had, in effect, sold God and reform in the burgeoning cultural market before the Civil War. I just needed to prove it.



"The Hutchinson Family," in *Turner's Comic Almanac for 1848* ([Philadelphia]: Turner & Fisher, [1847]).

There were other people around, I'm sure, but they didn't dress in 19th-century ink, so I paid them no attention. One morning, though, I noticed Phil Lapsansky flitting about. He stopped by my side and gruffly whispered, "I may have something for you." I looked up to reply, but he was gone. Lunch time came and went. Phil had disappeared.

At three in the afternoon I spotted Phil's signature white mop. Phil's arms carried a large binder filled with clippings he had made of African American images. "Whoa," I thought. "This is going to be a mother lode." Phil opened to a page and pointed. I looked at him waiting for more. "I think this will help," he said, turned and walked away. I considered the one image, "The Hutchinson Family" from *Turner's Comic Almanac*, an 1847 cartoon in which a black couple in the foreground exclaims that they can sing just as well as the Hutchinson Family, who perform in the background. The cartoon had little to do with selling religion or reform and I didn't know what to think.

The next day I started to research why such a cartoon existed. The Hutchinsons, it seemed, had played a performance at Musical Fund Hall to a mixed race audience. Antiabolition forces in Philadelphia had gathered in protest, their violent threats enough to stop the singers after two weeks of sold-out shows. I started working backward. The Hutchinson Family Singers had created public space for interracial interaction as early as their beginnings in Boston, where newspapers applauded their shows but warned listeners of the group's tendency toward "amalgamation." Phil's cartoon had opened the way to seeing the musical troupe in a whole new light. As arbiters of interracial cooperation, the Hutchinsons stood at the cutting edge of American social reform while enjoying a position atop popular culture. I wanted to compare them to a modern-day equivalent, but only a combination of the Jackson Five, for its popularity and "family" style, and the Weavers, for its social activism and group presentation, could even come close. Thank you, Phil, for the binder, foresight, and leadership—you forever changed the story of the Hutchinson Family Singers.

**Scott Gac** is the author of *Singing for Freedom: The Hutchinson Family Singers and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Reform* (Yale University Press, 2007).

## Jenna M. Gibbs

In 2006 to 2007, I was an Albert M. Greenfield Foundation Dissertation Fellow at the Library Company, an experience made far more productive and stimulating because of Phil Lapsansky's infectious intellectual enthusiasm for and rich knowledge of the collections, especially the Afro-Americana Collection he was so instrumental in cataloging. At the time, I was a Ph.D. student at UCLA working on my dissertation, a transatlantic study of the ways in which theatrical performances and related cultural productions—such as broadsides, ballads, ephemera, and cartoons—contributed to debates over slavery, citizenship, and polity in London and Philadelphia, and of how, through transatlantic exchange, playwrights, performers, and cartoonists in the two cities created a recognizably British-American constellation of perspectives on issues of slav-



Samuel Jennings, *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences*. Oil on canvas, London 1792. Gift of the artist.

ery and race. How lucky I was that my topic was right up Phil's alley! Almost every day, Phil pointed me to an intriguing image, a little-known pamphlet, or relevant secondary source. In our many conversations, he was unstintingly generous in responding to my ideas about sources and sharing his own. There were many, many ways in which Phil's expertise and passion aided my scholarship.

But for me perhaps the *tour de force* was a priceless exchange that redirected my research and gave me the title of the dissertation (and now book manuscript). One day I commented to Phil that I had encountered plays, poems, and images featuring the Temple of Liberty as a metaphor not only for civic polity but also abolitionism, including a pantomime written to celebrate the British slave-trade abolition bill of 1807, *Furi-bond; or, Harlequin Negro*, in which Britannia descends from the sky into her temple to present a supplicant slave a writ of emancipation. I mused aloud as to whether this motif might have common usage as a transatlantic abolitionist trope, given that the Goddess of Liberty as an anthropomorphic national icon (in the forms of Britannia, Columbia, Hibernia, Marianne, Bavaria, etc.) so clearly had Atlantic reach. Phil's eyes lit up with a mischievous twinkle. He promptly escorted me to John Van Horne's office, where Samuel Jennings's painting *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences; or, The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks* (1790–1792) then hung. Jennings painted his abolitionist allegory in London, just as antislavery fervor gained sway, for the Directors of the Library Company. As Phil well knew, many others have seen and written about the painting before me, and my question was not a new one. Perhaps fewer have been treated to Phil's personal file, which he showed me next, of "Temple of Liberty" clippings in a large file of the same name. Some of these images dealt with slavery, others did not. Some dealt with developing notions of femininity and gendered constructions of rights. Some were jingoistic encomiums to nation, others biting critiques of polity. In short, upon perusal and in discussion of the file with Phil, it was apparent that the Temple of Liberty was, on both sides of the Atlantic, a symbol of the contested meaning of polity and citizenship.

As a result of this exchange, I reshaped the first few chapters of the project to incorporate a transatlantic analysis of the shifting meanings over time of the Goddess in her Temple with regard to slavery, citizen-



ship, and polity. And Phil's file also gave me the title of my manuscript: "Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in the British Atlantic." Thank you for this and thank you for everything, Phil, including our more relaxed but no less valuable exchanges over lunches and martinis. You were more helpful and influential on my research than I could possibly say. You will be very sorely missed indeed!

**Jenna M. Gibbs**, who received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, is Assistant Professor of History at Florida International University.



## Wendy Gonaver

In 1995 I volunteered to work at the Library Company one day a week. I was a recent college graduate casting about for career direction and thought maybe I'd like to work at a library or historical museum. I had no experience and little knowledge of American history. I figured I'd be put to work shelving books, answering the phone, or perhaps even fetching coffee. But on day one, a man wearing a lavender shirt and paisley tie (Phil) rolled out a cart loaded with boxes of papers that he had recently acquired with the instruction to read the contents and then tell

him about it. I was struck by his sartorial boldness and his unwarranted confidence in me.

My initial intimidation quickly gave way to fascination and total immersion. The papers, known as the Stevens-Cogdell/Sanders-Venning Collection, mapped out an interracial family odyssey that spanned three centuries and three continents. It was my first time ever encountering primary documents, and the experience was a thrilling revelation. I looked forward to that one day a week, and relished the insightful and humorous snippets of conversation with Phil about what I was reading. (Even the one time I shelved books was exciting—Phil lent me his elevator key and it was as though he had handed me



John Stevens's great-great-great-grandchildren, Sarah and Louise Venning. Carte de visite photograph, Philadelphia, ca. 1900. Stevens-Cogdell/Sanders-Venning family papers.

keys to a time machine that allowed me to enter the sacred vault of the sphinx!) As my understanding of the documents improved, so too did my sense of life direction. I applied to graduate school (Phil wrote a letter of recommendation), and that first clueless read-through became the foundation for my Master's thesis with Phil providing valuable assistance and encouragement throughout the transformation.

Other material Phil introduced to me became seminar papers. And what a jolt to encounter a photo of a young Phil Lapsansky in an assigned book, John Dittmer's *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*! When I emailed him to ask "Is that really you?!", he answered with characteristic loquaciousness, "Yes." Apart from the ties, it is my experience that Phil is not one to draw attention to himself. He would rather draw attention to the amazing collection he has amassed on behalf of the Library Company and the scholarship it has enabled. I am grateful to Phil for mentoring me. It has been a pleasure to know him over these years. The reading room will not be the same without him. I selfishly hope that even in retirement he will still want me to tell him about what I have read.

**Wendy Gonaver** is an instructor at Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies at the College of William and Mary in 2012 with the dissertation "The Peculiar Institution: Gender, Race and Religion in the Making of Modern Psychiatry, 1842–1932."



## Jerome S. Handler

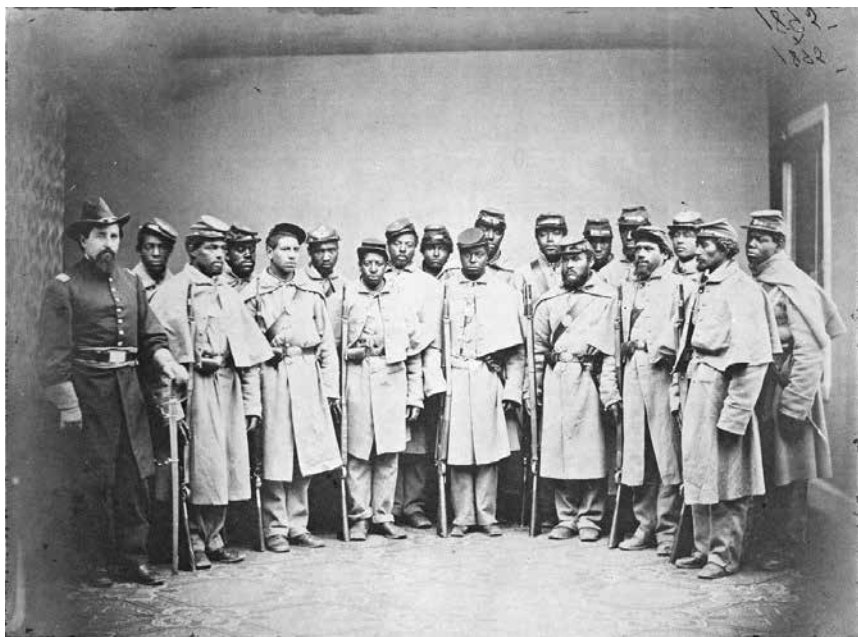
As a leading authority in Afro-American bibliography and imagery, Phil Lapsansky has been of immeasurable help to me over the years in several projects, the most important and largest being a database of images, “The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record” ([www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org)). This database, sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library, now comprises over 1,200 images depicting, among other subjects, pre-colonial west and west central Africa, the transatlantic crossing or middle passage, auctions and sales of captive Africans, and aspects of the lives of enslaved Africans in the slave societies of the New World. This website was started on a modest scale many years ago, but really did not take off until I visited the Library Company in the mid-1990s. I then became



*United States Soldiers at Camp "William Penn" Philadelphia, Pa.*, chromolithograph (Philadelphia: P. S. Duval & Sons, 1864).

aware of Phil's multi-year project of collecting images of African American life, photocopies of which were contained in several large loose-leaf binders in the reading room of the Library Company. His prodigious efforts in locating images relating to African American life and slavery considerably aided the early work in compiling our database, and the Library Company's marvelous collections in Afro-Americana, with Phil's guidance, were a tremendous asset to our project. The generosity with which Phil shared his materials and their sources was a major factor in expanding the website and providing historical and bibliographic context to the images. His ongoing congeniality, friendship, and erudition played no small role in how the website evolved.

Over the years, Phil has regularly responded to my queries relating to several other research projects dealing with slavery and African American life in this country and the British Caribbean. One of these projects was particularly fascinating—what to make of the modern falsification by neo-confederates of a Civil War-era studio photograph of



Studio photograph taken in Philadelphia, probably in early 1864, of 25th USCT unit (possibly Company C or G), mobilized at Camp William Penn in February 1864 and sent to war in March 1864.

black Union soldiers in the Philadelphia area. I undertook this project after Phil drew my attention to a well-known Union recruitment poster, *United States Soldiers at Camp "William Penn" Philadelphia, Pa.*, held by the Library Company. Encouraged and assisted by Phil, this project was ultimately able to identify the original photograph on which the recruitment poster was based, and to learn that unknown persons sympathetic to the Confederacy had within the last decade or so deliberately falsified this photograph to make it appear that the soldiers were members of the First Louisiana Native Guards (Confederate)—and therefore defenders of the Confederacy—rather than soldiers in the Union Army. Copies of the doctored photograph were offered for sale by an online retailer, [www.rebelstore.com](http://www.rebelstore.com), which promotes itself as “The Internet’s Original Rebel Store!” We presented the result of all this research in the website “Retouching History: The Modern Falsification of a Civil War Photograph” ([www.retouchinghistory.org](http://www.retouchinghistory.org)), and due to the light we shined on the manipulation of a historic photograph, the Rebel Store no longer offers cop-



“1st Louisiana Native Guard, 1861,” fabricated photograph.

ies of that tainted version.

From my perspective, Phil is the quintessential reference librarian, whose talents, interests, and erudition are an essential dimension of scholarly work. Besides all of that, he is just a real decent and friendly guy, and I am pleased to count him among my friends.

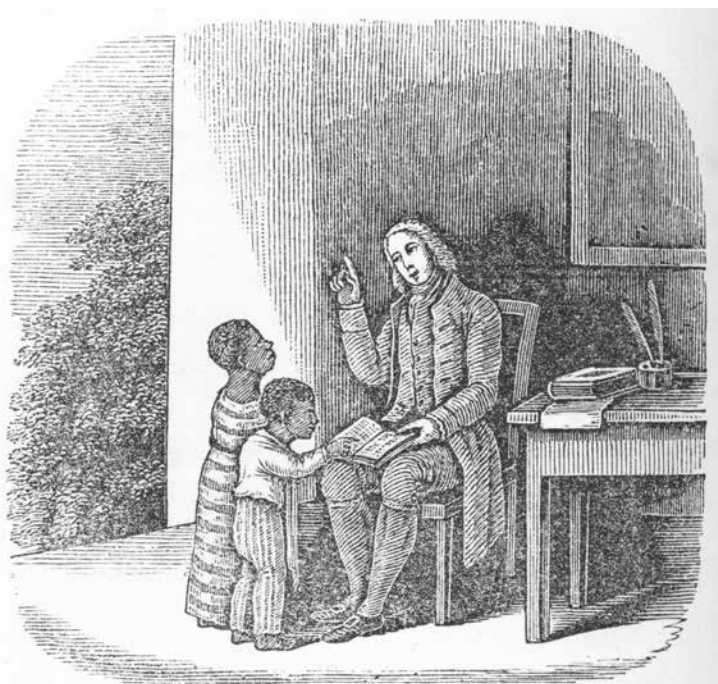
**Jerome S. Handler** is Senior Scholar at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. His publications include *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) and *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* (Harvard University Press, 1978).



## Maurice Jackson

Phil Lapsansky is my type of librarian; let me tell you why. I went to grad school later than most. I am working class, African American, not the least bit proper and have never got caught up in academic jargon. Additionally, I study rebels, revolutionaries, antislavery figures, and the downtrodden. I study them because I identify with them, because I admire them, and most likely would have been one of them, in slavery or freedom, where I grew up in the South.

By the time I got to the Library Company in the 90s, I had made my rounds in rare book rooms. I used to go regularly to the rare book room at the Library of Congress, where few treated me with dignity; I suppose



*Benezet instructing colored children.*

ANTHONY BENEZET.

“Benezet Instructing Colored Children,” in John W. Barber and Elizabeth G. Barber, *Historical, Poetical and Pictorial Scenes; Principally Moral and Religious* (New Haven: J. W. Barber, 1850).



thinking that a person like me did not belong there. (Later I was a John Kluge Fellow there and attitudes changed.) One day I had to give a talk, at a memorial, for a dear friend François Somlyo. Frank was a Hungarian Jew who escaped to France during World War II, later got to Russia, worked as a cook at the Embassy, and then went to the Philippines at the end of the war to join the U.S. forces. With his French wife, Jeanne, he became a cook and a union activist. I decided to go to the Library of Congress before heading over to the memorial at Frederick Douglass's and Harriet Tubman's Church, the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in downtown Washington. I had on a dark coat and white shirt and tie and noticed how much better the librarians treated me. Later, I always dressed accordingly on my library visits.

When I went to the Library Company in Philadelphia, the first person I met was Phil. He was dressed neatly but casual chic. He made me feel very welcome. It was one of those impossibly hot summers, so I went back to my own neat but comfy clothes. We talked about jazz and our children, the state of Black America, and about the "civil rights" days.

Phil was not in the least bit surprised when I gave him my reading lists. Sir Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, Francis Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, the writings of African slavers and explorers like William Snelgrave, Willem Bosman, and John Atkins. And, of course, everything that the Library Company had on Anthony Benezet. You see, in order to understand Benezet's antislavery ideas, where they came from and where they went, I had to try to read everything that Benezet, a shareholder in the Library Company, had read. When did he read Hutcheson and fellow moral philosophers George Wallace (Wallis) and James Foster? Where were the books located in Philadelphia? And how did he come upon copies of the works of Atkins, Snelgrave, and others. I went through every edition of Benezet, all that the Library Company had. I also went to Haverford College, which housed his works, letters, and correspondence and his personal library.

To each question, Phil posed a hypothesis. What about this? Did you see this edition? While I was sitting at my desk and taking notes he would quietly come over. "Have you seen this book? I will have it over at my desk when you are done with Foster." I always tell my students to go to the library prepared and to know at least some of what you want. I tell

them that the more they read and know the more they can get out of me or the librarian. Such is true with Phil. Research a topic, get excited by it, and true to form, Phil would know a bit about it and lead you to other sources. Like any good teacher or librarian, he came to your aid without making you feel ignorant.

Phil always lit up when talking about his work and research on early blacks. You see, Benezet had founded the School for Black People also called the African Free School in Philadelphia, and many future black leaders went to the school or were affected by his work. And by educating blacks and opening up first his home, in 1750, and then a building for them in 1770, he indirectly aided Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. When they founded the Free African Society in 1787, one of its first meeting places was in a Quaker schoolhouse after they found Allen's home too small. Although quite a few white historians have asked me if I were not putting too much emphasis on Benezet, I must say that few blacks have. And neither did Phil. He understood because he had seen the proof of this man's noble work, as an educator, and as, in my opinion, the catalyst for the building of antislavery ideology and networks in the mid-to-late 18th century in the Atlantic world. He did this by educating his fellow whites (like Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush in America, Granville Sharp and John Wesley in England, and the Abbé Raynal and Abbé Grégoire in France); the African-born Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana; and American-born blacks like Allen and Jones about the beauty of Africa and Africans.

I last saw Phil in mid-January. The BBC was filming a special on the life and works of Francis Hutcheson. By the time I reached the Library Company, coming up from Washington, Phil had placed the works of Hutcheson on a table for the crew to film. He had also placed copies of Benezet's *Short Account of Africa* (1762) and *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1771), works in which Benezet had extensively quoted Hutcheson. I had written a book on Benezet and I was the man before the camera. But I let them know that Phil had helped me locate many sources and that he was as much an expert on the topic as I was.

Phil understands the importance of black action and ideology, and that is why with Patrick Rael and Richard Newman he co-edited *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature*.

ture. That is why his work in documenting the more than 13,000 items in the Afro-Americana Collection at the Library Company secures his legacy.

What makes Phil so special is that he makes all of us better. What more could we ask for? Thank you, Phil. As the late African American writer June Jordan said about Martin Luther King Jr., “You pushed me to think and feel way beyond myself.” And I will forever be indebted.

**Maurice Jackson** teaches history at Georgetown University. He is the author of *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) and is co-editor with Jacqueline Bacon of *African-Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents* (Routledge, 2010). He is at work on “Halfway to Freedom: A History of African-Americans in Washington, D.C.” He wrote the liner notes to the jazz CDs *Steal Away: Spirituals, Folk Songs and Hymns* (1995) and *Come Sunday* (2012) by Charlie Haden and Hank Jones.



## Martha S. Jones

For scholars of early African American history, Phil Lapsansky is a bellwether. Not merely for the sake of working the metaphor, we are Phil's flock, listening for his voice and his insights to help find our way through the field. His sound is not quite that of a bell. But his words, warm and often punctuated with a wry chuckle, lead us to books, manuscripts, tracts, images, and ephemera toward new and enduring insights.

As I began my first book, the reading room of the Library Company of Philadelphia was a sort of Mecca. I knew that one must pass through the place in order to write the history of 19th-century black women's politics. The footnotes of those scholars I most admired made that clear. What the footnotes had not disclosed was that on the edge of that room



Edward W. Clay, *The Road to Philadelphia*, lithograph ([Philadelphia: Childs or Childs & Inman, 1830 or 1831]).

I would find Phil. It was remarkable and reassuring to meet someone who shared my abiding passion for the field and never tired of puzzling over a curious artifact. In fact, the more inexplicable the document, the more engaged was Phil. Lesser known people and incidents became clear as Phil led me through Philadelphia's early political history with care and discernment. He was among the first colleagues to whom I gave a copy of the book when it was published. He was, as I recall, too humble to receive it as a gift for himself and placed it among the Library Company's holdings.

My work with Phil at the Library Company had only begun. Back on my campus at the William L. Clements Library, a new acquisition ensured that I would have occasion to again consult with Phil. In 2007, Clements graphics curator Clayton Lewis shared with me the scrapbooks, watercolors, and sketches of the early American artist Edward W. Clay. I knew Clay from his notorious "Life in Philadelphia" series, which cruelly parodied the city's free African American community. These new materials suggested that Clay had become a student of visual culture during a sojourn to Europe, where he imbibed French and British graphic satire. I wanted to know more about Clay, "Life in Philadelphia," and what a young American artist might have learned about race and representation in Europe. It was time to return to the Library Company, which holds an extensive collection of Clay's work.

Arriving in Philadelphia, my first stop was Phil's desk. I'm sure that I was brimming with excitement as I explained to Phil that the new Clay materials suggested a transatlantic explanation for the artist's ideas. Phil listened politely and then reached for the massive three ring binders that sat on the shelf just behind his desk. I heard a bell ring as he opened a new door to scores of images gleaned from the collections over many years. "Have at 'em," Phil said as he laid a binder in front of me. I was proud to be given access to Phil's archive, but I sensed he was skeptical. And I was right. At the day's end as I thanked him, Phil muttered, "I'm not sure why you want to work on that any way." Ouch. Obviously, I hadn't persuaded him that there was a new and important story to tell about the history of race and caricature in the Early Republic. If Phil doubted the project, I knew I had work to do.

A year passed as I journeyed through U.S., British, and French ar-

chives looking for insight into the transatlantic story of race and representation. It turned out that Clay's peers, whose work was in some cases pasted into Clay's scrapbooks, had also used caricature to make sense of the presence of black people in cities like London and Paris. From British illustrators such as Thomas Rowlandson and brothers George and Robert Cruikshank to French artists Edme Jean Pigal and Louis-Léopold Boilly, Clay had encountered complex and varied possibilities for representing black subjects. Yes, "Life in Philadelphia" was produced out of the discomfort that men like Clay felt as they encountered free African Americans in shops, parks, and on the streets. But it was also true that Clay's visual vocabulary was deeply informed by a broader milieu that was transatlantic in scope. We know that Clay's images were later reproduced in British comic annuals and on fine French wallpaper. With Clay's scrapbooks and water colors in hand, we began to see that "Life in Philadelphia" resonated with European audiences because it was simultaneously novel and familiar. It was time to return to the Library Company.

By this time, plans for an exhibition on race and representation in the Atlantic world were underway at the Clements Library, and both Phil and Library Company curator Erika Piola showed me the whole of the Library Company's remarkable Clay materials: "Life in Philadelphia" printed in the U.S. and London; miniatures; derivative prints including the series "Life in New York." As I looked through the materials with them, I sketched the outline of the exhibition and of our new thinking about Clay. And then something clicked (to mix the metaphors) and Phil produced new keys to the project. First there was Clay's guide to Paris's Père Lachaise Cemetery, a gift from Clay to the Library Company in 1827. We unfolded the accompanying map, and there in red pen was Clay's carefully delineated route through the cemetery. It was vivid evidence of Clay as *flanêur* roaming Paris, much as his watercolors suggested. What came next was a smoking gun. Clay had not only studied his European peers, he had also borrowed from them. First, Phil reminded me about one of Clay's early prints, *The Road to Philadelphia*, which depicts an encounter between an Irishman and two Quakers. He then opened G. M. Woodward's *The Caricature Magazine or, Hudibrastic Mirror*, published in 1807, a collection of cartoons by Woodward, Rowlandson, and the Cruikshanks, among others. There was Woodward's earlier

print, “The Road to London, or the Countryman and the Quakers,” from which Clay had liberally borrowed: the scene, the characters, and the dialogue. Had I persuaded Phil that “Life in Philadelphia” had transatlantic roots? His note days later suggested that I had made progress: “New and astute questions and perspectives on stuff we’ve lived with for years keeps us from getting jaded.”

The final test came in fall 2009. The Clements Library’s exhibition “Reframing the Color Line: Race and the Visual Culture of the Atlantic World” was mounted and open to the public. The companion conference brought together scholars of history, literature, and art. The highlight was a curators’ roundtable during which Phil sat beside Clayton Lewis from the Clements Library and Georgia Barnhill from the American Antiquarian Society to reflect out-loud about race and racism in the archives. It was a remarkable moment for the many of us who had worked at the Library Company to hear Phil reflect on his life’s work. Characteristically, Phil had tried to dampen expectations in a note to me: “As



G. M. Woodward, “The Road to London, or the Countryman and the Quakers,” hand-colored etching in *The Caricature Magazine or, Hudibrastic Mirror* ([London]: T. Tegg, 1807).

free-associating and bullshitting are my strong suites, this suits me just fine.” The format allowed for a good amount of fascinating free association. But there was little bull. We sat in on a probing exchange about the culture and politics of the archive, about what it had meant to pioneer and sustain a commitment to African American history, and about the ambitions that curators have for scholars and themselves as they shape research and scholarship. The “Life in Philadelphia” series, we learned, had been important to acquire but difficult to interpret. It was an afternoon for appreciating how indispensable the collaborations between curator and scholar truly are.

Phil was still my bellwether, and the last challenge was the exhibition itself. True to form, he didn’t wait for me and instead walked himself through even before the meeting officially began. It was a busy weekend, with panels, receptions, dinners and travel logistics. I never got to sit down with Phil and hear his reaction. Had we succeeded? Had we persuaded him that there was yet another way to understand “Life in Philadelphia”? The weekend concluded and the guests headed home. Phil, it turned out, did have some final reflections for me, and they came in an email: “So it’s been a week since I first arrived in Ann Arbor and I’m still warm from the glow. What a wonderful, imaginative and daring exhibition, and a no less wonderful conference.” If Phil was still “warm from the glow,” I was now beaming. Phil’s bell rang loud and clear and I understood that I’d taken, it turned out, the right path. As he signed off, Phil left me with a final reflection, one that reminded me what a tough sell he can be: “Is anyone paying any attention to the exhibit? If not, their loss.”

**Martha S. Jones** is an Associate Professor in the Departments of History and of Afroamerican & African Studies and a member of the Affiliated Law faculty at the University of Michigan. She holds a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University and a J.D. from the CUNY School of Law and is the author of *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007).





## Laura Keim

When I arrived at Wyck as Curator in 2007, I learned that the collection included a cake plate on which was printed the Josiah Wedgwood-designed seal of the Abolition Society; an 1815 sampler made for Jane Bowne Haines by Lucy Turpin, a free-black child enrolled in Female Association School No. 3 in New York City; and a significant collection of thirty-three antislavery and abolition pamphlets. These finds are not surprising in a Quaker household. However, I required a consultation with someone who knows the scope of all the antislavery and abolition materials that were printed in order to understand just how strident the Haines family was in their support of abolition and to understand the meaning of their collection. I turned to Phil Lapsansky, writing him an email with a complete listing of all the pamphlets, in an effort to find out.

I did not hear from Phil for a little while. Then several weeks later, a lengthy email response arrived, having been composed while Phil was out of town visiting his grandchildren in California. In his colorful, detailed way, he explained the relative importance and rarity of the various publications, indicating that the last 18th-century generation of the family may have been more radical in their views, but that the early 19th-century Haineses were, in fact, quite quiet in their support of abolition, about what one would expect from Orthodox Quakers. Without Phil's knowledge and experience on which to draw and the context he provided, I might have misinterpreted the evidence and been tempted to overplay the importance of the abolition movement in the life of the Haines family, perhaps asking the collections to carry more weight than they bore in their own time.

Phil is a guru of African American history in Philadelphia, especially when it comes to the world of printed materials. Not only does Phil know the collection at the Library Company, having created the finding aid, but he did so much to form it, that his encyclopedic mind is an embodiment of the Library Company's collection. The challenge for the future is to capture his knowledge and his forty years in the field so that his experience lives on in the generations to follow. Such expertise, built through passion and over more than a generation of time, is priceless. Cheers to Phil and kudos to the Library Company of Philadelphia for

nurturing Phil, building the collection, and founding the Program in African American History.

**Laura Keim** serves as Curator for Stenton and Wyck in Historic Germantown and is a Lecturer of Historic Interiors, teaching undergraduates at Philadelphia University and graduates in the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Pennsylvania.



## Saadia N. Lawton

In its simplest form, history is a series of dates, events, and interactions that transpire among people. However, its inherent complexities exist in the meanings we ascribe to these factors as the past, present, and future become intricately interwoven. Librarians such as Phil Lapsansky have the significant responsibility of laboriously maintaining this information and organizing it in a user-friendly manner that affords researchers, like me, the opportunity to analyze the vast meanings ascribed to objects.

In 1971, when Phil started to identify materials associated with the black experience in America, I was just entering the world. By the time he illuminated the significance of Mary Anne Dickerson's album in the Library Company's *Annual Report* for 1993, I was a fledgling scholar who had recently received a bachelor's degree in history. I would not realize the fruits of his labor for another decade, when my doctoral project, "Contested Meanings: Audience Responses to the Wedgwood Slave Medallion, 1787–1839," relied on his description of Dickerson's album. Phil defined the adolescent African American girl's album as a pedagogical instrument that evinces issues of "conflict and struggle" for the lives of its makers and users despite its aesthetic qualities. This interpretation of Dickerson's album helped launch a deeper investigation for the final chapter of my dissertation. It forced me to reconsider the different ways Philadelphia's African American community employed the black suppliant icon to address their views on representation in relation to political, economic, and social issues.

During my tenure as an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow at the Library Company, I distinctly recall Phil's style as a non-evasive and supportive librarian. He always provided direction to scholars and served as a sounding board to flesh out ideas. Based on conversations about our research, Phil's vast knowledge of resources often resulted in suggestions to consult materials I would not otherwise have considered. Sitting at his desk, Phil remained observant of the approaches each scholar employed and encouraged us to further contextualize our research with materials housed at the Library Company, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and other institutions in the surrounding area. For me, Phil's influence

on my scholarship remains immeasurable to this day. As I continue to unpack the meanings that Philadelphia's 19th-century black community associated with the kneeling slave image, I can't help but reflect on Phil's contention that Dickerson's album is evidence of "conflict and struggle."

Like Mary Anne Dickerson, I find that I often negotiate the terms of my own education. As an African American woman, I continue to contend with issues of identity and representation. Things that appear to be



Sarah Mapps Douglas, "Fuchsia," July 15, 1846, in Mary Anne Dickerson's *Album* (1833-1882).

aesthetically pleasing to those on the periphery are sometimes the very things that reflect my personal conflicts and struggles. In 2008, when a new edition of the *Afro-Americana, 1553–1906* catalog was published in New Castle, Delaware, I sat at my desk less than ten miles away in Newark hammering out the final chapter of my dissertation. It gave me great satisfaction to know that I was afforded the opportunity to make use of some materials featured in this monumental bibliography. However, if it were not for Phil's description of the Dickerson album, my last chapter would have missed an historical moment in time when a series of dates, events, and interactions transpired among Mary Anne Dickerson, other members of Philadelphia's black community, and objects bearing the kneeling slave imagery. That historical moment provided a missing link to a narrative that continues to unfold today. Thanks to Phil's documentation, guidance, and direction, my scholarship was enriched and the time spent under his tutelage made a lasting impression on me.

**Saadia N. Lawton** is Director of the Center for Excellence in Visual Arts (The Lincoln-Barnes Foundation Partnership) and Assistant Professor of Art History at Lincoln University. She holds a Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

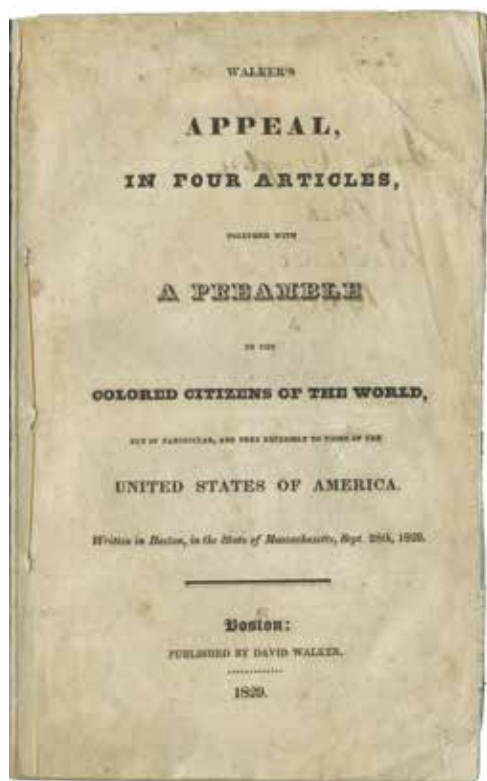


## Lori Leavell

I first came to know Phil over the phone and via email in 2010 as I prepared to apply for a Library Company fellowship. Phil's expansive knowledge, generosity, and general good will came across right away as he shared his insights not only about the Library Company's holdings with which I already was familiar but also about several other sources that proved relevant to my project. In June of 2011 I took up residency at the Library Company, as a Albert M. Greenfield Foundation Fellow in African American History. Having arrived late on a Friday afternoon, I was not to meet Phil until Monday. As I breakfasted in the Cassatt House kitchen on Monday, I struck up a conversation with an incredibly

knowledgeable and friendly man, and halfway into the conversation, I realized it was Phil with whom I had spoken so many months ago. (Anyone who has stayed in the Cassatt House knows the delight of those early morning conversations with Phil, who routinely stops in for coffee before heading to the Library Company next door.)

Having just completed a dissertation on the literary impact of a black-authored antislavery pamphlet, David Walker's *Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), I was in Philadelphia to conduct research that would help me revise and expand the project. My main objectives were (1) to develop a stronger sense of how Walk-



David Walker, *Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizens of the World* (Boston: Published by David Walker, 1829).

er's rhetoric fit within the broader range of antebellum African American print culture, (2) to explore indications of the wider circulation of the pamphlet via references to it in newspapers, and (3) to gain a better handle on Colonization rhetoric preceding and following the *Appeal* (Walker was an outspoken critic of what he called the "colonizing trick"). Needless to say, Phil proved an invaluable resource. In fact, conversations with him helped me to realize the need to give greater attention to the 1843 posthumous publication of the *Appeal* when Henry Highland Garnet published it along with his own "Address to the Slaves" in a single edition.

It was a pleasure to talk to Phil about the business of acquiring Library Company materials. He talked in particular about the experience of happening upon a listing for a first edition of the *Appeal* in the book dealer's catalog and then placing the order, thinking all the while that surely the pamphlet must already have been bought by someone else. In Phil's article "Black Is Sometimes Golden" in the Library Company's *Annual Report* for 1984, he describes the experience: "Our diligent reading of antiquarian book dealers' catalogues often brings us real treasures tucked among long lists of commonplace old books. A brief entry in a London dealer's catalogue listed 'David Walker. Appeal...Boston, 1829' for an insignificant sum" (43). In his conversation with me, he underscored the surprise and joy he felt when it arrived in the mail.

As I searched Philadelphia and New York newspapers for references to the pamphlet, I relied on Phil's expertise. Finding references to the pamphlet as well as excerpts from it, I was glad for Phil to inform me about the antebellum readerships of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *New York Evening Post*. My findings at the Library Company suggest that even if obtaining a copy of the *Appeal* may have proven challenging to interested readers during the period, Walker's ideas—and rhetoric—nonetheless circulated. I cannot thank Phil enough for all his help and support.

**Lori Leavell**, who received her Ph.D. from Emory University, is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Central Arkansas.



## W. T. Lhamon

It may be mistaken to think of great archives as places storing Eureka items. And great archivists may not lead us to Eureka texts. When Phil Lapsansky guided me at the Library Company of Philadelphia, he enriched me not with singular items that unlocked secrets but with cross-connections that confirmed, compounded, or contradicted ideas I was trying out. He knew who had befriended whom. He brought out cartoons from magazines or papers that I had not suspected would weigh in on the issue I was pursuing. He showed me maps that vivified the proximity of theaters to riots. We talked over early newspaper editors who were frequent dinner companions with my actor or playwright. The Library Company's newspaper runs helped me build up complete cast lists that displayed players' gestures crossing from pastoral to proletarian. They were seeding similar ideas in parallel but differing contexts.

I wish I could remember the name of the important scholar I met at a conference and told I had just come from the Library Company. She said, "Oh, Phil! He knows everything."

**W. T. Lhamon's** books include *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American 1950s* (1990); *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (1998); and *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (2003) (all Harvard University Press). Lhamon lives now in Vermont, where he is writing a book called "Secret Histories."





## Joanne Pope Melish

I first visited the Library Company in 1992 to do research for my Ph.D. dissertation on Northern slavery and emancipation. I arrived in a somewhat bruised condition from a brief sojourn at another archive in the Northeast that shall remain nameless (but easily recognizable to other scholars who worked there in that period, I suspect; happily, conditions there are quite different now). There the Overseer had greeted questions with disdain and call slips with repugnance, had surrendered each requested item reluctantly, one at a time (no comparing!), and upon their return had examined each one with dead certainty that it had been compromised. Thus it was that I stepped into the Library Company with some apprehension. My stated topic led the person at the desk to refer me to someone named Phillip Lapsansky.

In the space of half an hour I was sitting at a table with three or four different folders (at the same time!), and in the course of several days no more than a couple of hours would pass before something would remind Phil of another sermon, pamphlet, or letter relevant to my project that he would deliver to my table. He also welcomed me into his office to look through an extensive, dog-eared card file of notes on hundreds of graphic images of, by, and about Northern people of color. My dissertation, and the book it became, would be a lot narrower and duller without the material I found at the Library Company with Phil's generous guidance and assistance.



“La Belle de Philadelphia,” hand-colored aquatint in *Tregear's Black Jokes: Being a Series of Laughable Caricatures on the March of Manners amongst the Blacks* (London: G. S. Tregear, at his humorous and sporting print shop, Cheapside, 1834).

But much more importantly, my arguments would have been less well developed without the conversations I had with Phil in the course of that short research visit and by email off and on afterward. Phil was much more than a resource of boundless reference and recollection; he was, and is, a really insightful scholar, and a joyfully collaborative one. His keen observations and discerning questions on the subject of evolving racial ideology in the antebellum North were very important in developing my understanding of the impact of the gradual emergence of a free black population on racial thinking in the North. Conversations with Phil on four topics in particular greatly influenced my work.

First, there is his encyclopedic knowledge of caricatures, cartoons, and other graphic representations of antebellum people of color. In response to my innocent reference to two Bobalition broadsides I had found in other archives, he brought me at least half a dozen others, along with a folio of Edward W. Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" etchings, a couple of examples of Anthony Imbert's "Life in New York" lithographs, and one of *Tregear's Black Jokes*. We continued for several years to exchange information about new graphic finds along these lines. I will be forever grateful to Phil for expanding my understanding of how to read and think about the visual culture of race in early America.

Second, Phil was virtually the only historian I encountered in the very early '90s who was interested in Frank J. Webb's 1857 novel, *The Garies and Their Friends*, and saw it as a radical and quite extraordinary novel. I had thought it was; but I was a graduate student—what did I know? The conventional take on *The Garies* was that it was accommodationist and insufficiently antislavery. Phil was delighted at my enthusiasm for *The Garies*, discussed the novel with me at length, and stuffed into my hand a copy of his article on *The Garies* from the Library Company's 1990 *Annual Report*. As Phil pointed out, in fact *The Garies* "is not an antislavery novel, rather it is an anti-racist work, and the first American novel to deal with race relations and colorphobia in the urban North." It was Phil's encouragement that led me to give *The Garies* a prominent place in my arguments about the development of Northern racism.

Third, Phil's insights into the paradox presented by Mathew Carey helped me wrestle with the broader universe of contradiction reflected in Northern ideas about race. Carey's antislavery activism and philan-

thropic endeavors on behalf of Philadelphia's white working poor contrasted sharply with his general indifference toward blacks' impoverished condition and his vicious portrayal of their role in the 1793 Yellow Fever epidemic. Phil's comments led me to think in more complex ways about how race inflected class and ethnic conflict in the early national period.

And finally, a few years later, as I was thinking about the 1791 slave uprising in Saint-Domingue and its effects on racial thinking in the U.S., I emailed Phil to find out what he knew about *Secret History, or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1808), attributed to Leonora Sansay, a Philadelphia native. I had run across this text at another archive. Well, he knew quite a bit, and although I have never written about Sansay myself, I passed on what I learned from Phil to Michael Drexler, then a graduate student at Brown whose dissertation committee I was serving on; he, in turn, was inspired to investigate Sansay further, ultimately producing the terrific new edition of *Secret History* that appeared in 2007.

On a last personal note, I was delighted a few years later to hear from Phil that his daughter Charlotte was preparing to apply to colleges and was interested in Brown (where I received all of my degrees); would I be willing to meet with her? Shortly thereafter I had a delightful visit with Charlotte and Phil in Providence, and I like to think that my salesmanship had something to do with her final decision to enroll there. This was the only opportunity I have had to repay in any way even a small part of my indebtedness for the advice, encouragement, and sheer pleasure of scholarly exchange that I have received from Phil over the years. I'm sure I am not alone in being unable to imagine the Library Company without him.

**Joanne Pope Melish** is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, where she teaches American and African American history. Her research focuses on slavery, emancipation, and the development of racial ideologies from the colonial period through Reconstruction, especially in the northern colonies and states. She is the author of *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

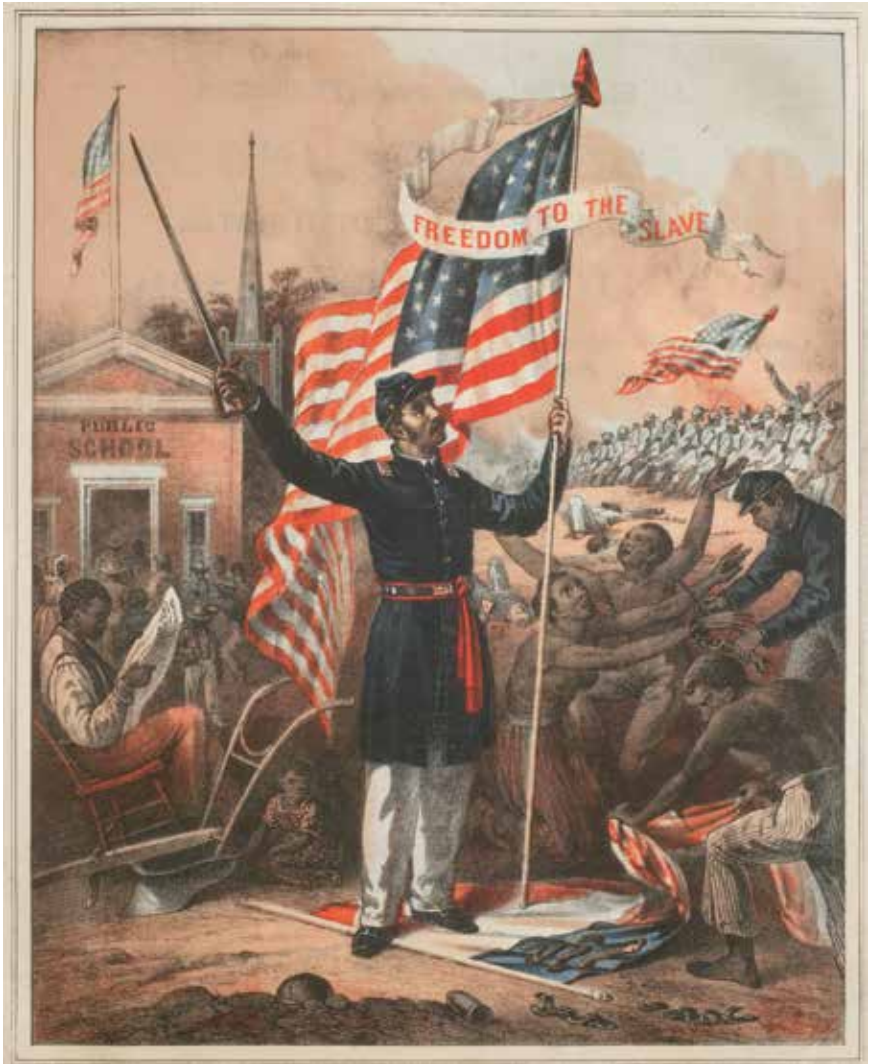


## Randall M. Miller

One of the great joys of my life as a historian has been going on treasure hunts with Phil Lapsansky at the Library Company of Philadelphia. Treasures abound there, to be sure, but Phil always made each venture a discovery tour of documents and artifacts that might be seen in new ways by placing them in different contexts, as in exhibitions. Of the many occasions when Phil has pointed the way, the one that, for me anyway, exemplifies Phil's genius as a collector and curator is the time I worked with him and Bob Engs co-curating the exhibition "The Genesis of Republicanism: The Birth and Growth of the Grand Old Party, 1854-1872," which opened in 2000 to "speak" to the presidential election that year and, in part, to remind Republicans of their origins as a party of reform and civil rights. Phil led me into the vast "archive" of the John A. McAllister Collection, with its scrapbooks of all manner of Civil War-era ephemera, newspaper clippings, and more. I was especially taken with the bric-a-brac of party campaigning and loyalty-building, as in starched "Union" collars for women to affix to their blouses or the "Union" cigar boxes and wrappers men discarded after their tobacco puffing. Phil appreciated that what McAllister had saved in all the "litter" of the moment was the very soul of the people. But he also looked to more dramatic representations of fundamental ideas such as liberty, Union, service. That led us to the many recruiting posters directed to particular peoples, rallying them to service. None were more telling than those calling black men to arms. In effect, they signaled a revolution in the making, a theme we tried to incorporate into the exhibition and one Phil has often remarked upon in describing the "meaning" of the Civil War. And among those posters none was more dramatic in its message and meaning, and more representative in the ways Phil Lapsansky saw and read history, than a two-sided handbill, with a colored lithograph, *Freedom to the Slave*, on the reverse side of a recruiting poster for black troops.

*Freedom to the Slave* was printed in Philadelphia in either 1863 or 1864. On its reverse side the recruiting poster reads "All slaves were made Freemen by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, January 1st, 1863. Come, then, able-bodied Colored Men, to the nearest United States Camp, and fight for the Stars and Stripes." This handbill speaks

volumes. Comparing its two sides reveals the double-barreled cause and consequence of emancipation as policy, as it also shows the contradictory meaning emancipation had in its own day and in later historical readings of it. The recruiting poster emphasizes the obligations of black men to fulfill a promise given by Abraham Lincoln, as if freedom came from his hand more than theirs, while the colored lithograph, in turn, asserts the



Philadelphia Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments, *Freedom to the Slave*, colored lithograph (Philadelphia, 1863 or 1864).

authority of black men, as men, to claim freedom for themselves and their people. In the lithograph the black soldier strikes a manly pose, holding both saber and American flag high and crushing a flag of serpents (Copperheads) with his boots below. He is flanked on his right by images of black soldiers moving forward in disciplined maneuver and of a black soldier breaking the chains of bondage on the outstretched arms of a woman, and flanked on his left by images of a black man reading a newspaper and children entering a public school, with its American flag aloft, and with a church steeple in the background. All the Civil War-era tropes of the slave becoming a responsible citizen are embedded in this lithograph, but its principal force comes from the central assertion of black agency in trampling secession and seizing freedom. As Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists understood, once a black man put on the uniform of the Union Army, with the brass buttons stamped U.S., and took the field with rifle and purpose, he became a citizen of the nation he was saving and remaking. The rights and obligations of that citizenship were thereby his due. The lithograph thus extends, but also counters, the message of Lincoln as emancipator by making the black soldier the author and agent of black liberty. As Phil taught so many of us, seeing that double-vision of how freedom came is essential to understanding what the Civil War promised and what we must not forget.

The theme of black agency in making their own way has been, and is, a driving force in Phil Lapsansky's collecting and exhibiting of African American works for the Library Company of Philadelphia. Before such terms as "agency" and "contingency" became buzzwords among historians, Phil already was making the case for blacks as agents/actors in shaping their own place and purpose in America and for reminding us that there was nothing inevitable about their degradations in bondage or their realizations of freedom. Blacks were enslaved by violence, and they became free by violence. Phil made the case for black agency and the contingency of their, or any, history by accumulating many and varied black-authored works in print and otherwise. That process of continuous collection and exhibition showed that the African American experience was, and is, the American story of a people always in the process of becoming, and of a history that is unfinished. Also, as the two sides of the lithograph suggest, and Phil always insisted, perspective matters in "see-

ing” the meanings authors and audiences assigned to any work. Further, even as Phil emphasized the importance of placing any and every work in its historical context(s), he demanded a close examination of the particulars of that work—e.g., author, publisher, paper, print run. Knowing the physical attributes of the work might reveal its intended audience(s), uses, and life span in ways that its content alone could not. Thus, for example, a cheaply produced broadside with a small print run that called for a meeting or a rally at a particular place and time would suggest its author(s) targeted the message to a specific audience, with postings likely limited to the churches, meeting halls, and neighborhoods where they gathered. A large print run suggested a wider distribution. And so on. To be sure, the content told the tale, but, as Phil taught so many of us, so did the basic facts of production. Thus, the handsome colored lithograph on the reverse of the recruiting poster likely had an audience and a presence intended for more than just the moment.

This handbill echoes the principal themes that have so much informed Phil’s collecting, curatorship, and scholarship and that have so influenced me, and so many others. It is, in the end, that the African American story is really the nation’s story, and we all must know it and own it. Thanks, Phil, for showing the way.

**Randall M. Miller** is the William Dirk Warren ‘50 Sesquicentennial Chair and Professor of History at Saint Joseph’s University. He is the author or editor of more than twenty books. His most recent publications are (co-authored with Paul A. Cimbala) *The Northern Home Front in the Civil War* (Praeger, 2012) and (as editor) *Lincoln & Leadership: Military, Political, and Religious Decision Making* (Fordham University Press, 2012).



## David Murray

In my book *Matter, Magic, and Spirit: Representing Indian and African American Belief* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) I used only a small number of the sources that Phil Lapsansky pointed me to. Which is not to say, of course, that he wasn't wonderfully useful to me. Initially it was through a few laconic remarks at the end of the day, having noted what I was ordering ("I suppose you've looked at . . . ?"), and then gradually a steady trickle of incredibly useful and intriguing suggestions and, just as important, questions about just what I was doing, which made me focus my ideas. As a European scholar I've been incredibly lucky over the years to have been able to profit from the incredible resources of American research libraries, and the expertise of their staffs. Phil was outstanding in this elite group of experts and well deserving of the recognition he is receiving.

**David Murray** is a Professor of American Studies at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of many books, including *Indian Giving: Economies of Power in Early Indian-White Exchanges* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).





## Amrita Chakrabarti Myers

In the winter of 2000–2001 I was a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University specializing in African American women's history. I had just returned to New Jersey from South Carolina, where I had spent nine months completing the archival research for my dissertation on the lives of free black women in antebellum Charleston. Certain that I had examined virtually everything that had to do with free women of color in that city, I was intrigued when I picked up the Library Company's *Annual Report* for 1991 and read Phil Lapsansky's piece on a collection recently acquired by the Library Company. Stretching back over two hundred and fifty years, the Stevens-Cogdell/Sanders-Venning (SCSV) Papers chronicled the lives of an established black Philadelphia family—a family with black and white ancestry whose roots were in Charleston, South Carolina. After reading Phil's essay, I thought I might want to take a look at the SCSV Papers myself, particularly since the black side of this family's tree traced back to one Sarah Martha Sanders, a *de facto* free black woman who died in Charleston in 1850 before her surviving children and their white father moved to Philadelphia.

Before making the trip to Philadelphia, I emailed the Director of the Library Company and spoke with him and Phil on the telephone. Both men were gra-



Photograph of Julia Sanders Venning, in the Stevens-Cogdell/Sanders-Venning Papers.

cious and helpful, and after hearing about my dissertation, Phil encouraged me to come and look at the SCSV collection. He believed it could be a valuable addition to my project, and that I should consider applying for a short-term Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship in order to spend a month at the Library Company going through the SCSV materials with a fine-tooth comb. My conversation with Phil convinced me that a journey down the turnpike was in order, and my day-trip to the Library Company in the teeth of a blizzard one January morning in 2001 confirmed that I needed to apply for a short-term fellowship. During that visit, Phil made the time to speak with me about my dissertation, gave me a preliminary “tour” of the SCSV Papers, showed me some of the collection’s not-yet identified or cataloged portraits and ephemera, and introduced me to other holdings that could be helpful for my work.

I was delighted when my fellowship application was approved, and I moved to Philadelphia for a one-month stay in the summer of 2001. That month was priceless. The materials in the SCSV collection were even richer than I had realized, and the information I gathered during my fellowship became one entire chapter of the dissertation. That dissertation became the foundation of my first book, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston*. The story of Sarah Martha Sanders, her master and sexual partner Richard Walpole Cogdell, and their children, forms a chapter under the title “A Tale of Two Women: The Lives of Cecille Cogdell and Sarah Sanders.” The chapter is critical to the overall book, providing a rare glimpse into the inner workings of a black-white family; into the tenuous existence that *de facto* free black women experienced in the antebellum South; and into the significant negotiations these women had to engage in, and the compromises they had to make, in order to forge a more secure freedom for themselves and their descendants.

I believe that Phil’s influence on my work is thus clear. Had it not been for his tireless work collecting African American materials for the Library Company, and had he not published his essay on the SCSV collection in the *Annual Report*, I would have never even known that the papers existed. And, had it not been for Phil’s generosity with his time, my examination of the collection (which was not fully processed in 2001) would have been made much more difficult. Finally, Phil made one fi-

nal, significant contribution to my work just this past year. In the spring of 2011, as the book was in the final stages of production, I called the Library Company to enquire as to whether any of the uncataloged portraits and photographs in the SCSV collection had been identified in the decade that had passed since I first perused the materials. I was hoping (but not hopeful) that an image had been found of Sarah Sanders or one of her daughters.

Picture my surprise when I was patched through to Phil, who *remembered* me and my dissertation from so many years back. Consider how relieved I was when he began checking into the SCSV visual materials for me, because I knew that my search was in the right hands. And, then, imagine my excitement when Phil got back to me just two days later with the news that a photograph had been positively identified as Julia Sanders Venning, Sarah Martha Sanders' daughter by Richard Walpole Cogdell. Given that almost *no* photographs exist of free black women from Charleston's antebellum period, you can understand my delight at being able to include this last-minute find in my book, and why I was so happy to be able to write this essay for Phil's *Festschrift*. Without his help, my book would be a much poorer contribution to the story of black women's lives in the Old South. So, I end here by saying, very simply, "Thank you, Phil. You are a treasure, and you will be sorely missed."

**Amrita Chakrabarti Myers** is Assistant Professor of History at Indiana University. She is the author of *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011).



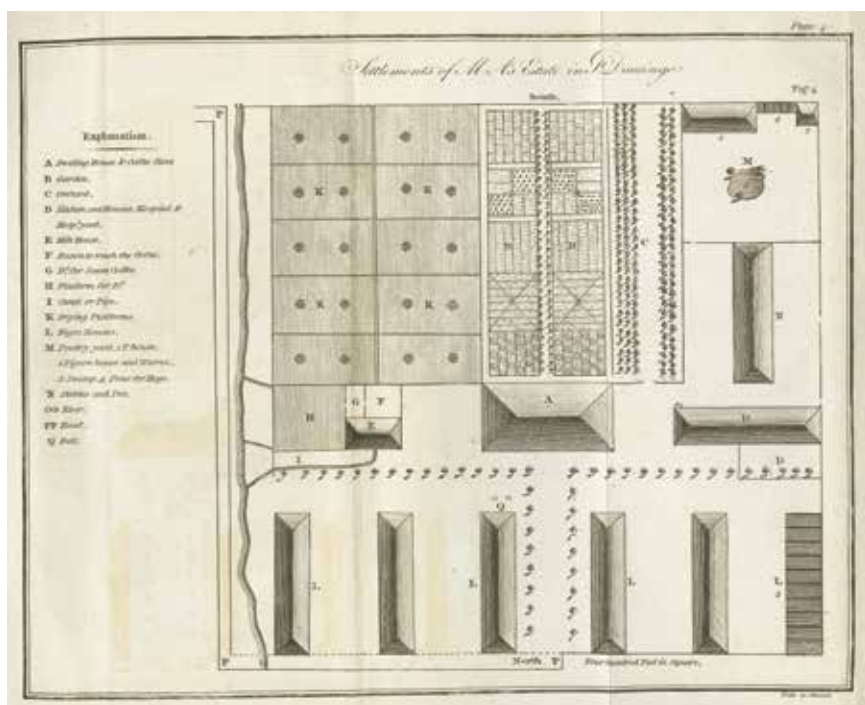
## Gary Nash

I am one of hundreds, perhaps several thousand, who have been the beneficiaries of Phil Lapsansky's many years at the Library Company of Philadelphia. His work in building, cataloging, describing, and contextualizing the thousands of items in the Afro-Americana Collection must stand as one of the most learned and admirable feats of librarianship in our generation.

Each year when I receive the *Annual Report* of the Library Company, I turn immediately to read Phil's reports on new additions to the Afro-Americana holdings. But "report" is not the word that adequately describes what are, in fact, deeply researched mini-essays on different aspects and dimensions of the African American experience, throughout the entire Atlantic basin, as they are revealed in books, pamphlets, engravings, and other materials acquired over the years. For example, in the 1988 *Annual Report*, Phil reported on the Library Company's copy of Joseph Laborie's *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo; with . . . Some Hints on the Present State of the Island under the British Government* (London, 1798) and on the acquisition of *The London Missionary Society's Report of the Proceedings against the Late Rev. J. Smith, Who Was Tried under Military Law, and Condemned to Death, on a Charge of Aiding and Assisting in a Rebellion of the Negro Slaves* (London, 1824). In a few pages, Lapsansky told of Laborie's career, discussed him as a backer of the British occupation of Saint-Domingue in the firestorm of the Haitian Revolution, and detailed the several later editions of Laborie's coffee planter's guide published in Colombo, Madras, and Havana. More followed on Smith's role in the Demerara slave rebellion of 1823. Several decades of reading these meaty and marvelously crafted sections of the *Annual Report* has been a key part of my education in the history of the peoples of the African diaspora.

To be more particular, Phil has been invaluable for my own work on Black Philadelphia in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, I went to school at his desk to acquire an understanding of the broadside caricatures from Boston, Philadelphia, London, and other cities where lampooning white artists mocked and deplored the efforts of free blacks, most of them former slaves, who were building the sinews of commu-

nity through churches, schools, and literary and mutual aid societies. In his wry prose, Lapsansky wrote in the 1988 *Report* how, through caricature, “white folks attempted[ed] to reinvent black folks to their liking.” Through his assiduous combing of sale catalogs, he has built a fabulous collection of graphic black caricature, as well as ephemeral material such as songsters, farces, jokesters, minstrel posters—all of the material that was to make blackface minstrelsy so widely popular in the United States and abroad. “Like fire ants, killer bees, and termites,” wrote Lapsansky, “the impact of these various forms of caricature lies in their number. We know of no reasonably complete enumeration of these works, yet we shrink from the task, knowing that our several hundred items reflect but a glimmer of the tip of the iceberg. In their vast ubiquity, these various ephemeral items demonstrate how deep-rooted and commonplace anti-black sentiment became during the 19th century.”



“Settlements of M. A.’s Estate in St. Domingo,” engraved by S. I. Neele, in Joseph Laborie, *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo; with . . . Some Hints on the Present State of the Island, under the British Government* (London: printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798).

Thus, Phil was indispensable to me in ferreting out the kind of sneering broadside attacks on respectable black Philadelphians—malapropic fools all in the comic artists' renditions—that fed racial discrimination and violence in antebellum Philadelphia. With his expert guidance and important leads to the production of racist propaganda, I used several lithographs from Edward W. Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" series (1829, published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1832) and several others rendered in 1819 by David Claypool Johnston, a pioneering stoker of white ridicule, where the objective was to cudgel aspiring black householders back into subservient roles. How this appalling art form reached across the Atlantic to London and back was a part of the story that Lapsansky has unfolded, one annual report essay after another, as new copies of lithographic racial caricaturing surfaced.

The deep exploration of racial caricaturing in print is but one fragment of Lapsansky's tireless collection of images bearing on Africa, the African diaspora, and the black experience in the Americas. If he has not been able to acquire the images, as they first appeared in a variety of forms, he has obtained copies, which he has neatly arranged in jumbo-sized binders. In one example of important acquisitions, noted in the 2006 *Annual Report* under the heading "Afro-Americana: Righteous Graphics," Lapsansky described newly acquired stipple engravings of Richard Allen, the A.M.E. founding father, and broadsides promoting Mother Bethel, Allen's church.

Here is one other example of Lapsansky's dogged research and incandescent prose. Long in pursuit of a copy of Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (London and New York, 1857), Lapsansky purchased a copy from a British book dealer in 1989. This was the occasion for a sparkling essay on "Frank J. Webb and His Friends," where Phil dissected the novel by a black Philadelphian (and only the second novel published by a black American). In the process, he dissected the critics of the book, who misunderstood the context of violence-wracked Philadelphia in the era of Webb's coming of age, knew little of the man himself, and did not find in *The Garies and Their Friends* the kind of protest novel they hoped for. "If this fictionalized study of race relations by the son of the free black urban middle class was offensive to his contemporaries and lacking acceptable racial consciousness to us today," writes Lapsansky, "that, we submit,

is not Webb's problem." By way of conclusion, Lapsansky reminded the reader that as he was writing this wonderful essay, Philadelphians were engaging in a primary election "marked by intense racial polarization," while, nationally, outcries against affirmative action programs and fiery campus debates about the theory and practice of multiculturalism raged. "Suddenly," Lapsansky concluded, "Frank Webb's novel seems depressingly current."

No wonder every scholar of the early African American experience beats his or her way to Lapsansky's door. For years I wrote, telephoned, and emailed him on a wide range of topics. And I haunted him over hundreds of happy hours in the reading room of the Library Company as I searched for one more source, one more image, one more lead on a long-hidden individual who figured in the formation of Philadelphia's free black community. At no extra expense he ladled out his mordant wit, flavored by his attire with ties that in their flamboyance suggested Phil's stick-it-in-your-eye bemusement with the human condition.

The monumental Afro-Americana Collection now attracts scholars coming from every point on the compass, making this resource one of the most used at the Library Company. Phil's successor will be the conservator and curator of the monumental Afro-Americana collection; and it will fall to that person to continue his gem-like annual reports on new additions to the collection.

**Gary Nash**, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Los Angeles, has published widely on African American history, including *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 2006) and *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Harvard University Press, 1988). He has been elected to the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Society of American Historians. He served as president of the Organization of American Historians in 1994–95 and was a member of the National Park Service Second Century Commission.



## Heather S. Nathans

My quest for the right picture took almost four years. My second book, *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787–1861*, explores the ways in which sentiment was deployed onstage not only as a weapon against slavery, but in the service of racial uplift. The book deliberately moves away from well-known stage images such as Uncle Tom, Eliza, and Jim Crow, in search of other models of sympathy and attraction. However, while these alternative images filled the stage, very few were ever captured in antebellum visual culture. Thus in 2005 I launched a seemingly endless search for that one, defining visual image to adorn the cover of my book and distill the essence of my argument without resorting to the familiar icons of the American antislavery movement. I looked in vain for an image that would combine the theatricality of emancipation with the sentimental culture of the period, while simultaneously recognizing African Americans' agency in their post-slavery transformations.

In thinking about appropriate images, I had been strongly influenced

by Phil Lapsanky's essay, "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images" and by my discussions with him while I was a fellow at the Library Company. As Lapsanky notes in his essay, "suplicants adorned countless abolitionist books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, broadsides, letterheads, and printed ephemera" (206). The ubiquitous icon, "Am I Not a Man and a Brother," would certainly have been familiar to both contemporary readers and to 18th- and 19th-century theatre audiences, with the kneeling slave raising his



"Slave on Deck," by George Cooke, frontispiece to Thomas Day and John Bicknell, *The Dying Negro, a Poem* (London: John Stockdale, 1793).



hands to a sometimes visible, sometimes invisible white liberator. Yet the representations I was studying in the playhouse depicted more complex relationships among black and white communities. These relationships were fraught with tension and often featured the black character firmly fixed at the center of his or her narrative, rather than displaced by the ghostly presence of a white benefactor.

With Phil's guidance and that of his colleagues in the Library Company's Print Department, who showed me hundreds of prints, maps, daguerreotypes, cartoons, engravings, and portraits, I narrowed my cover choice down to two possibilities: "The Slave on Deck" (1793) and *To the Friends of Negro Emancipation* (1834). George Cooke's "Slave on Deck," an illustration included in the 1793 edition of *The Dying Negro*, features a highly theatrical setting with the rebellious slave standing on the deck of a ship, arms and legs shackled, yet with knife drawn, as jagged bolts of lightning streak across the sky. The image conjures the story of a man who has escaped for one brief moment of freedom—even if that moment will end in his suicide or murder by the ship's white crew. It recalled for me the character of Hassan, in Matthew G. Lewis's 1798 drama *The Castle Spectre*. In the play Hassan describes the terrible trauma of being on the slave ship, vowing vengeance on his white captors, "In that moment when the last point of Africa faded from my view . . . in that bitter moment did I banish all humanity from my breast. . . . Oh how it joys me when the white man suffers!" The "Slave on Deck" print also conjured images of the *Amistad* uprising—an event



*To the Friends of Negro Emancipation*, engraving by David Lucas after a painting by Alexander Rippingille (London, 1834).

dramatized by American entertainers in forms ranging from wax works to plays such as *The Black Schooner*.

Yet the “Slave on Deck” image, while powerful, also spoke of defeat and despair. Perhaps more importantly, the tone evoked Gothic horror rather than sentimental culture. Alexander Rippingille’s 1834 study *To the Friends of Negro Emancipation* also offered a rich landscape of symbols, including young African boys burying the broken chains of slavery, a discarded whip, a ship sailing off in the distance (perhaps representing a retreating colonial power), and a young mother lifting her baby to the heavens. Yet it was the central figure—so similar and yet so different from the figure in “Slave on Deck”—that captured my imagination. Like the African in “Slave on Deck,” the male figure in Rippingille’s study is half clad and surrounded by other figures in European dress (indeed their poses almost mirror each others’). Yet in Rippingille’s portrait, the man’s partial nudity conveys not savagery, but a stripping away of all European accretions—a symbolic rebirth, like the swaddled baby next to him, who is also lifting its arms in triumph.

At the end of a long search, I finally found my cover image, but beyond that, I gained a deeper appreciation of the extraordinary role visual culture played in transforming the abject, downtrodden victim of slavery into a powerful and victorious hero. Phil’s work guided me not only towards a greater understanding of the development of antebellum abolitionist and antiabolitionist imagery, it offered me a new vocabulary for discussing the dynamic exchanges between print and performance culture.

**Heather S. Nathans** is a Professor in the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, University of Maryland. She edits the University of Iowa Press’s Studies in Theatre History and Culture series and has written *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson* and *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787–1861: Lifting the Veil of Black* (both Cambridge University Press, 2003, 2009). She is currently writing “Hideous Characters and Beautiful Pagans: Performing Jewish Identity on the Antebellum American Stage.”



## Dana D. Nelson

I grew up working class in Colorado and did my graduate work in Michigan. I worked my way slowly east through my young adulthood, a physical movement that eventually drew me to my scholarly center. As a westerner, big cities were a foreign land to me but as an early Americanist, Philadelphia was a foregone conclusion: a research lodestone, birthplace of the public library, home to amazing archives. I first went for a summer just out of graduate school, doing work on Benjamin Rush's niece, Rebecca Rush, the supposed author of the 1812 novel *Kelroy*, written "By a Lady of Pennsylvania." I'd been turned down on a Mellon Foundation fellowship by the Library Company and went on my own dime: intrepid, poor, and so, so green. Staff and reading room assistants at the Library Company—Mary Anne Hines, Denise Larrabee, and Jim Green—helped me scour their holdings and brainstorm for other ways to track down information about the elusive author for my Oxford University Press Early American Women Writers reprint edition. At the edge of my awareness all summer was Phil—silver-haired and blue-eyed behind smudged glasses, distracted, humming, elusive. I didn't have the impression he was interested in my *Kelroy* project. I didn't have the nerve to ask.

That first summer, though, I did some preliminary scouting for my next book, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Duke University Press, 1998), and it was clear the Library Company was an important archive for that project. So with some coaching from Jim Green, I refined my application and won a Mellon residency. And *this* time, I managed to earn the attention of Phil. What a pleasure and treasure that became. For this essay, John Van Horne asked contributors to think of a source or two—"book, pamphlet, periodical, broadside, or graphic"—that Phil brought to our attention. But the sources Phil brought to my attention are all over *National Manhood*, and it would be impossible to isolate one or two as key. Probably more important are the ones I can't even remember. I can't count the times Phil either brought something to my table or took me upstairs to look at images or materials not yet cataloged. I'd ponder, not always seeing a place or an immediate connection. "Just think about it," Phil would quietly and officially conclude. Many of these did not show up in my book—but

whether or not they appeared in my analysis, they were becoming part of a rich historical tapestry that Phil was weaving for me as I developed my arguments: the fabric of the book.

And that summer, Phil became just as much the fabric of Philadelphia to me, the peripatetic civil rights activist who became (what I've always thought of as the maestro) curator of the African American history holdings, the guy who showed me where the really great ice cream was, the man who knew both early American race history AND Philadelphia backwards and forwards. I've sent my students to him ("you have to *earn* Phil's attention," I warn, "and make it your best business to do that!") and they come back with the same sense of awe, and similarly stocked files. He's so much a part of the Library Company, it's frankly impossible to think of it without him (forever after "The Library Company of Adelp<sup>h</sup>ia"). Our work is the better for our contact with Phil, our lives equally the richer.

**Dana D. Nelson** is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English and American Studies at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of three books and is currently working on "Commons Democracy," which reexamines the growth of democracy in the early United States, describing the range, durability, and vitality of the various ideas about and practices of democratic self-government in the young nation that existed outside formal government.



## Richard S. Newman

Like many scholars working in early African American history, my sojourns to the Library Company have become as much about visiting Phil as working in the Afro-Americana Collection. In fact, as far as I can tell, they are synonymous. Talking to Phil is like talking to the archive itself. “You know,” he would often say to me after I had asked about something that led nowhere, “we do have a different version of that,” or, “Do you know about this source?” In a matter of moments, he would grab it from somewhere deep inside the vault and lay it before me. Whether it was a Philadelphia reprint of the Haitian Emigration Society’s plans to encourage black settlement in the Caribbean or Phil’s private file on Northern antiabolition broadsides—an accordion-like folder stuffed with copies, notes, and correspondence that he kept updating through the years—he always provided new leads. “You know, we just purchased a copy of an 1823 Richard Allen portrait,” he told me several years ago when I was finishing my biography of the celebrated former slave and A.M.E. Church founder. I had never seen an original version of it. When Phil brought it down and unveiled the beautiful stipple engraving, I knew I had my book cover. Picturing a graying and sober Allen in his sixties, the portrait had been executed at just the moment this black founding figure was battling to reassert his status as a community patriarch and national leader. The engraving showed Allen as an aging but an indomitable leader who was far from ready to step aside from the struggle for racial justice. As long as he lived, the engraving showed, he would be a force.

Yet, as much as Phil has delighted me with research aid through the years, he has been a treasure-trove for another group: school teachers. Biennially since 2006, I have used the Library Company as a base for a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for School Teachers on abolitionism. Our focus has been on abolitionist documents that teachers might use in the classroom. While the teachers salute everyone at the Library Company for their geniality and helpfulness, they often rely on Phil’s expertise in the Afro-Americana Collection. No matter the topic they are interested in, Phil would always have an ace up his sleeve.

One of the most moving and popular items Phil shows teachers is

William Wells Brown's *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (see p. 31). Originally published in Boston in 1863, Brown's book offered a compendium of black achievement in the Atlantic world. Slave rebels, bishops, actors, poets, activists fill the pages, illuminating black genius through time and space. Yet, as I learned, Phil was not interested merely in Brown's text. Rather, it was the story behind the Library Company's edition of the book that resonated with him. Where the original book was published safely in abolitionist Boston, this copy came from conquered Savannah, Georgia, in 1865. Indeed, as the title page indicated, the book was "Published for James M. Symms," a former slave who had been run out of Savannah for running educational classes for slaves and free blacks around the time Brown first published his book



*The Revd. Richard Allen, Bishop of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in the U. States*, stipple engraving by John Boyd, after the oil painting by Rembrandt Peale (Philadelphia, 1823).

in the North. Symms—also spelled Simms—showed up in Boston and evidently secured an agreement to republish the book. At the end of the war Symms returned to Savannah, became an instrument of black institution building and uplift (he served as a leader in the Baptist Church, a founder of a chapter of the Prince Hall Masons, and a newspaper publisher), and issued his edition of Brown's book.

In short, Symms served as just the type of figure Brown celebrated in *The Black Man*. Or, as Phil put it, Brown's book was written by a freedman (Brown himself had fled bondage before becoming a noted activist and author) for freedmen in the Civil War era . . . and now it was being republished by a freedman in the Reconstruction South. The Library Company edition that Phil held tightly at his side even carried an inscription to this effect. It was a great story. Indeed, the last time we ran the seminar, in 2010, a teacher from Georgia was so captivated by Phil's tale that she planned to use the book with her students. As she explained, Symms's edition of *The Black Man* would not only teach but inspire her own students in Georgia, who often felt the odds were stacked against them. But here was a powerful moment from their regional past when a former enslaved man sought to harness the power of books for communal uplift.

Now every time I teach Brown's book, I think of Phil's presentation and the moving way he linked this one text to the saga of Civil War emancipation.

**Richard S. Newman** is a Professor of History at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He is the author of *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the A.M.E. Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York University Press, 2008).



## Samuel Otter

I first met Phil Lapsansky when I arrived at the Library Company in 1998 to take up a one-month fellowship, and he sat down with me to talk about my project proposal. With a characteristic gentle rigor, Phil wondered where to begin. I had described a broad treatment of texts generated at times of racial crisis in the 19th-century United States, including the Yellow Fever epidemic in Philadelphia in 1793, the New York draft riots of 1863, and the War in the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century. He outlined where I might start in the archives, showing me original editions of several Yellow Fever narratives, including those written by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and by Mathew Carey.

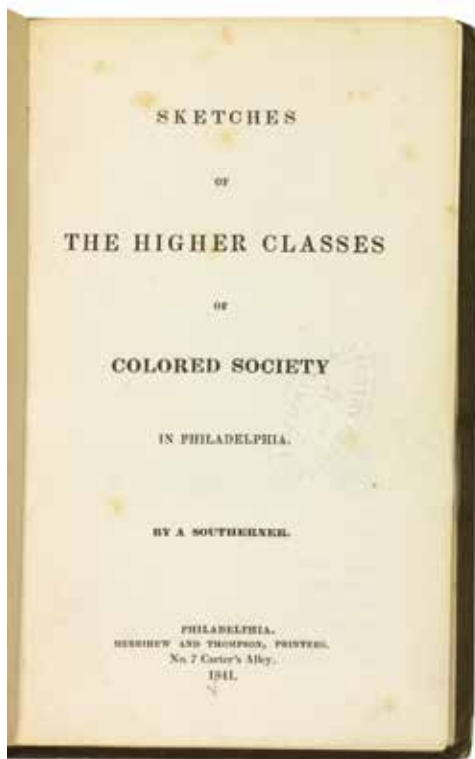
Over the next weeks, Phil was an invaluable advisor and an astounding resource. He seemed to have at his fingertips (not surprising since I soon learned that he had handled them all) the thousands of books, pamphlets, and broadsides that formed the Library Company's Afro-Americana collection. During the month, Phil brought to my attention or renewed my regard for the writings of Richard Allen; the "Life in Philadelphia" etchings of Edward W. Clay; Robert Montgomery Bird's metempsychic novel *Sheppard Lee*; Joseph Willson's treatment of midcentury manners, *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia*; the debates and documents surrounding the burning by rioters of the social reform Pennsylvania Hall in 1838; John Beauchamp Jones's fictional defense of racial violence *The City Merchant*; and Frank J. Webb's extraordinary *The Garies and Their Friends*, a novel of the city's past, present, and future, pivoting on the history and experience of its free African American community.

Phil's precise knowledge about these texts and their historical contexts helped me to see something I had never seen before, despite years of studying 19th-century American literature. These various documents shared a narrative, unfolding between the United States Constitution and Civil War, about the crucial and symbolic city of Philadelphia. They formed part of a largely unacknowledged tradition, verbal and visual, that focused on the city's distinctive history, geography, politics, and aesthetics and took up concerns about race, character, violence, and freedom. During my month at the Library Company, I gained the topic for



a much better book than the one I had proposed to write. Phil helped me to understand the complexity of this often disturbing material. He viewed such material with a historian's eye—refusing to condemn or discard evidence because of its racist or racist cast, insisting on the significance of coming to terms with a full and accurate record of the past—and also with an almost aesthetic regard for the contours of representation. I remember Phil suggesting, as we examined Clay's caricatures of what he took to be African American social pretension, that the details in these images—the furnishings, clothes, and gestures—might convey not only disparagement but also fascination, especially when contrasted with other contemporary graphic portrayals of African Americans. Historians still tend to adduce Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" images as self-evidently racist, with not much more to be said, but Phil helped me to recognize that the archive is never self-evident. It requires context and discernment.

I came to the Library Company and to Phil with a loose set of interests. I left with a thesis. And my experience was not unique. In article after article and book after book, written by historians, art historians, and literary scholars, authors express their gratitude to Phil for having shared his knowledge and contributed to their work. Books that had been out of print for decades or for a century—such as Webb's *The Garies* and Willson's *Sketches*—are now available again,



Joseph Willson, *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia*. By a Southerner (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1841).

edited by those who worked at the Library Company in the collection supervised by Phil. The support he has given to scholars is a major legacy of his four decades at the Library Company and his roles as bibliographer, reference librarian, purchaser, chronicler of acquisitions in his essays for the Library Company's *Annual Reports*, editor, scholar, Chief of Reference, and Curator of African American history. With the devotion of a curator, the precision of a historian, the appreciation of a literary scholar, and an uncommon mix of expertise and generosity, not to mention a delicious sense of humor, Phil has left us a rare legacy. His retirement from a career at the Library Company, dedicated to the preservation of the country's African American past, is an occasion for gratitude and celebration.

**Samuel Otter** is a Professor in the Department of English at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Melville's Anatomies* (University of California Press, 1999) and *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2010).



## Carla L. Peterson

One day in the early 1990s, I traveled to Philadelphia and made my way to the Library Company. There I was greeted by a wise-looking man with graying hair who asked how he could help me. He was none other than Phil Lapsansky. Over the years, Phil's passion for knowledge—both historical and literary—has never ceased to amaze me.

At the time, I had just begun working on my book, *Doers of the Word: African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830–1880)*. My graduate education in the Comparative Literature Department at Yale had happened so long ago that my training in theory and methods was confined to New Criticism and structuralism. I knew virtually nothing about archival research, but was well aware that investigating the literary production—both oral and written—of 19th-century African American women would require me to reach beyond printed volumes on library shelves and the close textual analysis of their contents. For reasons I don't quite remember, I chose the Library Company of Philadelphia as one of the first archives to visit.

That turned out to be a lucky decision. I began by asking for the microfilm reels of the *Christian Recorder*, a 19th-century black newspaper published out of Philadelphia, to see whether I could find any additional writings of poet and orator Frances Watkins Harper that prior scholars might have overlooked. My request revealed my utter ignorance, for I had confused the Library Company with its next door neighbor, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Many an archivist, as I would later discover, would have openly scoffed at my mistake, but Phil simply corrected me with the gentleness that was his trademark. As he sent me next door, he called out to invite me to come back later so he could give me a tour of the Library Company's Afro-Americana Collection.

Return I did, and Phil spent the afternoon pulling out treasure—books, pamphlets, broadsides, prints, and more. Since I had told him I was a literary critic by training, Phil made sure to show me some of the Library Company's most significant literary holdings, most especially Leonora Sansay's *Zelica, the Creole*. Phil had identified the novel not only as one of Sansay's but also as a revision of her earlier *Secret History, or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*. To my delight, I discovered that

Phil's vision of history was sufficiently capacious to embrace literary texts and traditions as well.

As I progressed in my work on *Doers of the Word* and gained a better sense of the archival material I was looking for, Phil helped me research the writings of antebellum black women living in and around Philadelphia, notably Frances Watkins Harper, spiritual autobiographer Jarena Lee, and diarist Charlotte Forten. He suggested that for additional Watkins Harper material I should browse through the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, an abolitionist newspaper with which I was not familiar. Going the extra mile, Phil also facilitated invitations for me to speak at the Library Company; I remember one talk on Forten that focused on her diary entries of life in Philadelphia and subsequent experiences on the Sea Islands during the Civil War, and another on Jarena Lee's account of her career as an itinerant evangelical preacher.

Phil came to my rescue once again as I conducted research for my most recent book, *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*. Well into the project, I found myself challenged by the fact that New York's antebellum black community had not been as active in the antislavery movement as Philadelphia's (or at least their activism had been of a very different sort). And I was chagrined to discover that



"Mrs. Jarena Lee," lithograph by P. S. Duval after original by A. Hoffy, frontispiece to *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee* (Philadelphia: Printed and published for the author, 1849).

unlike their Philadelphia counterparts, were woefully absent from the historical record. Grasping for clues, I returned to the Library Company to look through its collection for the friendship albums owned by three Philadelphia women, Amy Matilda Cassey, Mary Anne Dickerson, and her sister Martina Dickerson. Phil guided me through the albums, painstakingly pointing out the presence of black New Yorkers in each (Cassey was the daughter of minister Peter Williams Jr. at St. Philip's in New York): Rebecca Peterson, New York schoolteacher and daughter of John Peterson, penned several entries in the albums, as did New Yorkers James McCune Smith, Patrick Reason, Charles Reason, and Isaiah DeGrasse. I was once again reminded of the breadth and depth of Phil's literary knowledge as we discussed at length the significance of the fact that several of the copied poems were written by 18th-century British poet Anna Barbauld.

Phil might be retiring from the Library Company, but I can't imagine him ever retiring from the world of research and scholarship. I'm looking forward to many more encounters!

**Carla L. Peterson** is a Professor of English at the University of Maryland. She is the author of *The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel from Napoleon to Victoria* (Rutgers University Press, 1986); *"Doers of the Word": African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830–1880)* (Rutgers University Press, 1998); and *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City* (Yale University Press, 2011).



## David R. Prior

My first encounter with Phil Lapsansky came not in Philadelphia but on the third floor of the Thomas Cooper Library at the University of South Carolina. There, in the middle of a hectic semester of teaching and applying for research grants, I sat down with the 1973 edition of *Afro-Americana, 1553–1906: A Catalog of the Holdings of the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*. I was quickly struck, as I would be even more so while in Philadelphia, at the Library Company's wide-ranging and superbly documented holdings of 18th- and 19th-century writings about Africa. After several hours with *Afro-Americana*, I had a list of sources far too long to explore in one month.

My interest in this literature stemmed from a chapter I had written on opinions about the exploration of Africa in the Reconstruction-era U.S. As with other topics I had researched for my dissertation, which examined how Americans argued about Reconstruction by placing it in a global context, I found many more sources than I initially expected. When I arrived at the Library Company, I was particularly interested to learn more about Paul Du Chaillu, a now-forgotten explorer of equatorial West Africa, and his relation to European and North American commentary on Africa. Du Chaillu, one of the period's most popular authors and public speakers, was famous for offering the first modern, published observations of living gorillas—observations which set off a veritable gorilla craze in the United States. By the late 1860s, in fact, after Du Chaillu's second exploratory expedition, P. T. Barnum had already attempted to import a gorilla, and taxidermists were selling stuffed simulacra of the animal. The gorilla craze was evident in the Library Company's remarkable collections, including a graphic of a Union rabbit decapitating a Confederate "gorilla" in the Henry Louis Stephens Collection and an eccentric ninety-page pamphlet by Emanuel Herzberg entitled *The Gorilla Catechism* (New York, 1869). Du Chaillu's mischaracterization of the gorilla as violent and aggressive was especially important to Reconstruction-era white supremacists, who appropriated it as a symbol for what they believed to be emancipation's racial menace. Du Chaillu also became directly involved in the period's debates about race and citizenship through a chapter entitled "Ethnology" in the narrative of his second expedition.

Invoking his expeditions as a source of expertise, Du Chaillu argued that “the Negro” was doomed to extinction and that the southern United States was the only land in which “the Negro’s” population had increased. The Library Company’s holdings again proved helpful in demonstrating how Du Chaillu’s claims filtered into arguments among Reconstruction-era pamphleteers and press editors, who were quick to endorse and critique his work. The full value of the Library Company’s collections to my project, however, only became apparent as I tried to figure out what mid-19th-century Americans knew, or thought they knew, about Africa as they reacted to Du Chaillu. It is hardly surprising, given the pervasiveness of racism in the 19th century, that popular views of Africa were mostly negative. What I wanted to know was whether there were specific images, narratives, or figures that linked American interest in Du Chaillu to broader discourses about race and citizenship. What I found, thanks to the breadth of the Library Company’s collections, was that a longer history of mostly British writing about the Kingdom of Dahomey influenced U.S. discussions. Not only did Americans make references to Dahomey alongside those to Du Chaillu, but some of Du Chaillu’s more popular themes, including fetish worship and cannibalism, echoed British writings on Dahomey.

This project, like many others, not only received support from Phil, but was the beneficiary of his devoted career at the Library Company. I hope any future success my project has can serve as a tribute to his work in Philadelphia.



A Union rabbit decapitating a Confederate “Gorilla,” chromolithograph by James Fuller Queen in the Henry Louis Stephens Collection.

**David R. Prior** is a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in the Department of History at the University of South Carolina, where he earned his Ph.D. His dissertation, “Reconstruction Unbound: American Worldviews in a Period of Promise and Conflict, 1865–1874,” and articles examine how Americans thought and argued about Reconstruction by placing it in national and global contexts.





## Patrick Rael

The February I spent as a graduate student fellow at the Library Company in the early 1990s was among the coldest I've ever experienced—and I have lived in Maine for the last sixteen years. Cooped up every night in a crummy dorm room at the University of Pennsylvania's International House, I soldiered my way to the Library Company each day it was open, skating inadvertently and inexpertly across ice patches that could have hosted Olympic competitions. Eventually I would find myself in Center City and make my way to the Library Company. Still a neophyte in my knowledge of the sources of 19th-century African American history, I wondered if anything could make a research trip in such lousy weather worthwhile. I was very much on thin ice.

I was blessed with Phil Lapsansky. We would often arrive at the same time, and though his white beard made it impossible to be certain, I'm sure his face was coated with a layer of frost, of which he seemed completely unaware. No matter; he was on his daily mission. The reading room of the Library Company served as an oasis of academic warmth and insight in that frosty landscape.

Phil's genuine interest in my research on the protest thought of antebellum free blacks in the North mattered much during that lonely month, and the Library Company wound up providing the greatest single cache of research material I found. I did my own searching, of course,



"The Rising of the Afrite," Bobbett & Hooper, engravers, in *Vanity Fair*, January 19, 1861.

but Phil supplemented my finds with innumerable treasures of African-Americana. He revealed what were to me remarkable new finds, from Elizabeth Keckley's account of domestic service in the Lincoln White House, to foldout lithographs of slave-trading ships like HMS *Brookes*. He exposed me to rare, genre-stretching slave narratives I had never seen. He introduced me to the dispiriting racist humor of early comic almanacs and Edward W. Clay's "Life in Philadelphia" prints. And he shared with me John H. Johnson's "Argumentative Observations on the Ancient Civilization of the Ethiopian or African Race," an 1851 manuscript in the American Negro Historical Society Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, which I have dutifully transcribed and, alas, still have yet to republish (it will happen, I promise!).

Somehow, this collection of oddities and ephemera began revealing things, helping me form a picture of race-life in the antebellum North utterly new to me. I was ludicrously unprepared and felt totally over my head. The only thing that tempered the intimidation I felt at Phil's encyclopedic knowledge and furrowed presence was the enthusiasm he brought to sharing these treasures. Phil seemed most delighted in showing off the remarkable collection of images he had played such an important role in acquiring over the years.

My first book also features a "Phil" image on the cover. "The Rising of the Afrite" first appeared in *Vanity Fair* in January of 1861, right in the midst of the secession crisis. In the image, three white men on a beach step away from a bottle that has just erupted into a cloud, which dominates the sky and contains at its zenith a dark complected African dressed as a genie. Text accompanying the image identifies him as the "tremendous evil Afrite" loosed by the fishermen of an Arabian Nights tale.

The image and its accompanying text clearly blame Southerners for unleashing the forces of disunion. The unloosed genie is, according to the caption, "evil"—a "devil of dissention and anarchy." He has been released from a bottle marked "secession," the responsibility for which lies (literally) at the feet of Southern politicians who had been fishing in the "troubled waters" of national politics. According to the text, the Afrite represented the "Awful Discord" that threatens "ruin-death!"; and it urged the fishermen "to conjure the Afrite back into the bottle."

Yet the image disparages blacks as "evil" and "devils" just as casually

as it castigates proslavery politicians. The Afrite clearly melds sectional tensions with the bodies of Africans; black people literally come to embody disunion. In this bizarre transferal of secession's etiology, it seems to suggest that disunion owed to black people themselves rather than the Southern politicians who simply unleashed it. In presenting blacks as the longstanding, latent source of disunion, it displaces responsibility for secession, suggesting that somehow the victims of slavery were actually the cause of it.

Entanglement also plays a prominent role in "The Rising of the Afrite." The image likely refers to a very famous Roman statue, *Laocoön and His Sons*, which was well known to educated antebellum audiences. (William Blake had depicted the statue to parody what he considered inferior modern epigones of classical artists, for example.) In Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843), an ecstatic Scrooge becomes entwined in his own stockings, thus "making a perfect Laocoön of himself." This was likely a good part of the meaning implied in "The Rising of the Afrite," as the bare-chested black figure wrestles with six snakes (instead of Laocoön's one), which may have represented the six states that had seceded by the image's publication in January 1861. (Texas would shortly follow, in February, thus completing the "first secession" of Southern states before the firing on Fort Sumter, in April of 1861). "The Rising of the Afrite" thus conspicuously confuses issues of responsibility, as if the problem has become too dense to untangle or fix.

Finally, and most importantly for me, the image reveals important connections between race and the concept of "rising." In the image, blacks are not only "released" onto the national scene as a spirit of discord, their freedom is presented as a spatial, and by implication social and political, rise. The logic of the cartoon as visual media allows for the clearest possible identification between the "freeing" of blacks and a movement upward, or "elevation," in the parlance of the day. The visual hierarchy of the image, which is ordered in terms of "higher" and "lower" space, assigns black freedom to elevated realms.

Few Americans would have been insensitive to the implications of such an image. For decades, slavery's defenders had been arguing that emancipated slaves made for degraded freed people, whom they regarded as a blight on the community and a threat to the republic. Abolitionists,

and free African Americans themselves, argued that experience demonstrated that many blacks could “rise”—or enhance their own educational and moral status—if given the chance. “Rising” thus implied a range of moral and mental hierarchies, latently suggesting *Vanity Fair*’s troubled relationship with its own (for the day) racial liberalism: it could imagine blacks rising, but it troubled that elevation by entangling it with horrifying predictions of disunion and Civil War.

As an image so emblematic of the country’s tortured relationship with slavery and free African Americans, I could think of none more appropriate to grace the cover of my book *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. In the process, I hoped quietly to honor Phil. While I suspect that Phil’s influence on several generations of fine scholars can only be touched on by a volume such as this, it is nonetheless a fitting tribute to his commitment and contribution.

**Patrick Rael** is Associate Professor of History at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. He is the author of *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); the editor of *African-American Activism before the Civil War: The Freedom Struggle in the Antebellum North* (Routledge, 2008); and co-editor, with Phil Lapsansky and Richard Newman, of *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature* (Routledge, 2001). He is currently working on “Eighty-Eight Years: The Long Death of Slavery in the United States, 1777–1865,” to be published by the University of Georgia Press in cooperation with the Library Company.



## Peter P. Reed

The Haitian Revolution, ending with the defeat of Napoleon's army and the declaration of Haitian independence in 1804, was an epochal event for the Atlantic world. Of course, it played a central role in the Caribbean history of independence and emancipation, but it was also important to the wider Atlantic world, and in particular Philadelphia. A seat of government, a lively cosmopolitan intellectual center, and a trade entrepôt, the city linked the North American interior with the seaborne Atlantic triangle trade of slaves, sugar, and manufactured goods. Philadelphia was also a part of the Franco-Atlantic world, and French and Franco-Caribbean diplomats, émigrés, intellectuals, and merchants—as well as slaves and servants—connected the city's culture to Saint-Domingue's slave insurrections. Representations of the Haitian Revolution, from natural histories, to eyewitness accounts, to rumors and legends, fundamentally shaped early American culture.

Nevertheless, the texts and artifacts of the Haitian Revolution remain an elusive presence in North American archives. This is in part because the Haitian Revolution was, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued, in a sense “unthinkable,” a difficult fit with the era's other democratic revolutions. Recovering those records thus remains a formidable task, but the Library Company's holdings, and especially its African American collections, have yielded important evidence of Haiti's impact. Phil Lapsansky's expertise, as well, has led me to important documents and hidden histories represented by those pieces of evidence. Phil's deep familiarity with Philadelphia's early African American community, for example, pointed me towards newspaper reports like the 1804 story of black rioters who threatened to replicate the violence of the Haitian Revolution in Philadelphia. That report reveals the vibrant popular awareness of Haiti and its newly declared independence among black and white Americans alike. There is still some question about whether anything actually occurred on July 5, 1804, and if so, whether it indeed was an alternative black independence celebration inspired by Haiti. But the account and others like it confirm the active circulation of certain notions about Haiti. Even if the event was entirely rumor, the account suggests the almost talismanic power that Haiti seems to have held for both black and white observers.

Jeannot & Thérèse  
air j'ai perdu tout mon bon<sup>he</sup>

Jam<sup>y</sup> a moi si pordi  
moi pas connu ou si si  
— Air que fais tu la  
j'annot vous allie  
qui la vous gague  
la v<sup>ra</sup> dans misere  
pourquoi vous parti  
vous quittie moi ex  
qui sa moi allie faire  
— Air au bord d'un Chaire en p<sup>re</sup>  
Cet Changee si Change  
mais Je la qui la Cause  
si doit pour misere Chome  
Je j'annot quite moi  
quante misere toi serie plus belle  
d'abord si infidelle  
si peu bon quittie toi.

Phil also brought to my attention texts like Leonora Sansay's 1808 novel, *Secret History, or, the Horrors of St. Domingo*. While such a novel may not fall neatly under the categorical label "African American culture," its scenes display the acting black bodies and white spectators that animated the Haitian Revolution's early American presence. Sansay's text, moreover, provides evidence that early Americans, and especially women, did not simply repress their knowledge of the slave uprisings in Saint-Domingue. More intriguingly, it shows how the Revolution animated their literary imagination, intertwining the narrative of slave revolt with the conventions of sentimental and epistolary fictions.

While those documents might help clarify the early American impact of the Haitian Revolution, Phil Lapsansky's help led me to others in the Library Company's holdings that instead point out the problems of interpreting Haiti's historical presence. *Jeannot et Thérèse*, a blackface manuscript play written in Creole and performed in pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue, might be the most intriguing and most culturally complex document to which Phil has drawn my attention. A parody of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*, the play's presence in the Du Simitière Collection seems more a cipher than a key to North American investments in French Creole culture. It is a cipher in some obvious ways—its handwritten 18th-century Creole is difficult to read and translate. As a (presumably) white staging of black characters, it is also a racial cipher, a complex sign of ambivalent racial attitudes—it gives only a glimpse into the kinds of imagined blackness to which white actors would have been party. As the transcription of a play, its meanings remain masked behind the conventions of theatre, in particular satire and racial masquerade. It is also a cryptic part of the archive—slipped by accident, it almost seems, into the Du Simitière Collection alongside scraps of writing about Caribbean natural history and indigenous culture. As a pre-Revolutionary performance, the play's relationship to the slave uprisings of the 1790s remains deeply ambiguous. Nevertheless, it points toward the blend of nostalgia and radical racial ideologies with which black Saint-Domingue was represented, remembered, and curated in 18th-century Philadelphia. These holdings are just a few of the Haitian Revolution's elusive traces in the early American archive, and more will surely emerge. Thanks to the creative expertise of Phil Lapsansky, the im-

pact of the Haitian Revolution on early American culture and its archive is gradually becoming more legible.

**Peter P. Reed** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Mississippi, teaching early American literature. His monograph *Rogue Performances: Staging the Underclasses in Early American Theatre Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) was researched and written with the generous support of an NEH Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the Library Company.



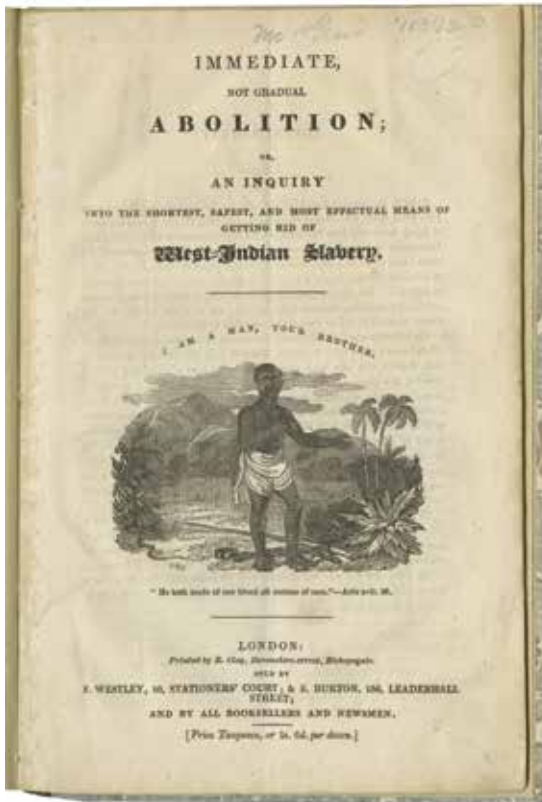


## Marcia C. Robinson

I came to the Library Company for the first time in the spring of 2006 as a recipient of a month-long Andrew W. Mellon Foundation fellowship. At that time, I was researching a book on African American poet and activist Frances Watkins Harper and had already spent two summers and a fall in a number of Maine research institutions, a few Boston-area libraries and historical societies, and the Library of Congress. On starting my work at the Library Company, I assumed that my experience would be comparable to those I had had in other big-city research institutions. I was pleasantly surprised, though, to find a welcoming, trusting, and knowledgeable guide in Phillip S. Lapsansky. He was the key to the collection—and a door to a Philadelphia long gone. Indeed, the Library Company's and the Historical Society's online catalogs and the Historical Society's wonderful old card catalog were helpful tools for identifying both institutions' resources. I benefitted greatly, though, from Phil's expansive and intimate knowledge of the Library Company's treasures in abolitionist and cultural history. Indeed, I found Phil to be the "soul" of the Library Company, particularly in his capacity as the guiding force of its reading room. For me and many other academics, the central function of the Library Company is to serve researchers, and the central place of this activity is the reading room that Phil Lapsansky inhabited for forty years. Phil is one of a now rare cadre of librarians who not only bring to researchers an intimate knowledge of and deep devotion to their institutions' collections; they also create a space for scholars to thrive. On listening to my interests, Phil helped me to understand better some of the materials that I wished to examine, such as the records of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society; government almanacs and other materials with possible information about the schools and communities in which a young Frances Watkins taught; early editions of her *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*; popular literature of the time that Harper may have used as resources; and a number of materials on or by William Still, Still's family, and William Henry Furness—all friends, colleagues, and/or acquaintances of Harper. He also helped me to rethink things that I thought that I already knew well enough.

For example, in discussing Kate E. R. Pickard's transcription of Peter

Still's narrative in *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed. Being the Personal Recollections of Peter Still and his Wife "Vina," After Forty Years of Slavery* (1856), Phil and I had a rather lively discussion about William Still's brother and sister-in-law, Peter and Vina Still. During that discussion, Phil gave me more texture, complexity, and questions about stories of this sort, especially in light of their rhetorical and commercial purposes, and in light of Harper's own use of the stories of self-emancipated slaves in her work. Similarly, we had a very helpful discussion about Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends*, an 1857 novel about race prejudice and passing in Philadelphia with deep implications for my work on Harper and race relations, and which Phil wrote up in the Library Com-



Elizabeth Heyrick, *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition; or, An Inquiry into the Shortest, Safest, and Most Effectual Means of Getting Rid of West Indian Slavery* (London: Joseph Rakestraw, 1824).

pany's *Annual Report* for 1990. Phil also encouraged me to look closer at important and oft-referenced abolitionist documents such as Elizabeth Heyrick's pamphlet *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition; or, An Inquiry into the Shortest, Safest, and Most Effectual Means of Getting Rid of West Indian Slavery* (1824). In my view, Heyrick's doctrine had always struck me as self-evident to slaves and marginally free blacks. However, Phil realized that since I was interested in the economic dimensions of Harper's abolitionism, I might benefit from a closer look at this pamphlet. He even introduced me to another scholar working on a related topic.

Indeed, during my first and later visits to the Library Company, Phil was in the habit of doing such things for me—and for others. For example, on one occasion, when he brought out an abolitionist autograph book for another scholar, he told me that I might find the same book interesting—which I did, especially as it told me about a circle of people—black and white—from which young Frances Watkins had initially been excluded. Similarly, Phil discussed items that were related to Maine blacks, which brought my Maine research and colleagues together with the work I was doing in Philadelphia. On another occasion, Phil introduced me to several articles related to my interest that were published in or under consideration by the *Journal of the Early Republic*. Finally, Phil was simply in the habit of creating a convivial environment for all visiting scholars, not just for those staying at the Cassatt House, where a community of its own easily formed around down time.

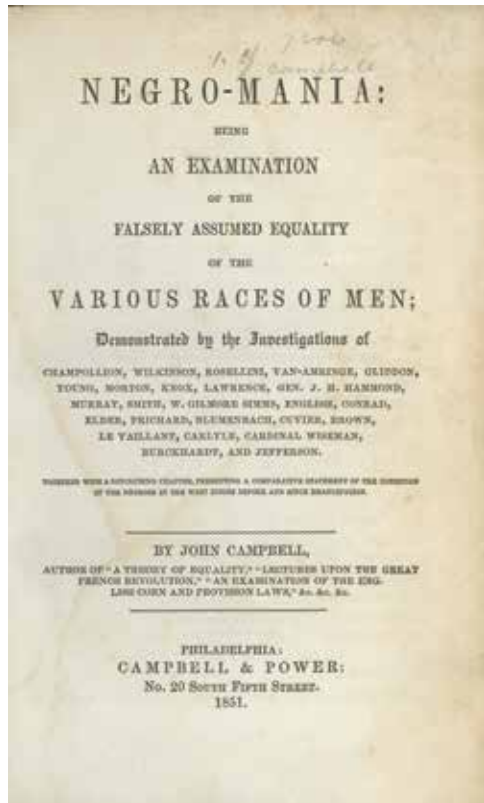
It is fitting to say, then, that with his perspective, insight, and sparkly and impish personality, Phillip Lapsansky became a kind of kindred spirit on the research path that I had chosen to take into our nation's past. As such, he showed me “the soul” of the Library Company of Philadelphia. For that, and for all of his wonderful publications—including his essay, “Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images,” a staple in my Women, Abolition, and Religion course at Syracuse University—I am truly grateful.

**Marcia C. Robinson** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion, Syracuse University. She is the author of “‘The Noblest Types of Womanhood’: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and the White Anti-Slavery Women of Maine,” which is currently under review.

## Molly Rogers

The award letter came as a surprise. I had applied for a research fellowship but as an independent scholar had little reason to expect my application would be successful. The term “independent scholar” is even too grand a term for my situation at the time. After earning an MA in art history I turned to writing fiction, but then nearly a decade later found myself researching a group of photographs for a non-fiction book. The images, largely unknown outside academic circles, depict American slaves and were intended to support an early scientific theory of race formation. The photographs made an impression on me as a graduate student and so I forged ahead with the project despite knowing little about the histories of race and early anthropological science in 19th-century America. I also had no publisher and no institutional affiliation. Really, there was little to suggest I could pull it off, but I was full of the confidence and enthusiasm that sometimes comes with wholesale ignorance.

The vast realm of my ignorance included the Library Company of Philadelphia. A footnote in William Stanton's *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815–59* (University of Chicago Press, 1960) changed this. From Stanton's book I learned that the Library Company and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania hold the correspondence of Dr.



John Campbell, *Negro-Mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men* (Philadelphia: Campbell & Power, 1851).

Robert Wilson Gibbes, the man who in 1850 oversaw the making of the photographs of slaves. It was Dr. Gibbes's correspondence that led me to the Library Company, yet it was the superb collections that kept me occupied for much of my stay as an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow in the spring of 2003. Among the more interesting items I encountered was an annotated copy of John Campbell's *Negro-Mania* (Philadelphia, 1851), in which the author seeks to popularize scientific attempts to classify humans by race; the annotations were apparently made by Campbell in anticipation of a second edition. It was clear I could not have picked a better place to begin researching the origins and development of scientific racism in America.

Phil Lapsansky was my guide through the collections. I am somewhat embarrassed to say this now, but Phil frightened me at first—the breadth of his knowledge of African American history was daunting. Yet at the same time he was so extraordinarily helpful. He asked me numerous questions about my project—not, I soon realized, to test my knowledge but to determine how he could help me with my research. And help he certainly did. It was Phil who suggested I look at Campbell's *Negro-Mania* and who pointed out the significance of the marginalia. Far better than I, Phil knew that with only a month in which to peruse the Library Company's collections, I had to focus my reading upon the more influential and indicative texts, and he was a tremendous help in this regard. Then he told me about John Johnson.

I was standing beside Phil's desk in the reading room, waiting to ask a question or possibly to give him some requests for items from the stacks. He was helping another researcher but (as I recall the moment) he interrupted their discussion to show me something. Here, he said as he pulled a file from one of his desk drawers and handed it to me in an offhand manner, adding, you might find this interesting.

In the file was a photocopy of a newspaper advertisement for a public talk given in 1851 by "a colored man," and an incomplete copy of a manuscript by John H. Johnson entitled "Argumentative Observations on the Ancient Civilization of the Ethiopian or African Race." Phil then pointed out that in the introduction to *Negro-Mania* Campbell mentions a "Mr. Johnson." To explain how he came to write his book, Campbell describes meetings of the Social Improvement Society of Philadelphia,

held over eight successive Sundays, at which he and others discussed the question, “Can the colored races of men be made mentally, politically and socially equal with the white?” A number of people spoke at these meetings and “in about two weeks afterwards, a Mr. Johnson, a mulatto, lectured in the Franklin Hall, upon the same subject.” The advertisement and manuscript Phil had presented to me were the historical remnants of Johnson’s lecture.

I was dumbstruck. Here was a remarkable cache of documents showing how a “colored man” publicly sought to refute claims that Africans were naturally inferior to Europeans. Frederick Douglass occasionally spoke on such matters—this was well known—but John H. Johnson was not a famous abolitionist; he was not a public figure practiced in oratory but (the record suggests) a Philadelphia blacksmith, rendering his appearance at Franklin Hall all the more unusual. I used Johnson’s lecture in my book, *Delia’s Tears*, as an example of how people responded to scientific racism, demonstrating not only the widespread popularity of debates on race and science in antebellum America, but also how such debates were not the sole privilege of white people.

Inexperienced as I was in 2003, I knew Phil had given me a gift like no other. It would have taken me years to find and connect the dots between Johnson, Campbell, and the “colored man.” Quite possibly I never would have made the discovery even had I known what to look for. It was years later, however, that I truly understood what an extraordinary gesture this was. A decade of working both independently and in universities has taught me that generosity is a rare thing in academic circles. When I asked Phil if he really meant to give me the Johnson story, he simply said that he’d never found the time to do anything with it. I am deeply grateful to Phil, not only for his assistance with my research, but also for setting an extraordinary example of how to live.

**Molly Rogers** is a writer and independent scholar currently based in the UK. Her fiction has been produced for theater and radio, and her first book, *Delia’s Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, was published by Yale University Press in 2010.



## Augusta Rohrbach

Before I came to the Library Company of Philadelphia as the McLean Contributionship Fellow in 1999, I understood the 19th century in purely black and white terms. Both because my interests were in the iterations of literary realism as they appeared in texts published in the 19th century and because I was following a theory that African American print culture had an impact on the development of the predominantly Anglo-American culture that had not been properly documented, my research had kept me in book and periodical publication. And it was to further investigate this archive that I came to the Library Company.

As our archives of the past are becoming more and more available online, I think it is important to emphasize the differences between the online and the onsite research experience. One of the important—and particular—pleasures of onsite archival research is in the interaction with



A montage of comic valentines.

library staff. And anyone who has had the honor of working at the Library Company has no doubt encountered the infinitely resourceful librarian Phil Lapsansky. I honestly cannot tell you how it happened, but somehow—most likely based on some glaring lacuna in my idea of the 19th century—Phil decided I should look at the Library Company's expansive collection of paper valentines found in the John A. McAllister Collection of Civil War-Era Printed Ephemera, Graphics, and Manuscripts. Was this suggestion triggered by something I said? I doubt it. Rather, I believe it was inspired by Phil's imaginative energy and extensive knowledge of the collection.

Surely I was overly smitten by the high seriousness of my own project. Thankfully, these comic valentines helped infuse a sense of fun and frolic into my idea of the 19th century. Seldom had I come across—or perhaps had been unable to recognize—the humor of the period as it was reflected in the areas of gender, race, and/or class in which these images reveled.

Before I left the Library Company that summer, I took with me color copies of several carefully selected valentines. These have served me well over the years as I have incorporated them into my classes on 19th-century American literature and culture. My students won't have Phil Lapsansky to open their eyes to the colorful past, but they also won't suffer from the myopia I had regarding the period. Phil cured that.

**Augusta Rohrbach** is an Associate Professor of English at Washington State University. She is the author of *Truth Stranger Than Fiction: Race, Realism, and the U.S. Literary Marketplace* (Palgrave, 2002) and editor of *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*.





## Nick Salvatore

Walking into the Library Company of Philadelphia that first day in June 1989, my excitement at the possibilities before me battled my inner fear that I would find nothing significant. The problem was not with the Library Company's holdings, but rather with the elusive nature of my topic—a biography of Amos Webber, a reticent, relatively unknown 19th-century African American janitor and messenger. As I began to get situated that day, I met Phil Lapsansky, the collector, bibliographer, curator, and overall guardian of the Library Company's African Americana Collection. As we talked about my project, I began to realize that Phil's response took the form of a steady stream of suggestions of relevant sources. As I scrambled to write some of this down, Phil assured me that he would not forget. That was my first encounter with the person I would come to see at the Library Company's most valuable resource.

The staffs at the Library Company and the adjoining Historical Society of Pennsylvania are truly superb, and in my month there I relied on them greatly. But there is only one Lapsansky. We would talk daily, some days more than once, as something I read touched another path to explore. In one of those talks, Phil told me that a fraternal organization important to Webber still existed and its headquarters were in Philadelphia—a tip that led to three days in the musty basement of the organization exploring a treasure-trove of material. As Phil and I continued to work together, and got to know each other, I began to deeply appreciate his knowledge and insights—not just in identifying sources in the collection but in sharing his understanding of my thinking. Following the talk I gave on my work, Phil, at dinner, discussed my emerging ideas substantively, and was acute and helpful. But, as he explained that night, this was difficult for him to do because as the librarian, he was by definition “a neutral” on such matters. That he took that step was a sign of the comfortableness between us, and that pleased me even more than the specific advice.

We had one wild adventure together—wild, at least, for academic types! I had found in an obscure article a reference to a man who was thought to have the records of many African American churches in Bucks County going back to 1818. For five generations his family had collected

and preserved the material. The mere mention of this to Phil produced a curator's sheer lust that matched my historian's yearning, and off we were to Langhorne, by train, on a brutally hot day in June to visit this gentleman. We miscalculated the distance from the station in Langhorne to the house, and ended up walking the better part of a mile in tropical humid conditions. I cannot now recall the stream of sarcastic, ironic, and absolutely hilarious observations Phil offered about "our condition" as we labored up and down small hills to our destination—but tears of laughter melded with the sweat on my face. When we finally arrived, the gentleman offered us ice tea; we talked about the collection, which was displayed in all its glory on card tables on his screened-in porch in the intense heat; and I finally asked permission to open one of the ledgers of an early 19th-century church Amos Webber's family may have joined. Politely but clearly, I was refused permission. The gentleman had thoughts of writing a history himself, and was neither interested in allowing me access or in depositing his collection in a library. Before we left, however, Phil, ever the preservationist, offered some suggestion about how to preserve the collection. So back we went to Philadelphia, in the slightly cooling heat, dismayed certainly, but also appreciative of this gentleman's deep commitment to his family and community history.

A few days later, my month at Library Company ended and I headed home. Phil and I were in touch in the years that followed, especially as each of us mastered the new technology that drove email. But the book took time, and it was not until February 1996 that *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber* saw the light of day. But Phil was there then too. He and others at the Library Company organized a book party and invited among others the officials of the fraternal organization who had generously let me consult their records. It was quite a good time. Having said this, however, I recognize that there is yet something missing in my appreciation of Phil, something I simply cannot reproduce: Phil's wicked sense of humor, matched only by his intelligence, and his honesty. To attempt to recreate that is simply beyond my power, so I will end by repeating what I wrote in my acknowledgements in the book. Phil, I wrote, "was absolutely indispensable. His vast knowledge of Afro-Americana in his and other collections, his joy in sharing it, and his irrepressible sense of the ironic led me in directions for which I am most grateful." I still am.

**Nick Salvatore** is Maurice & Hinda Neufeld Founders Professor of Industrial & Labor Relations and Professor of American Studies at Cornell University. He is the author of *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (University of Illinois Press, 1982) and *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber* (Times Books, 1996).



## Carroll Smith-Rosenberg

(Imagining Phil Lapsansky as a *South Pacific* beauty and the Library Company as a World War II atoll, with acknowledgements to Rogers and Hammerstein)

Swifter than Google is he  
More apps than Apple has he  
More wide-ranging than JSTOR  
Better connected than ISI  
Is Phil.

Before the Internet, electronic databases, the digitalization of Evans, Shaw Shoemaker, and American Historical Newspapers, before clouds, blogospheres, pinterest and timblr, there was Phillip Lapsansky. Now that Phil is abandoning us, we will have to make do with these inferior props. As every librarian and archivist knows, academics are dependent over-aged children, habituated to presenting ourselves at the desks of the wise guardians of America's scholarly treasure troves. "Where can I find . . . ?" "Do you know . . . ?" "I need . . . !" "Help!!!!" we cry. And Phil always did help, find, and know.

But, when writing of Phil, the binary of librarian and scholar rings particularly false. Perfectly fusing archivist and scholar, Phil was as fine a researcher, as nuanced an interpreter of America's contradictory past, as caring a teacher as any of us who turned to him for assistance. He taught us all to look beyond traditional historical categories, read sources we all too often had ignored. He expanded the field of U.S. historical analysis in transformative ways, revealed subaltern voices, and placed those voices in the complex social contexts of their times. He was a pioneer, creatively reconstructing our nation's past, a perceptive and generous guide to new historical understandings. This is the Phil this volume enthusiastically celebrates.

I doubt few have benefitted more from Phil's guidance than I. Before coming under Phil's guidance, I had rarely pondered the challenges race and slavery posed for those of us who think of ourselves as living in the land of the free. As I moved from 19th-century women's history to an

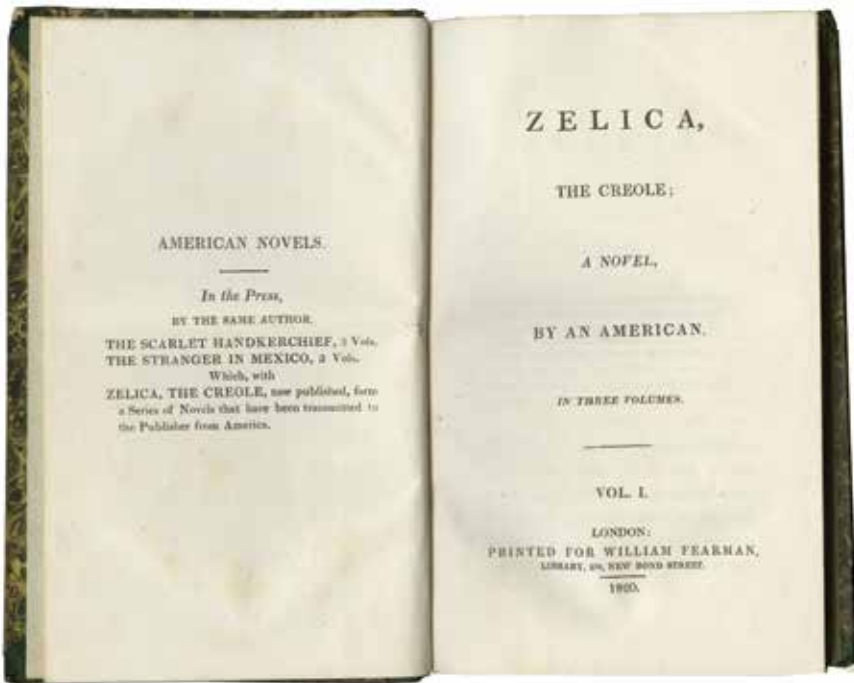
exploration of the origins of a U.S. national identity, Phil led me to realize that to study the new American republic one must trace the long shadow race threw over our so-anxiously-white republic, plumb the complex interplay of race, gender, and sexuality, read political ideologies and political compromises through windows darkened by race and violence. As my homage to Phil Lapsansky I will suggest some of the ways he helped me understand the challenges slavery posed in the Age of Revolution by analyzing a rare and little known novel Phil had the perception to identify in a book catalog, acquire for the Library, and then write about in an important article. Some fifteen years ago Phil brought the novel to my attention. Its complexities and contradictions continue to intrigue me. The novel is Leonora Sansay's *Zelica, the Creole*.

The second novel Sansay published about the Haitian Revolution, *Zelica* appeared in 1820, a meditation on Sansay's experiences as a white Philadelphian married to a wealthy Saint-Domingue planter/merchant, living in Cap François at the height of Haiti's revolutionary struggle to abolish slavery and establish its independence from Napoleonic France. A writer of strong and unconventional opinions (Phil points out that she was Aaron Burr's mistress), Sansay confronted the challenges slavery and the Haitian Revolution (especially its militant insistence on full political rights for blacks) posed for U.S. citizens in the Age of Jefferson. European Americans' claims to independence rested on their bold assertion that all men were created equal and endowed with unalienable rights. They thus embraced a vision of sameness, of universality. Yet categorical systems of difference and inferiority lay at the very heart of their understanding of social and political order. Sameness or difference, inclusion in or exclusion from the revolutionary Body Politic—these were the tensions that undercut the ideological and social stability of revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations.

By making her title character, *Zelica*, a mulatta, Sansay makes these tensions central to her novel. And it is precisely the symbolic significance of the mulatta that I will focus on. The mulatta can be read either as a transgressive fusion of categorical differences, or, conversely, as the emblem of a capacious and generative republican Body Politic alive with diversity and hybrid vigor. Which reading will Sansay choose?

*Zelica* poses a series of interrelated questions: Who has the right to

freedom and political agency: enslaved Afro-Caribbeans? women? Or are these rights the sole property of propertied white men? Can slavery ever be justified? Do Africans have the ability to govern themselves and thus assume the role of virtuous republican citizens? The answers *Zelica* presents are riddled with ambivalence and contradiction. While the novel begins by celebrating blacks as virtuous revolutionaries fighting for their freedom in words that echo European Americans' revolutionary cry — "Give me liberty or give me death," the revolution, as represented in *Zelica*, soon deteriorates into a bloody contest between equally savage and inhuman combatants. Systematically complicating what racism would make simple, *Zelica* decenters racialized and gendered identities and renders political distinctions uncertain. It represents black Haitian revolutionaries as both valiant freedom fighters and beasts bent on the rape of white women; Saint-Domingue's white Creole elite as sadistic sybarites exploiting enslaved Africans and as pathetic victims of black



Leonora Sansay, *Zelica, the Creole; A Novel, by an American*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for William Fearman, 1820). Note flyleaf identifying other works by Sansay.

savagery; French soldiers as enlightenment republicans and as economic and sexual oppressors of Creoles and blacks alike. Every act of black republican virtue is doubled by images of black lechery and violence, which, in their turn, are doubled by French and planter lechery and brutality. Pathetic white women, initially presented as victims of black savagery, are revealed as revengeful sadists. Racial and gender distinctions evaporate. The sadist fuses with the victim, black with white, male with female. In this way Sansay explores the political and racial challenges of her times, the tensions between freedom and slavery, virtue and corruption, male and female, sameness and difference—tensions the Haitian Revolution forced European Americans to confront. The deep ambivalence that unsettles Sansay's voice reflects the challenge black men's demands for political equality and white women's for a public voice posed for the United States' revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations.

Sansay's choice of a title character—the beautiful, fair and resourceful mulatta, Zelica—embodies this ambivalence. Throughout the 18th century, the mulatta, represented as a seductive and exotic courtesan, signaled political and social corruption. In Sansay's novel, she exemplifies classic republican virtue—Spartan in her needs, fierce in her love of liberty, resolute in battling corruption. Indeed, Zelica emerges as the novel's only truly virtuous republican. Fusing her embrace of freedom with clear-headed political and military analysis, Zelica understands and effectively controls the movements of black and white armies, confronting black "chiefs" and French generals alike. Staining her "white" skin black, disguising herself as a slave, she slips through enemy lines, infiltrates the French inner citadel, puts her own liberty in jeopardy—all to one end, to protect Clara, the white American Zelica passionately loves and whom she has sworn to protect from all danger.

Celebrated as the heroic emblem of civic virtue, Zelica is simultaneously presented as the violator of every political, social and sexual norm 18th-century Americans held dear. (She is the fair skinned daughter of a black slave mother, a mulatta in love with a white woman, braver than any general, white or black.) Choosing Zelica as the figure through whom to explore the ideological and racial challenges of her time, indeed making Zelica the emblem of a virtuous new America, it would seem that Sansay was embracing an image of America as a heterodox and inclusive repub-

lican body politic.

But Zelica, the character and the novel, is far more contradictory and troubling than such a progressive political read suggests. While one would expect Zelica, the daughter of a slave mother and a radical white father who abhorred slavery, supported both the French and Haitian revolutions, freed and married his black lover, Zelica does not share her father's racial liberalism. As she tells Clara, "This union, that formed his happiness, has devoted me to indefinable misery." Why? Because Zelica has an irrepressible aversion to blacks (and we must presume an even greater aversion to thinking of herself as black; never once in the novel does Zelica refer to herself as black). As she explains her position to a French officer come to Saint-Domingue to reestablish slavery, "Though their advocate, I am not their admirer. Whilst I think that they have an indisputable right to the freedom that they are struggling to obtain, I feel an involuntary sensation of horror at the sight of a black and never behold one without shuddering."

Here simply stated is the conundrum that lay at the heart of the U.S. revolutionary generation's vision of slavery. Slavery was wrong, corrupting all whom it touched. At the same time, slaves, degraded by their enslavement, were not fit to either govern themselves or be treated as the equals, the equivalent, of whites. They must be excluded from the virtuous white republic. But if this is Zelica's fundamental point why make the embodiment of an exclusionary white America a transgressive mulatta?

Reading *Zelica* against Clara's depiction of the United States may offer a further clue to the book's many riddles. Clara represents America as a country "where personal liberty is sacred, and all the rights of man respected." Most obviously, this representation obscures both the denial of suffrage to white women and the large body of enslaved African Americans resident in the United States, whose personal as well as political liberty is not sacred and whose economic and sexual rights are not respected. Enslaved blacks are as effaced from this representation of America as Zelica's black blood is effaced by her fair skin. Furthermore, as enslaved African Americans inspired hatred, fear and revulsion among European Americans, so Zelica hates the very sight of blacks. But this reading causes us to again pause. It positions Zelica in relation to blacks as European Americans are positioned in relation to blacks. But Zelica,



a mulatta, is not a European American. However, might she not stand, even more significantly, for the new United States itself? Fusing black and white and refusing to admit that fusion, does Zelica embody the United States in its racial and ideological complexities? Is she the dark secret that shadows the new republic—that the United States' claim to racial purity obscures the blackness without which America is not whole? Writing under the long shadow cast by the Haitian Revolution, is Sansay saying that until Americans embrace their own diversity, their country will be haunted by realities it fears to bring to light and its hybrid vigor will remain restrained within the stranglehold of its exclusionary national self-image?

**Carroll Smith-Rosenberg** is the Mary Frances Berry Collegiate Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Knopf, 1985) and *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010).



## John W. Sweet

It's a warm winter day in Chapel Hill. Sitting on the back porch, talking with a graduate student about his final dissertation chapter, and watching the squirrels dig up and nibble at their long-buried acorns, my thoughts keep returning to Phil Lapsansky.

I first met Phil more than twenty years ago—half a lifetime ago for me—when I was a third-year graduate student struggling to find a viable dissertation topic. When I arrived at the Library Company, for a short-term fellowship in the summer of 1991, I was graciously received and more than a little intimidated. Vast catalogs. Research tools I'd looked at before. Expert librarians. And Phil. I thought, somewhere in here is the path to my dissertation—and I've got approximately twenty-two working days to find it.

Hearing about my general interest in African American life in the North, Phil took me under his wing. He started me out with the vast catalog of Afro-Americana he had developed—an extraordinary inventory of material by, about, and related to African Americans from all parts of the Library Company's collections. I spent days devouring it, taking endless notes, and paging items that struck my fancy. Phil's catalog of Afro-Americana was an inspiration. It gave a powerful answer to those who said at the time that the subject could not be researched for want of sources. It made it possible to quickly locate individual items and references that would otherwise have lain invisible in collections and catalogs. And it was also a bit magical: I found that if I stared at it long enough, I started seeing things.

One of the things I saw that summer was that whatever my dissertation was going to be, it was going to include a discussion of the war of words in the Early Republic North about slavery, equality, and citizenship. As my focus became clearer, Phil started sharing his current bibliographical files with me. Early on, he showed me his research on so-called Bobalition broadsides—printed handbills designed to mock free blacks in Northern cities celebrating the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the decades after 1808. Phil's file contained not only copies of the Bobalition broadsides in the Library Company's collection, but also copies of those in other repositories and ones that surfaced on the

TRIAL OF A SLAVE IN BERBICE, FOR THE CRIME  
OF OBEAH AND MURDER.

---

Return to an Address to His Majesty, by The Honourable House of Commons,  
dated 29th of July 1822; for,

Copy of any Information which may have been received concerning the TRIAL  
OF A SLAVE, for the Crime of OBEAH, in the Colony of BERBICE.

Colonial Office, }  
12th May 1823. }

R. J. WILMOT HORTON.

---

PROCEEDINGS

Of the Court of Criminal Justice of the Colony

BERBICE,

On the Trial of the Negro *Willem*, alias *Sara*, alias *Cuffey*,  
for Murder of the Negress *Madalon*;

AND ALSO,

The Trials of the Negroes *Primo*, *Mey*, *Kees*, and *Corydon*,  
for aiding and abetting in said Murder.

---

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
14 May 1823.

---

*Trial of a Slave in Berbice, for the Crime of Obeah and Murder* ([London]: Ordered by the House of Commons, to be printed, 14 May 1823).

rare book market. Only about a dozen of these broadsides have survived, mostly in single copies. This file itself was an important lesson for me: to understand one of these broadsides, I needed to remember that it hadn't been produced in isolation but rather as part of a broader collection of texts printed and read in dialogue with each other.

As Phil led me through his own research path into these broadsides, he taught me to read them. In his quiet way, he showed me that the entire genre of Bobalition broadsides was part of a much larger set of racist attacks against free black people in the Early Republic, including the infamous "Life in Philadelphia" series. And he showed me that there was a whole other set of publications in this period written by free people of color claiming equality and full citizenship and denouncing the evils of slavery, racism, and colonial exploitation. In the end, I was so fascinated by this struggle over citizenship and equality in the print-culture of the Early Republic that it became a central focus of my dissertation and of my book *Bodies Politic*. Indeed, the last chapter of that book is organized around a Bobalition broadside that mocks the victims of an antiblack riot in Providence in 1824. And I'm currently working on a book about Venture Smith, whose *Narrative of the Life of Venture, an African, but Resident in the United States above 60 Years* was published in New London in 1798—a foundational American story about the enduring struggle for freedom, equality, and dignity in the modern world.

Back in the summer of 1991, when I left the Library Company, I was aware that I owed Phil a great debt. I took with me a new sense of focus and a new kind of education. But I also took away other things. One is an evangelical zeal for cataloging. The next summer, I spent several weeks with the card catalogs of the manuscript collection at the Rhode Island Historical Society—typing into my amber-screened laptop every reference I encountered to people of color. I gave the archivist a print-out at the end of that research trip, and the RIHS has now taken on that project as its own. This is one of many seeds that Phil has planted that have taken root and flourished in unexpected places.

Another of the seeds Phil left me with in the summer of 1991 was a copy of an extraordinary pamphlet entitled *Trial of a Slave in Berbice, for the Crime of Obeah and Murder* (London, 1823). I was fascinated by the vivid testimony and detailed descriptions in the trial record—even

though I had to consult an atlas to locate Berbice. But I never could find anything to do with the text. So I squirreled it away like a fat acorn.

And then, twenty years later, a graduate student was telling me that he needed a topic for a research paper—and that he wanted to do something about slavery in the West Indies. Randy Browne's article on this trial appeared last summer in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, and he is currently completing a dissertation on slavery in—where else?—early-19th-century Berbice.

Thank you, Phil.

**John W. Sweet** is an Associate Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).



## Beverly Tomek

A decade ago, while writing my doctoral dissertation on Pennsylvania antislavery, I discovered the treasure that is the Library Company of Philadelphia. While visiting the Library Company I discovered a number of jewels, one of the most important of which was Phil Lapsansky, who introduced me to many of the resources that would form the backbone of my research for years to come and who became an important friend and mentor.

On my first trip Phil introduced me to Thomas Branagan, an early 19th-century abolitionist. I had come to Philadelphia to research the Colonization movement, and Phil brought me Branagan's pamphlets and told me "Start here." That advice led to my first journal article, about Branagan, Colonization, and the gradual emancipation movement (*American Nineteenth Century History* 6, no. 2 (June 2005): 121–48).

I returned to the Library Company after receiving a fellowship, and Phil was waiting with a stack of sources for a book I was writing on Pennsylvania antislavery and Colonization. We



"Abolition Hall. The evening before the conflagration at the time more than 50,000 persons where [sic] glorifying in the destruction at Philadelphia May—1838. Drawn by Zip Coon," salt print photograph of unlocated lithograph, ca. 1850.

worked closely together that summer as I collected enough research to complete that project, mining the Library Company's resources on Mathew Carey, the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, and the city's African American leaders. As I was leaving that summer, Phil told me about the riot and destruction of Pennsylvania Hall, casually mentioning on my last day there that "someone should write a book on this riot."

Immediately upon finishing the Colonization project, I wrote to Phil and told him I was preparing to take him up on his challenge. Within a week I found a copy of Phil's 1989 Library Company exhibition pamphlet, *We Abolition Women are Turning the World Upside Down!* in my mail box with a note that I should start with Laura Lovell's gripping account of the event in her *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia, May, 1838*, published that year in Boston. Of course, the Library Company had a copy, so it was back to Philadelphia. Thanks to another generous fellowship I was able to return for another month and consult such crucial sources as Benjamin Lundy's newspaper, the *National Enquirer*, other newspapers, including the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, various writings of David Paul Brown and other Pennsylvania abolitionists, and William Henry Furness's sermon on the mobbing.

Phil has mentored many people in the field of African American history, but what some may not know is that he is an important part of Civil Rights history. During my last trip to Philadelphia, he and I sat and visited a while and I told him about a paper I was writing on Freedom Schools. He offered some valuable insights into the topic, not based on any sources at the Library Company but based on his own experiences as part of Freedom Summer. Phil is an icon of both black history and Civil Rights. The Library Company will not be the same without him.

**Beverly Tomek** teaches at Wharton County Junior College and the University of Houston-Victoria and is the author of *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York University Press, 2011).



## James Walvin

The treasures lurking in the Library Company are familiar to any student lucky enough to have worked there. But, as with so many libraries and archives, there are hidden gems which remain elusive. Arriving on a short-term fellowship in 1994, I was anxious to make the most of the time in Philadelphia. The task was made easier—and immensely more profitable—by my discovery of that other gem in the library: Phil Lapsansky. After some initial fencing around, we both warmed to each other personally. I soon discovered it was worthwhile venturing out onto the street to accompany Phil as he headed for his regular smoke: for his company, and there to share his sympathetic views and commentary on the current state of American life—and to savour the latest fall from grace of the latest religious or political zealot. I enjoyed his company hugely, but in the process of getting to know each other, Phil shrewdly teased from me my real interests: what sort of literature I was looking for and what end I had in mind for my time in the library. Gradually, this sidewalk friendship began to yield benefits which were totally unintended, but entirely fruitful—for me.

I was working on (primarily British) slavery and the slave trade, and Phil is a master of that literature. As I read through this or that publication, Phil would periodically emerge from the stacks, with a single item, or an armful—on one occasion even a trolley full: “You might find something of interest in this,” before sloping back to his desk. It slowly dawned on me that I had struck pure gold—not merely in the parade of 18th- and 19th-century slavery and African American literature that Phil laid before me, but in having galvanized, quite accidentally, Phil’s own intellectual curiosity and expertise. Not only did he know about specific tracts and booklets about slavery, but he also knew of publications that contained potentially useful material, but which would be unknown to an outsider unfamiliar with the publication. Phil Lapsansky knew the Library Company’s African American material like the back of his hand. It was like having a highly-experienced, well-trained, and industrious researcher, someone who was, in many respects, ahead of my own game. All this provided the basis—and inspiration for—a book I wanted to write, but which had little shape or direction when I landed in Philadelphia.



THE  
ANTI-SLAVERY RECORD.

VOL. III. No. VII.

JULY, 1837.

WHOLE No. 31.



This picture of a poor fugitive is from one of the stereotype cuts manufactured in this city for the southern market, and used on handbills offering rewards for runaway slaves.

THE RUNAWAY.

To escape from a powerful enemy, often requires as much courage and generalship as to conquer. One of the most celebrated military exploits on record, is the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks under

On a number of issues which had interested me for some time, Phil Lapsansky's help proved invaluable. In my earlier work (on the history of the English black community) the question of the law had been critical, namely how English courts dealt with the problem of slavery in England itself. It became clear, in Philadelphia, that a similar approach might help explain certain features of English colonial experience. The laws of both Barbados and Jamaica and contemporary commentary on changes in those laws might help to explain the way slave societies emerged on both those islands, for they evolved not merely as an accidental by-product of economic activity, but as a conscious legal and political engagement with the institution of slavery. It also became apparent that reading pro-slavery literature of the 18th century offered an instructive entrée to the wider study of contemporary slavery. Studied today, some of those arguments appear bizarre, perverse even (the idea, for example, that slavery could be viewed as a civilizing force), yet it was powerfully argued by proponents of slavery, such as Robert Bisset in *The History of the Negro Slave Trade* (London, 1805) but especially by those attempting to turn the tide of British abolition at the turn of the 19th century, such as Richard Nisbet in *The Capacity of Negroes for Religious and Moral Improvement Considered* (London, 1789).

Until late in the 18th century, few commentators on the British Atlantic doubted—whatever the ethical worries might be—that Africa offered an economic cornucopia for outside traders. For historians, the difficulty had long been, why did it have to take the form of enslaved African labor? Here again, materials conjured forth from the Library Company's holdings steered me toward important evidence. The economic centrality of slaves to Britain's imperial and domestic well-being was asserted time and again; it was an article of faith which seemed, in the mid-18th century, unchallengeable. That central fact, initially gleaned from materials in the Library Company such as John Peter Demarin's *A Treatise upon the Trade from Great Britain to Africa, by an African Merchant* (London, 1772) and John Hippersley's *Essay on the Populousness of Africa* (London, 1764), was to become the kernel of much of my subsequent work. I completed my fellowship and left Philadelphia, but now with a much clearer idea of what I wanted to say, and how—and helped substantially by Phil Lapsansky's mastery of the Library Company's holdings. The initial out-

come was my book *Questioning Slavery* (Routledge, 1996).

What I did not fully appreciate until later was that my intellectual curiosity had been sharpened by Phil's sporadic delivery of another source: illustrations and images issued in a range of slavery publications. For years, I had privately collected pictures of slaves and of scenes from slavery, but Phil opened my eyes to a plethora of 19th-century U.S. illustrations, especially the woodcuts (of runaway slaves, for example) which offer an extraordinary (though problematic) entrée into the world of slavery. Again, I had no intention of using such material, no idea what purpose they might serve; the illustrations were just one branch of my growing database about slavery. It was to prove important when I turned to the question of slave resistance.

Slave resistance had long been a theme in the historiography of slavery and, like many others, I had circled around the topic in a number of publications prior to studying at the Library Company. But I had never seriously studied the illustrative material which is available in abundance, but which often lurks in unexpected places. Images—wood engravings—of slave runaways proliferated in mid-19th-century publications of all sorts—and again Phil was on hand to produce a variety of samples when I asked.

As before, I found myself studying evidence which not only leapt from the page (though often in contested form) but which seemed to demand further investigation and possible use (even by someone with no formal training as an art historian). My thinking about this material took longer to ferment and mature, but some of that graphic material, and the ideas behind it, finally saw the light of day in *The Slave Trade* (Thames and Hudson, 2011). The most memorable image (caricature, really) of a runaway slave is that of a handsome young man, neatly dressed, in good footwear, well-packed nap-sack slung on a stick over his shoulder—heading for freedom. Variants on that theme were printed time and again in North American newspapers, tracts, and books from the 1830s onwards, and became a *leitmotif* for abolition and for the broader discussion about slavery. There are many such images in the Library Company's holdings and in the Afro-Americana image files; one of that *genre* was chosen as an illustration in *The Slave Trade*.

It is worth repeating here the point I made in the acknowledg-

ments in *Questioning Slavery* in 1996. Thanking all the staff of the Library Company, I wrote “I hope others do not take it amiss if I single out Phil Lapsansky for praise and thanks. He steered me towards sources and books I did not know about and generally acted as my mentor and guide—often above the call of duty.” Clearly the books, tracts, and illustrations formed the bedrock of my work on slavery. But my access to it would have been utterly different (more difficult and time-consuming) without the friendly expertise of Phil Lapsansky.

**James Walvin** is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of York. He has published widely in the field of slavery and abolition.



## Ashli White

As any visitor to the Library Company of Philadelphia well knows, Samuel Jennings's *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences* makes a striking impression (see p. 71). Measuring five feet high and over six feet wide, this rendition of liberty bestowing gifts of knowledge to eager African Americans occupies a prominent place in the reading room, right above the enormous card catalog and opposite the entrance. Several scholars have remarked on this picture, less for its artistic execution than for its historical significance. Dating from 1790–1792, it is one of the first allegorical paintings by an American, and it features an abolitionist theme. In the context of the Library Company's holdings, the painting points to the centrality of African American history to the institution's collection from its earliest days, a collection which Phil Lapsansky has nurtured for the past forty years.

The Library Company, under Phil's influence, has been particularly attuned to connections between African Americans and the broader black Atlantic, and in this spirit I offer a brief and speculative rereading of Jennings's famous painting. Most often this allegory has been considered as part of a very local story about abolition, yet from an Atlantic perspective the painting's theme and timing are revealing. Jennings, a Phila-



Detail. Samuel Jennings, *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences*. Oil on canvas, London 1792. Gift of the artist.

delphia native studying in London, presented his services to the Directors of the Library Company in early 1790, proposing to paint a large canvas for the Library Company's new building. The artist suggested a classical theme, with Clio, Calliope, and Minerva, to honor the arts and sciences. A few months later the Directors,

among whom were several abolitionists, accepted Jennings's offer but insisted on a different subject: Liberty "with her Cap and proper Insignia," introducing various fields of knowledge to "a Groupe of Negroes sitting on the Earth, or in some attitude expressive of Ease & Joy." Jennings agreed to the change and added his own interpretive flourishes, most notably, another group of African Americans gathered around a liberty pole in the background.

Jennings finished the painting in 1792, but before he shipped it to Philadelphia, he made a small copy with one minor alteration: he placed a British shield at Liberty's feet. Clearly, Jennings hoped that this canvas would be a showpiece—a work that would generate interest and business on both sides of the Atlantic. In this era allegories of liberty resonated in sundry national venues, and given the transatlantic abolitionist movement, so, too, might the theme of the painting. In an effort to drum up business in the United States, Jennings asked the Directors of the Library Company to solicit subscriptions among the public for an engraving of the painting. While an advertisement to that end appeared in Philadelphia newspapers in May 1792, the print was never issued, nor, it seems, did Jennings have any luck selling reproductions of his rendition of *Liberty* in England.

The short life of Jennings's project begs the question: why did the painting not enjoy the success and distribution that Jennings anticipated? His contemporaries, like many subsequent critics, may have found the painting lacking artistically, but more likely the answer lies in the greater Atlantic world. In 1791—a year after the initial conception of the painting but before its completion—slaves in the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue revolted, inaugurating what would become the Haitian Revolution. News of the insurrection spread swiftly, and white observers expressed more sympathy for white planters than for rebel slaves. Even abolitionists were wary of this campaign for liberation: immediate freedom achieved through violence contrasted starkly with their plans for gradual manumission by legal means. The following year, 1793, was even more problematic, as French republican officials endorsed the slaves' fight by declaring emancipation on the island—a move that anglophone abolitionists found reckless. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society began to retreat from calls for universal liberty, while on the other side of the

Atlantic, abolitionists faced increasing criticism as Great Britain invaded Saint-Domingue with the aim of reinstituting slavery.

Given these reactions to the Haitian Revolution, Jennings's depiction of Liberty—replete with liberty cap and poles and freed slaves—may have become too radical to disseminate widely. Perhaps more troubling, events in Saint-Domingue exposed the lie at the heart of Jennings's painting (and in the views of abolition societies), namely that enslaved peoples would wait patiently to receive liberty from enlightened whites, remaining, all the while, submissive at their feet. The Haitian Revolution showed that slaves were ready to seize freedom for themselves and on their own terms. For all its abolitionist overtures, the abandoned trajectory of Samuel Jennings's painting invites us to reconsider the thorny relationship between slavery and freedom in the age of Atlantic revolutions, and thanks to Phil's unparalleled stewardship and scholarship, the Library Company of Philadelphia is a crucial place to carry out this important work.

**Ashli White** is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Miami. She is the author of *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), and her current project examines material culture associated with the Age of Atlantic revolutions.



## Marcus Wood

I was at the Library Company of Philadelphia and in day-to-day contact with Phil Lapsansky for a few short months in 1997 as a Barra Foundation International Fellow. For the last twenty years I have been writing big books about slavery and memory, slavery and propaganda, slavery and visual representation, slavery and the slave presence within the archive of the diaspora across Europe, North America, and Brazil. All of these books carry acknowledgments to Phil and the Library Company, because for many of those twenty years Phil, it is no exaggeration to say, has constantly infiltrated and operated upon my thought and work. His influence comes and goes, it ebbs and flows. Sometimes it has been hands-on and sudden. Sometimes in the wee hours, with a deadline long expired and an editor exuding a calm beyond fury, I would be emailing or phoning Phil. With a combination of patience and laconic humor (the humor was *always* there, and *always* laconic, heaven knows you need it working in our field) what I needed appeared, arrived, was given. Never have I known a scholar and archivist so prepared to go the extra mile for a chaotic colleague. Example: *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology*, clocking in at some 766 pages with Oxford University Press in 2003. The dirty hands research for the American side of the volume was done six years before the book appeared and consisted of digging out often bizarre slavery verse penned by pro- and antislavery bards of varying degrees of madness and lack of talent. How often after a question, or a brief conversation with Phil, would I find that a small pamphlet with 19th-century colored paper wrapper had appeared next to my laptop, when I returned from smoking a cigarette.

That indeed was one of the constants of my magical stay at the Library Company, this process of mysterious appearance, sometimes nigh on instantaneous, sometimes requiring a matter of days while Phil went off and ferreted out some obscure publication which had floated into his thought. This wasn't a research expert fetching resources which had been requested, this was a form of inspired librarianship as intellectual dialogue and tutelage. When Phil constantly dug up these things for me he did not get me what I wanted, because I didn't know what I wanted. No, he showed me where I needed to go, where I could go, he made radical



connections between texts and forms for me, and he broke down my own temerity and ignorance. To be as intimate with the vast slavery archive of the Library Company as Phil was, and is, means that you are in a position to take anyone with a sense of purpose, and a sense of adventure, on an intellectual mystery tour. But the limits of that tour did not stop when you left the building and went home across the seas. When *The Poetry of Slavery* was in its final production stages there were gaps and errors everywhere. In my enthusiasm and sloppiness I had forgotten dates, titles, publishers, in two or three instances forgotten to transcribe whole sections of poems, or lost pages of photocopy. It was at this stage that Phil's precision as a scholar came into the picture. Invariably I turned to Phil, and invariably he turned up the vital statistics, or stanzas. I remember my delight when a three-page email arrived in which he had, because there was literally no other way of getting the stuff to me in time, copied down pages of missing stanzas from a particularly crazy abolition poem I was after. It was, of course, Phil who had introduced me to the poem in the first place nearly ten years earlier. It was also Phil, with his passionate sense that popular culture needs to be taken more seriously than it has been, who directed me towards the "Nigger" or "Ethiopian" Songsters of the antebellum decades. He suggested that these were not mere ephemera circulating racist stereotypes, but that they often contained poetic texts which have hidden ironic depths. This insight transformed the manner in which the slave voice operated in my anthology. Whenever students now email me about this aspect of the book I think of Phil.

It was Phil who, because of his unique breadth of archival knowledge regarding the Anglo-American diasporic archives, constantly told me to be more, rather than less, ambitious. My main books usually move in and around one big idea. Phil, if he did not always give me the big idea in the first place, certainly was from the very first in tune with what I was up to and fed the big idea with abstruse and wonderful materials, knocked the big idea about a bit, with hard and good questions, and fed the big idea with more ideas, in order to make it into not just a big idea, but into a solid idea. That the memory of slavery could often involve processes of self-blinding on the part of the slave owners, and equally the abolitionists, was a big idea to which Phil and I were committed, and which finally resulted in my best-known book *Blind Memory*. That there were intimate



links between the development of the abolition publishing market and the rise of the pornographic publishing industries was something Phil had been onto way before I came up with an extended account of the process in the monograph *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography*. In 1997 Phil took me aside and asked me if I realized just how strange the workings of these links could be in popular culture. As ever he backed up assertion with example after example. Arriving back from a cigarette there was the *Curious Adventures of Captain Stedman* open before me complete with a foldout frontispiece engraving showing the beautiful mulatta Joanna. She was now the centre-piece of a flagrant and fully blown piece of sadistic pornography, featuring black men, white men, and a now completely white, completely naked, and obscenely lacerated Joanna. Phil suggested the visual marketing of Joanna was complex. He pointed out to me how Joanna's naked breast suddenly got covered up when Lydia Maria Child got hold of it in her radically reordered account of John Stedman's erotic narrative in the 1842 antislavery journal *The Oasis*. Phil was typically not immune to the comic implications of Lydia's "cover up." I have never properly acknowledged that it was Phil who enabled my two extended published discussions of Joanna within the context of abolition pornography because I only realized this fact recently. Phil's effect on my thought and writing is organic and intimate.

Phil did two things which influenced and influence the way I work on slavery and its memory. Firstly, he provided me with my own mini-archive which I took back to England, and which I am still working through and with to this day. Secondly, Phil gave me self-belief, he came across me when I was a relatively young, intellectually insecure, absurdly overambitious, aspiring cultural historian of the diaspora. I was attempting to move from my specialist field of alternative British radical Romanticism, to think about how slavery publicities had worked. Phil believed my work had potential, he looked at what I wanted to do, and he provided me with a road map, or maybe a road atlas would be a more appropriate metaphor. He made links across forms and genres, he knew, and shared with me, his deep knowledge of the extent of the intellectual dialogues which had occurred across the Atlantic during the Revolutionary period. It was his preparedness to make huge comparative moves, which in many ways gave me the confidence for the sort of intercontinental and genuine-

ly interdisciplinary work I now do. Phil was the first academic of the slave diaspora I had met who was as expert and comfortable in looking at images as he was looking at texts. Above all he had thought deeply into the ways in which the cultural archive generated by slavery was in the main a white-generated archive. Phil made me understand for the first time how precarious, yet how glorious, the contribution of the slaves themselves to this archive had been. He has always cared passionately that we acknowledge the limits and lies of white-generated slavery propagandas, and that we celebrate properly the remarkable achievements of slaves and ex-slaves in combating those lies and in creating their own dialogic relationship with those archives.

The ways in which Phil influenced my thought and work often run so deep, and emerged over such long periods of time, and via such circuitous routes, that even I am not sure of their precise operation, although I will often have a very certain sense of their moment of genesis. It frequently took me years to see the value of things that he had put my way. It was, for example, Phil who introduced me to the astonishing 1872 *The Underground Railroad* of William Still. In *The Horrible Gift of Freedom* in 2010 I finally devoted a long chapter to an extended analysis of the rhetorical diversity of this book in both its text and images. I focused discussion on accounts of slaves escaping in boxes, and the layered metaphors of em-boxment in this text. The origin of that analysis lay back in a conversation with Phil. I was talking to him about Henry “Box” Brown and the spectacular marketing of his escape. Phil went off and got out Still’s tremendous tome and turning to Leah Green’s narrative commented: “But a lot of slaves were getting in and out of boxes.” A literal example here, where Phil invited me to think outside the box, although it took me the best part of twenty years to see what he was getting at.

I want to give one final example of how Phil’s influence worked on me at mysterious and indirect levels which only came to fruition after years of dormancy. At the same time I want to introduce an item Phil exposed me to fifteen years ago, and to publish a close reading of it for the first time here, because it explains the creative processes of thought Phil encourages in me.

I recently wrote a long chapter in “Black Milk,” my forthcoming comparative study of North American and Brazilian visual archives of

slavery, focussed on Jean Baptiste Debret and the application of the techniques of the Romantic sketch to the recording of traumatic aspects of slave life. Again it was, in fact, Phil who had first opened up this subject for me. When Phil learned that I was thinking about the relationship between slavery, traumatic memory, and visual representation, he pointed me in the way of a ghastly document he had come across. It was a small inscribed sketch by a Swiss traveler in Jamaica in the late 18th century. Phil suggested that this part of the slavery archive, the fugitive, the ephemeral sketch made privately on-the-hop, might give unique insights into the representation of slave trauma. This sort of art, he suggested, was valuable because it was off guard, it was an aesthetic beneath the radar, capable of doing things with time and with testimony that more formal art, in the days before photography, could not.

Although I have not published my ongoing dialogue with this image to date, what Phil invited me to think about *it* had a huge impact on my current work on Debret and George Fuller. Phil gave me a way into the Romantic sketch and slavery and I want to try and explain how. What does this image tell us? Near the end of the 18th century, as the Saint-Domingue revolution raged, a traveling Swiss named Pierre Eugène Du Simitière was walking in Kingston, Jamaica, and stopped to make a visual record, drawing at great speed. Du Simitière sketched the scene from just over a crossroads, looking back at the corner where a sort of show gallows had been erected. A heavy cart loaded with barrels crosses the center of the street. In the bottom right foreground is a slatted fence with a figure standing next to it. A tracery of light abstract lines indicates a few lacy clouds in the sky. All of these areas are set out in a dancing parade of light swirling marks and scribbles. The gallows is drawn differently, massively, clumsily. The wood of the gallows is incised in thick lines, the central shaft heavily shaded, the support struts almost completely filled in. The gibbet carries two iron cages each shaped to hold an adult human form. The left-hand one is empty, the metal structure drawn in with short, thick but wiry lines. The right-hand cage carries another body-shaped cage, filled with human remains.

This little drawing, buried in an archive in Philadelphia, never before reproduced to my knowledge, seen by very few pairs of eyes but put before mine by Phil, is one of the very few eye witness accounts, in vi-

sual art, of the habit of exhibiting the bodies of executed slaves in public spaces. How is this work to be read? Is it a holiday sketch, a moving piece of abolition propaganda, a curiosity? How far can art go in describing the trauma of Atlantic slavery. Du Simitière didn't leave his drawing as an open sign, but provided an explanation written in red ink and brown chalk, now all but illegible, which translates:

One of the company of mulattos who were on the night watch shouted out 'Who goes there' to a black who appeared in the dark, the negro did not respond to him so he shot at him and killed him. He was a new black who was carrying a fagot of wood to sell. After he was dead they put him on a gallows, planted at a place in the road which was half way between what is called Montgomery's Corner and the other road which is called Rockport near the One Mile Stone [where he remained] for two years. He was called 'Fortune' . . . the blacks who passed by took him to be a relic.

This is all rather peculiar; the human remains in the cage now have a history. The body on display is indeed that of a slave, but he was not executed as a criminal, or even a runaway, the normal motives for placing an executed corpse on display in this manner. He was shot by accident, by other blacks, presumably free mulattos who had been given the responsibility of keeping the night watch, and who were entrusted with guns. The black is apparently a fresh import from Africa, 'un negre nouveau' in the original French, who was simply carrying out a task he had been set. It is likely then that he did not understand the night watch's challenge, and because he was carrying goods it was assumed he was stealing. He is innocent, his death is an accident, and yet the Jamaican planters decide to have his body displayed publicly, as a warning, but a warning of what? A warning that it is advisable to learn the language of the masters very quickly or you are in constant danger? He is placed symbolically at the crossroads, again why? It had long been the custom in certain central European countries for those refused a sacred burial—murderers, suicides, violent criminals—to be buried at the crossroads. Crossroads were also associated with sacrificial ceremony in pre-Christian Europe and had consequently become used as places of public execution. But why display this unlucky slave there? Maybe because he was a new African and consequently a pagan. The end of the quotation provides a new perspective,

that of the blacks, and destabilizes the body in the cage further; it moves from being an object of horror, of warning, a testimony to the slave power, to become an object of veneration to the other black slaves. The body now has a name, Fortune, but who gave him this name, and why? Was it the white slave holders who thought up this nickname, as a sort of ironic joke for a man who was anything but fortunate? Or was it the blacks, who designated him fortunate in that he had escaped the life of a slave without ever becoming fully integrated into the system of slavery? His status as a relic, presumably an object of fetishistic power for the blacks, makes a lot of sense in this context. Blacks who died very soon after arriving in the slave diaspora, having experienced the middle passage, but without ever having been "seasoned," that is, integrated into the society of the slave power, were regarded with special reverence. The remarkable night of the silent drums which happens during Carnival outside the church of the black people in Recife, Northeast Brazil, is dedicated to the remembrance of precisely those slaves who died soon after arrival in Brazil. Fortune may hold a tremendous significance for the Jamaican blacks if he is read as a conduit back to Africa, and to the world of the ancestors.

And so this drawing and its text are located at their own symbolic crossroads. In both stylistic and narrative terms the image is wonderfully indeterminate, as sketches often are, and this is one source, as Phil suggested to me, of its continued power. But the reason this sketch has remained unseen, and undiscussed, until Phil made me see it, probably results from the fact that in aesthetic terms it has been designated ephemeral, a visual diary entry, almost a piece of doodling, in an obscure man's papers. It is produced by a competent draftsman, who had clearly learned, as many gentleman did, how to sketch figures and landscapes, in the picturesque style, but who was also capable of developing the new spontaneous art of sketching in the context of a traumatic subject. Du Simitière's little sketch introduced me to the issue which then became central to, indeed enabled, my discussion of the Romantic sketch and slavery in "Black Milk." It was ultimately Phil who had forced me to ask whether there was visual art generated during the Romantic period that was capable of harnessing the dynamic resources of a new style of drawing and indeed a new way of seeing. Du Simitière pointed the way very precisely to Debret's remarkable achievement, and to his manner of combining in ironic

ways the light art of sketching and the ambiguities of the diary entry. This interest in Du Simitière's image is one small indicator of the long-term purity of Phil's aesthetic gaze. He is committed to seeing varieties of significance in all archival material, and to seeing beyond the false binary division of art into "high" and "low," "good" and "bad," "permanent" and "ephemeral."

When I first arrived at the Library Company I remember Phil initially as very much a double act with Jim Green. New fellows had to sit down and explain to staff and scholars what they thought they were up to, and how they might be helped. I remember Phil sitting there with a sardonic smile, with all that white hair, the slightly "beat" aura, the slightly bohemian wardrobe, somehow as if Kerouac and Baudelaire had pooled their sartorial resources. Jim was next to him, so tall and thin and Gothic, almost like a Mervyn Peake illustration, with that completely certain, but very softly spoken, delivery. And the two of them together exuded the sense that they were enjoying a conspiratorial ironic pact against all those fools who they quite rightly did not suffer gladly. I gave a chaotic and very unscholarly account of myself. I remember at one point announcing that I wished to work on early American satiric lithographers, and on Henry Claypole Johnson's slavery work in particular. There was general puzzlement at this unknown artist's name. "Would that be any relation of David Claypoole Johnston?" Phil asked, innocently, announcing with dangerous clarity. "A distant relation," added Jim, quietly. The room laughed, but not in *that* bad a way. Blushing, I corrected my notes; thanks to Phil I still am correcting them.

**Marcus Wood** is a Professor of English at the University of Sussex. He is the author of *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America* (Routledge, 2000); *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford University Press, 2002); and *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (University of Georgia Press, 2010).





## Jean Fagan Yellin

Phil Lapsansky has been making important contributions to my work for years. We probably met before my summer 1988 fellowship at the Library Company and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania—I was already deep into my edition of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, which established Harriet Jacobs's authorship and the book's genre as autobiography—when luckily I found Phil. When I told him about my project, he pulled an 1861 copy of *Incidents* from the shelf and showed me its inscription. Signed "Harriet Jacobs," it read:

*Dear Lady—I delivered the letters you so kindly gave me on my arrival in the City—and should have written before this but I was anxious to say something of my success—I have been very busy trying to get at the people that they might interest their friends.*

*Your letters has done me good service for which I acknowledge my grateful thanks—I have sold fifty Coppies in all—and the friends that I have meet have encourage me to stay longer. I have not been out of the city but hope to do so as I shall remain for two weeks longer. I shall hope to see Miss Smith on my return to the City.*

*Again Dear Miss Smith let me thank you for the kind interest you have manifested in my behalf. Believe me most Gratefully*

*Harriet Jacobs*

Then, searching the Mary Rebecca Darby Smith Collection, Phil handed me a note signed "Linda." It was addressed to "Miss R Smith the Slaves true Friend," blessing her for her "kind sympathy assistance & true hearted devotion to my oppressed race."

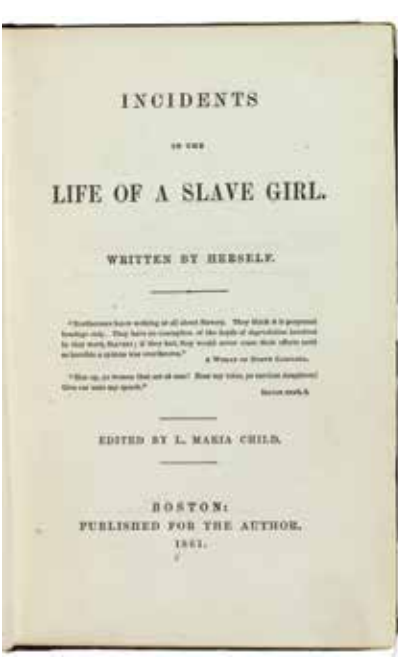
This signed note and inscription certainly verified my claims that Harriet Jacobs was Linda Brent, the pseudonymous author of *Incidents*. (Smith, although born a Quaker, became a cosmopolitan socialite, and her copy of Jacobs's book was among the six hundred volumes she donated to the Library Company at her death in 1886.)

Phil then showed me something that made me feel foolish for having searched far and wide to identify Jacobs as the author. He simply reached to the shelf, picked out a 19th-century dictionary of aliases and pen

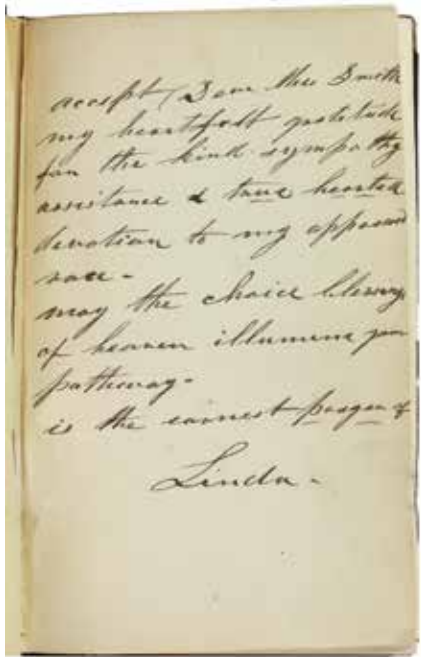
names, and pointed to the entry identifying Harriet Jacobs as “Linda.” I had of course examined this standard reference—but what I had checked in other archives were more recent editions which did not include this entry. It had somehow been lost in editing. Now I realized that what had been commonly known in the 19th century had sometimes disappeared in the 20th. In consequence, I broadened my research, scanned antiquated reference books, and hunted for references to Jacobs in outdated publications.

When my edition of *Incidents* was finally in press, Phil sent me his new discovery: a clutch of letters from Jacobs in Civil War-era newspapers discussing her efforts as a relief worker among the black war refugees. Too late for inclusion in the Introduction to my edition, these letters pointed me directly toward work on her life story. I was finally able to publish her biography, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, in 2004.

One of Phil’s many contributions to that volume was information he unearthed, in the Library Company archive of the Stevens-Cogdell/



Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston, 1861).



Inscription by “Linda” on the flyleaf of *Incidents*.

Sanders-Venning family papers, concerning the history of two sisters, friends of Jacobs's daughter Louisa. Their lives in many ways paralleled Louisa's own—although their slaveholding father had freed and educated them and sent them North, as Louisa's slaveholding father had not.

A major contribution involved a photograph I had seen described in a 19th-century publication as picturing Harriet Jacobs with her students at the Harriet Jacobs Free School in Alexandria, Virginia. Phil knew that I had been searching for years for this image and one day phoned with news of an odd item listed in an auctioneer's catalog. Many emails later, we determined that this was indeed the sought-after image. It now graces the cover of *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*.

Because of the huge importance of Phil's ongoing contributions to my work, from the moment I conceived of *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* project, I knew that I needed him as a member of the Advisory Board. Over the years, Phil proved to be always available, at times helping—on a phone call—to straighten out a mixed citation, at times coming up with references I hadn't known anything about.

Proud as I am to see Phil's name in print as one of the *Papers'* Advisory Editors, I am prouder yet to count him as a friend and pleased to congratulate him on his retirement.

**Jean Fagan Yellin** is Distinguished Professor Emerita, Department of English, Pace University. She is the author of *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (Basic Civitas Books, 2004); the co-editor of *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Cornell University Press, in cooperation with the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1994); and the editor of Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Harvard University Press, 2000) and *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

