

Delany martin robison  
a african american  
journalist history  
essay



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African American intellectual, journalist, physician, the first African American field officer in the United States Army, politician, judge, abolitionist and arguably the first proponent of American black nationalism was born a free black man in Charles Town, West Virginia (then part of Virginia) to Pati and Samuel Delany on May 6, 1812..

Martin Delany, is best known for his promotion before the Civil War of a national home in Africa for African Americans. For his parents traced their ancestry to West African royalty. His father Samuel was a slave but his mother was free. Delany's maternal grandparents were born in Africa, where his grandfather was said to have been a prince. When Delany was just a few years old, attempts were made to enslave him and a sibling. Their mother Pati carried her two youngest children 20 miles to the Winchester courthouse in order to defend her family against being enslaved. which she did successfully thus preserving their freedom.

As he was growing up, Delany and his siblings learned to read and write using The New York Primer and Spelling Book, given to them by a peddler and using the knowledge gained to write passes to enslaved blacks thus breaking a Virginia law against teaching enslaved people of color to attain literacy.

As it was illegal in Virginia to do so, when the book was discovered in September 1822, and fearing reprisals, Pati took her children to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania where she hoped to find a better racial climate to ensure their continued freedom. Their father Samuel whom they had left

behind, a year later managed to buy his freedom and rejoined them after refusing to be whipped by his overseer.

In Chambersburg, the young Delany continued learning but occasionally left school to work when his family could not afford to continue supporting his education. From 1823 to 1831 Delany lived in the tightly knit black community of Kernstown, outside Chambersburg, going to school and worshipping at the black Methodist Episcopal Church except for living and working briefly in Cumberland County in 1828.

In 29th July 1831, at the age of 19, he set out on foot travelling west to the growing city of Pittsburgh where he became a barber and laborer. On September he enrolled as a student of Rev. Lewis Woodson in the cellar of Pittsburgh's Bethel African Methodist Church on Wylie Street where he attended an African American school. He then started harboring ambitions to visit Africa, which he considered his spiritual home which he resolved to do someday. .

In 1832 Delany studied classics, Latin and Greek at Jefferson College with Molliston M. Clark, his roommate with whom he debated whether to live in America or Africa. During a cholera epidemic in 1833 he became apprenticed to Dr. Andrew N. McDowell, learning fire cupping and leeching. He continued to study medicine under the mentorship of abolitionist doctors Dr. Andrew N McDowell Dr. F. Julius LeMoyne of Washington County, Pa and Dr. Joseph P. Gazzam of Pittsburgh in the 1840s.

Delany also became more actively involved in political matters. In 1835 he attended his first Negro Convention with Rev. Woodson. and the next year <https://assignbuster.com/delany-martin-robison-a-african-american-journalist-history-essay/>

conceived of " A Project for an Expedition of Adventure to the Eastern Coast of Africa" in search of a " Black Israel." And was already transporting fugitive slaves through Pittsburgh.

The next year in 1837 he formed the Young Men's Literary and Moral Reform Society of Pittsburgh, as the Temperance Movement was taking hold particularly against widespread whiskey consumption. He was made secretary to the executive committee of the Philanthropic Society, a " cover" organization for rescuing, protecting

Then in 1836 he set up his own practice as cupper and leecher in Pittsburgh

When in 1838: a State Supreme Court Chief Justice C. J. Gibson ruled that blacks can't vote in Pennsylvania, in a suit brought by William Fogg Delany's disillusionment with white dominated American culture and law began. So in the winter of 1839 he travelled with " free papers" down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, parts of Louisiana and visited the still independent Texas, which he saw as a possible haven for freed blacks, the Choctaw Indian Nation near Fort Towson in Arkansas, as well as Mississippi which. became the basis for his semi fictional novel about an itinerant insurrectionist, " Blake: The Huts of America."

On the 3/15/1843 Delany met and married Catherine A. Richards, the part Irish/black daughter of Charles Richards an affluent meat provisioner, and Felicia Fitzgerald and began their large family of eleven births, from which seven survived to adulthood.

On 9/1843 the voteless, Martin R. Delany founded and began publishing one of the earliest African American newspapers “ The Mystery,” a black controlled newspaper in Pittsburgh devoted particularly to the abolition of slavery. He began writing on public issues. Proud of his African ancestry, he advocated unrestricted equality for African Americans, and participated in conventions to protest slavery,. His articles and other writings were often reprinted elsewhere such as in abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison’s The Liberator A eulogy which Delany delivered for Rev. Fayette Davis in 1847 was reprinted by Richard Gleaves, George B. Vashon, and James L. Williams who, like Davis and Delany, were Freemasons and widely redistributed..

His activities brought controversy in 1846, when he was sued for libel by “ Fiddler” Johnson, a black man he had accused in The Mystery of being a slave catcher for which he was convicted and fined an astronomical \$650/ \$150 (1846 dlrs.) defrayed by many white supporters in the newspaper business.

While the leading African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison were in Pittsburgh in 8/14/1847 on a regional anti-slavery tour, they met with Martin Delany and together they conceived the newspaper that became the North Star. Frederick Douglass made him coeditor. It was first published later that year 12/3/1847 in Rochester, New York. The business was handled by Douglass, while Delany traveled to lecture, report, and obtain subscriptions. He travelled throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky lecturing, reporting, and obtaining subscriptions for the newspaper. During the spring-summer 1848 his tour went to New Lisbon, Ohio, Salem, Ohio; skipping Cambridge, OH where a mob had driven an <https://assignbuster.com/delany-martin-robison-a-african-american-journalist-history-essay/>

antislavery speaker named "Hull" out of town eleven different times; Lloydsville, Zanesville, Cincinnati, and Marseilles, OH, Sandusky, OH, and Detroit, MI.

During these travels, he was frequently confronted by mobs opposing his views, sometimes violently. In May, when he and Charles H. Langston arrived at Marseilles, OH by horse and buggy, they were met by a large mob who expressed determination to tar and feather them. Delany's hotelkeeper stood at some "distasteful" remarks by Delany, moving for the adjournment of "this darkey burlesque." He and Langston were followed back to their hotel and a mob remained outside shouting "Kill the niggers" Delany and Langston left in the morning.

In July 28 1848 Delany reported in the North Star that U. S District Court Justice John McLean had instructed the jury in the Crosswait trial to consider it as a specifically punishable offense for a citizen to thwart white persons' trying to "repossess" any alleged runaway slave in Ohio. His coverage influenced abolitionist Salmon P. Chase to lead a successful drive to remove McLean as a candidate of the Free Soil Party for the Presidency later that summer. Delany saw in it the seeds of the Fugitive Slave Law two years hence.

9/6/1848 Delany attended the Colored Convention in Cleveland and attacked in a speech the menial occupations available to free black women. By spring 1849 his despair over the state of affairs in the United States had deepened.

While living in Pittsburgh 6/1849-11/1850, in preparation for applying to medical schools Delany began to study more seriously the basics of medicine <https://assignbuster.com/delany-martin-robison-a-african-american-journalist-history-essay/>

under doctors while maintaining his own cupping and leeching practice at 189 Smithfield St. . In Spring-summer 1850 he applied unsuccessfully to University. of Pennsylvania, Jefferson Medical College, Albany and Geneva, NY Medical Schools. Only after trying several institutions was he accepted to Harvard University, after presenting letters of support from seventeen physicians from the Pittsburgh area, gathered by Dr. LeMoyne. He was accepted along with two black Bostonians sponsored by the American Colonization Society, Isaac H. Snowden and Daniel Laing, Jr.

The month after his arrival, however, a group of white students wrote complaining to the faculty that the admission of blacks to the medical lectures was highly detrimental to the interests, and welfare of their Institution even though as they stated they had “ no objection to their education and elevation but would decidedly not tolerate their presence in college with them. Within three weeks, Delany and his two fellow black students had been dismissed, despite dissenting opinion at the medical school from 48 (out of 116) other students, as well as a faculty vote disclaiming the power to expel the three students, from Dean and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Delany’s preceptor in anatomy and physiology.

Furious, Delany left Harvard Medical School having been allowed to complete only one of two four month term, and returned to Pittsburgh. He no longer believed reasoned argument and merit can persuade the dominant white culture to help deserving persons of color to become leaders in the society. He was convinced that the white ruling class would not allow that. His opinions became more extreme.

The /1850 Fugitive Slave Act placed property rights above human rights, ruling that an enslaved person, as “ property,” is stealing himself as property when running away from a master, and can therefore be grabbed anywhere and returned to slavery and also cannot defend themselves in court.

9/30/1850 Delany told a crowd in Pittsburgh: “ Sir, my house is my castle. . . If any man approaches that house in search of a slave. . . if he crosses the threshold of my door, and I do not lay him a lifeless corpse at my feet, I hope the grave may refuse my body a resting place, and righteous Heaven my spirit a home. O, no! He cannot enter that house and we both live.”

9/1851 Delany having being invited by activist Henry Bibb to a convention in Toronto, Canada got so inspired by impressions of Canada, that he began to write: “ Sometimes I sat, sometimes I stood, writing when and where I could, a little here, a little there; ‘ Twas here, and there and everywhere.” .

In the falls of 1852-and 1853 Delany accepted the principalship of a colored school in Pittsburgh and wrote in his spare time.

His landmark book, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* published in 1852 argued that blacks had no future in the United States. But it alienated virtually all abolitionist leaders by advocating the need for blacks to leave America and start anew with founding a new nation in Central and/or South America or elsewhere, perhaps in the West Indies,.

More moderate abolitionists alienated by his position, resented his criticism of those who failed to hire able colored men in their own businesses and for



disallowing leadership positions to blacks in their organizations. 7/10/1852 Delany wrote Frederick Douglass, upbraiding him for ignoring his new book with whose publication and its reprinting in 1968, he began to agitate for a separate nation, to get African Americans settled outside the United States but reserved some praise for William Lloyd Garrison.

At the age of 40 Delany began the practice of medicine, which he would continue on and off for the rest of his life.

3/1853 Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, was published, causing a sensation for its clear depiction of the cruelty of southern slavers, though it misrepresented enslaved blacks by the passive persona of " Uncle Tom." Delany, using his first hand experience traveling in the South, began writing about the secret travels through slave communities by an insurrectionist which modern scholars have concluded is among the most accurate. portrayals of antebellum black culture as his " reply" to Uncle Tom's Cabin,

6/24/1853 Delany also criticized racial segregation when he delivered his forty page treatise on its practice among Freemasons in the United States an act which violates the true principles of the Order, which was considered the first such account on Black Freemasonry. He implied that England's Freemason leadership could adjudicate this contention favorably for the black members.

Delany worked for a brief period as principal of a colored school before going into practice as a physician.

“ During the cholera plague in Pittsburgh in the summer of 1854 where he was then in practice as a physician, Delany rendered much valued service to the city and to sufferers from this dreaded plague that he got public notice through a series of resolutions proposed, adopted and presented to him in appreciation of his skill as a physician and of his unselfish and noble sacrifice to the cause of suffering humanity. When nearly every white doctor in Pittsburgh left the city on its outbreak, Dr. Delany remained and organized a corps of Negro nurses of both sexes who cared for those helpless white and black cholera victims, many of whom under his skillful treatment were restored to health. Most doctors abandoned the city, as did many residents who could leave, as they did not know how to control the epidemic. With a small group of nurses, Delany remained and cared for the victims.

In August 1854 Delany led 145 participants in the 4 day National Emigration Convention in Cleveland, Ohio which approved a resolution stating, “[A]s men and equals, we demand every political right, privilege and position to which the whites are eligible in the United States, and we will either attain to these, or accept nothing.”. This body, which included a significant number of women such as Mrs. Catherine Delany and 28 other voting women voting for the resolution, is considered the foundation stone for black nationalism in American history standing defiantly opposite in time to another convention backed by Frederick Douglass

He advanced his emigrationist argument in his manifesto “ Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent” which appealed especially to educated and commercially successful Northern freed blacks.

In the fall of 1854-and the spring of 1855 Delany was in Pittsburgh doing community organizing and assisting in the Underground Railroad to Chatham, West Ontario.

In an attack against the American Colonization Society, Delany in 6/1/1855 wrote an introduction to William Nesbit's " Four Months In Liberia citing his " graphic portrayal of the infamy of that most pernicious and impudent of all schemes for the perpetuity of the degradation of our race, the American Colonization Society. I say most pernicious, because it was organized in the South by slaveholders, propagated by their aiders and abettors, North and South, and still continues to be carried on under the garb of philanthropic aid and Christianity, through the medium of the basest deception and hypocrisy." .

In 1859 and 1862, Delany published parts of *Blake: Or The Huts of America*, a novel based on an insurrectionist's travels through slave communities which modern scholars have praised as an accurate interpretation of black culture., in response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He believed that she had portrayed slaves as too passive, although he praised her highlighting the cruelty of Southern slave owners. The first half of Part One was serialized in *The Anglo-African Magazine*, January to July 1859 in 25 installments " which was " the first novelistic offering of a black writer to be published in the United States." which on 2/1859 Martin Delany in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison called his attention to.. The rest of Part One was included in serial form by Robert Hamilton in his publication the *Weekly Anglo African Magazine* from 11/26/1861-5/24/62.

Delany's novel *Blake: or, the Huts of America* which reworked several of Stephen Foster's sentimental "plantation songs". the first novel by a black man to be published in the United States advocated black activism and rebellion. In it Delany reappropriated material for his own purposes, to express black resistance and independence.

8/16/1858 Delany wrote John Kagi, one of Brown's Harper's Ferry raiders even though that same year he had said he knew nothing of the plan at Harper's Ferry a claim which others who were in attendance doubted.

Delany who lived in New York City then, was raising funds for his African voyage. For a time he lived in Ontario. Despite his bitter opposition to the American Colonization Society and its colony, Liberia, Delany kept open the possibility of settling elsewhere in Africa. On 8/30/1858 Delany was named Commissioner "to explore in Africa, in order to investigate the possibility of establishing a new black nation in the region, with full power to choose others by the Central Board of the third emigration convention held in Chatham. In May 1859 he sailed from New York harbor for Liberia on the 'Mendi'. On the 10th of July he arrived on the shores of Liberia at Cape Palmas. Two days later he was in Monrovia three hundred miles from Cape Palmas to the west. In mid August. he returned to Cape Palmas and explored the Cavalla River. In mid September he sailed to Lagos and spent the next five weeks there. In late October. he travelled inland into Yorubaland along the Ogun River, going as far as the Egba capital of Abbeokuta where he met his expeditions' fundraiser in England, Robert Campbell, who had come from there.

He traveled in the region for nine months during which he negotiated. Then on 12/27/1859 he and Robert Campbell signed an agreement with eight chiefs headed by Ogubonna of Balagun, that would permit the settling of African Americans on “ unused land” in the Abeokuta region in return for using their skills for the community’s good. The chiefs agreed “ to grant and assign unto the said Commissioners . . . the right and privilege of settling in common with the Egba people on any part of the territory belonging to Abbeokuta, not otherwise occupied.” The Commissioners and Campbell) “ agree that the settlers shall bring with them, as an equivalent for the privileges above accorded, intelligence, education, a knowledge of the Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, and other Mechanical and Industrial Occupations which they shall put into immediate operation by improving lands and in other useful vocations.” Whether Delany and the chiefs shared the same concepts of land use was not clear. The treaty was later dissolved due to warfare in the region, opposition by white missionaries, and the advent of the American Civil War.

In April 1860 Delany explored further inland following the old trade route of the Oyo empire, a full 225 miles inland and on the 10th sets sail from Lagos to England where he was honored by the International Statistical Congress. In protest. on 7/16/1860 an infuriated American delegation, headed by Augustus Longstreet walked out of the first meeting of the prestigious International Statistical Congress, attended by Prince Albert, after its chairman, Lord Brougham recognized and honored Martin R. Delany with remarks before the gathering, an opportunity which Delany takes to remind the august body that “ I am a man.”

At the end of 1860, Delany returned to the United States. and on /16/1860 12/29/1860 arrived home in Chatham. The next year, he began planning settlement of Abeokuta. He gathered a group of potential settlers and funding. In the summer of 1861 the settlement expedition of Abeokuta, though ready with passengers and funding, began to falter as Delany chose to stay and seek the emancipation of the enslaved. This led to the pioneer plans falling apart.

Three events happening in quick succession changed the course of his life and the nation. The fist one was in (1/9/1861 when shore batteries drove off a federal supply ship heading for Fort Sumter in Charleston, S. C. Then, after Lincoln's Inaugural Address in March, Union forces attacked the shore batteries. Fort Sumter surrendered on April 13th, thus beginning the Civil War).

Further epoch making events followed First in (1/1/1863 Lincoln abolished slavery in rebelling states). Then on 7/13/1863 he called for a draft, triggering riots in most major Northern cities, killing 50 to 75 blacks in New York City alone). Then in (7/30/1863 he issued General Order No. 233 in reply to Jefferson Davis's warning that captured black soldiers would be either killed or enslaved by the Confederacy. Lincoln declared the same policy would hold for every captured Confederate, who, instead of enslavement would be " placed at hard labor on the public works." Lincoln, thereby, confirmed that black soldiers were full, legally protected citizens, the earlier Dred Scott decision by the U. S. Supreme Court notwithstanding).

In 1863 after Lincoln's call for a military draft, Delany began recruiting black men for the Union Army. He recruited men for Massachusetts' 54th Regiment, raising 2, 500 enlistees for Rhode Island, enlisting 5, 000 black men for Connecticut. Continuing efforts later in Cleveland and Chicago, he raised thousands of enlistees, many of whom joined the newly formed United States Colored Troops. On the 12/15/1863 he wrote to the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, requesting that he made efforts " to command all of the effective black men as Agents of the United States," which was ignored.

In early 1865 2/8/1865 Delany in an audience with Lincoln proposed a corps of black men led by black officers who when marched into the south would serve to win over Southern blacks. Although a similar appeal by Frederick Douglass had already been rejected, Lincoln was impressed by Delany whom he described as " a most extraordinary and intelligent man." A few weeks later, Delany was commissioned as a major, becoming the first black line field officer in the U. S. Army. After the war, he remained with the Army serving under General Rufus Saxton in the 52nd U. S. Colored Troops. He was later transferred to the Freedman's Bureau, serving as subassistant commissioner to Hilton Head on the South Seas Islands where he shocked white officers with his oratory, and strong call for the right of freed blacks to own land: " forty acres and a mule.". He was mustered out of the Freedman's Bureau and shortly afterward resigned from the Army.

S. C. Gen. Rufus Saxton was replaced by the state's new governor, Maj. Gen. Robert K. Scott, an appointee of Pres. Andrew Johnson with less commitment to helping freed blacks and who became known for corruption,.

In (1/1865 Confederate General Robert E. Lee recommended to Jefferson Davis that slaves in the South be armed to fight for their cause).

Following the war, Delany continued to be politically active. He went to South Carolina to participate in the Reconstruction. In the Freedmen's Bureau and as a Republican politician, he was influential among the state's population, in spite of his race He worked to help black cotton farmers improve their business and negotiating skills to get a better price for their product. From 12/1865 to 1/1866 Delany responded to plans by blacks on Sea Island to confiscate planters' land by appealing to them to improve business skills and negotiate good prices from Northern agents for cotton they would grow under contract on land owned by Southern planters. In 8/1866 Delany was cleared of stealing charges when investigation showed he was only trying to obtain higher prices for black farmers from Northern agents for their cotton.

He also argued against blacks, when he saw fit as he did in 8/1867 when he opposed in a private letter reprinted in "The New York Tribune," the proposed U. S. Vice Presidential candidacy on an abolitionist ticket with Wendell Phillips of a young black man, J. J. Wright, arguing that he needed more experience and education. He opposed the candidacy of a black man for mayor of Charleston, 1869 Delany unsuccessfully sought the post of Minister Resident and Consul General in Liberia. 7/1872 SC and lieutenant governor of South Carolina. On 9/1872 Delany was in New York City's financial district trying to sell bonds of the State of South Carolina. He was appointed as a Trial Justice in Charleston. While sitting as a trial justice there in 1875 trumped up charges of "defrauding a church" were brought against him. 3/4/76 Despite strong support attesting to his character, he was <https://assignbuster.com/delany-martin-robison-a-african-american-journalist-history-essay/>



convicted, and forced to resign which he did to serve a one year term in jail after being convicted on this charge.,. 9/1876 Delany was pardoned by the Republican governor but was not reinstated into his old job.

After Governor Chamberlain refused to give him his job back in 1876 Delany switched to the conservative Democrats. He supported the Democratic candidate for governor, Wade Hampton, who Delany believed was a moderate who advocated education for all voters in the next election. Partly as a result of black swing votes encouraged by Delany, Hampton was elected and was placed on a special commission to decide the U. S. Presidential election, which left candidate Rutherford B. Hayes with enough popular votes, but short on the needed electoral votes. In exchange for pulling U. S. troops out of the south as sought by Hampton and other southerners on the commission, Hampton and the others in the southern bloc on the Commission backed Hayes as the winner.

In 1877 Governor Hampton gave Delany his job back by reappointed him as Trial Justice. As a judge, Delany won the respect of people of all races.

In the later 1870s, with the gains of the Reconstruction period beginning to be methodically and permanently rolled back by more conservative and violent elements of the state's political world headed by Ben Tillman. , , as the Republicans began losing control of the state, Democrats replaced Delany in office and paramilitary groups such as the Red Shirts suppressed black voting in South Carolina, especially in the upland counties.

10/16/1876 Six are killed and many wounded when Martin Delany and others spoke at a large rally near Cainhoy in Charleston County. Part of the crowd  
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targeted him for backing the Democratic candidate. A reporter called the armed and whiskey aided crowd as one of the most uncouth and rowdy in memory. Delany escaped unharmed.

1877+1878 Delany was removed from his reappointed post as trial justice as the moderates in government are pushed aside by the more extreme racist group now in control.

In reaction to whites' regaining power in the summer of 1877 Charleston based blacks band together and started planning again about emigration to Africa to sail again to Liberia In 1877, they formed ' Liberia Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company', with Delany as chairman of the finance committee. A year later, the company purchased a ship - the Azor - for the voyage. Delany worked as president of the board to organize the voyage.

In 1878 he helped sponsor the Liberian Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company, which sent one ill-fated emigration ship to Africa. The next year his *The Principia of Ethnology* argued for pride and purity of the races and for Africa's self-regeneration. 1879 Delany published " The Origin of Races and Color" in Charleston, S. C. in response to Charles Darwin, expounding his views on the origins of racial color using a combination of scientific, archaeological and Biblical sources. 12/1879 Delany's son, Charles Lenox Delany, got drowned in the Savannah River.

When his political base collapsed in 1879, Delany returned to practicing medicine and later became a businessman in Boston.

5/1880 Delany realizing how much his family needed him, especially to pay for the college tuition of two of his children attending Wilberforce College withdrew from the board of the “ Azor” settlement voyage to Africa, his life dream.. Mrs. Delany has been making ends meet doing seamstressing work. 12/1884 Delany returns home with his family in Xenia, Ohio. 1/24/1885 Martin R. Delany died of consumption , tuberculosis.

Africanist scholar Molefi Kete Asante in 2002 listed Martin Delany as among the 100 Greatest African Americans. More than one noted historian has said Martin Delany lived several lifetimes rolled into one. His fertile mind and the principled conscience to which he felt absolutely beholden led him across three continents and countless experiences and challenges.

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