

# Free black people in antebellum america between 1820-1861

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Free Black people in Antebellum America Between 1820-1861 Perhaps the abolitionist movements that eventually freed the black Americans to become equal with everybody can be traced back in the free black people in Antebellum America between 1820 to 1861 (Greven 173-174). Prior to this period, slavery was a full blown trade that most blacks where were sold as commodities and thereby has no or few options in life. This was reinforced by anti black laws that came out in the 1800s where negative perceptions against blacks were codified to the point that blacks were prohibited to settle in the northern states. Among the effect of anti-black laws were segregation, lack of opportunities among blacks either at school or at work, lack of political participation in the public sphere and the general disenfranchisement against the blacks that made life difficult for them. Albeit there were few free blacks prior to the Antebellum period in America, they were still in danger of being relegated to slavery by many means such as being caught and sold into slavery, inability to pay debts and sold as slaves and losing their " freedom" documents which will automatically make them slaves since blacks were treated as slaves by default in the 18th century. And those who are deemed to be " free" still suffer from disenfranchisement, persecution and restrictions on their putative freedom. The rise of urban neighborhoods however slowly changed the political and economic prospect for the blacks. Urbanization nurtured black communities and from these communities emerged the free black people in Antebellum America which became prominent in periods 1820 to 1861. Community organizations, voluntary educations, mutual help societies and fraternal societies such as black temperance societies, Prince Hall Masons and Black

Odd Fellows lodges helped united these emerging free black communities. And from these communities emerged the new northern black elite who were educated, professionals, wealthy and well connected that led antislavery movements. These emerging movements gave direction and mold for the black culture in the 20th century and later propelled the impetus for abolitionist movements that eventually emancipated the blacks such as the Civil Rights Movements which removed the invisible shackles of the blacks and made them equal in law and opportunity (Greven 173-174).

One of the assertions of these new black elite was to racially integrate schools because segregated schools for the black were underfunded and poorly instructed. Black leaders realized that with the kind of schools that is available for blacks, opportunities would remain bleak for future generation because they would remain ill educated with the current state of education available, if any for the blacks. In 1855, Frederick Douglass and others successfully removed the segregation in schools in Massachusetts and this had the effect of expanding the opportunities for black children by receiving the same education as the whites (Fetherling). This initiative of Frederick Douglas was followed by Elizabeth Clovis and John F. Cook who also fought for the education of the blacks expanding the educated base among the black people. And from this educated base of black people came the black civil rights movement leaders which eventually removed any discrimination against the blacks.

#### Works Cited

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