

As a result of the tireless work of antislavery agents, membership in abolition societies reached 200,000 by 1840. Although this figure was but a small fraction of the 17 million inhabitants of the United States and abolitionists were still far afield of the mainstream, they had succeeded, during the period 1833 to 1840, in dramatically altering the course of American politics. According to David Grimsted, as white majorities in the North and South confronted the abolitionist campaign, two distinct "sectional systems of, and attitudes toward, social violence" took shape that would "mark and deepen all future North-South confrontations."²⁶

THE SECTIONAL CRISIS OF 1835

Sectional tensions reached such a fever pitch in 1835 that commentators in the North and South declared that the Missouri controversy had been revived and had taken on a much more fearful aspect. That year saw forty-six pro-slavery riots and fifteen race riots. What precipitated these mob actions was the confluence of a series of slave insurrection scares in the South and the onset of a massive public relations campaign by the Northern abolitionist movement. In 1835 the AASS published over a million pieces of antislavery literature for distribution in the South as well as the North. Targeting slaveholders, abolitionists hoped that this information could effect the gentle moral suasion that would bring repentance. Insisting that slaves—not slaveholders—were the intended audience for AASS propaganda, supporters of slavery chose to cast the mail campaign as the "smoking gun" that linked abolitionism to the threat of slave insurrection. In the words of Postmaster General Amos Kendall, abolitionist literature was "calculated to operate on the passions of the colored men, and produce discontent, assassination, and servile war."²⁷

Initially, Northern elites sought to reassure Southern ones of their opposition to abolitionism by chastising antislavery agitators in the press and by holding large, peaceful, pro-Southern meetings in Northern towns and cities. Anti-abolitionist rhetoric focused on the charge that abolition radicalism poisoned the relations between the sections and thus threatened the Union. Such accusations sent a chill through the antislavery ranks, as moderates no less than radicals felt themselves under attack. As Edwin Atlee of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society lamented, the patriots and philanthropists who dared

to “reiterate the declaration ‘that all men are created equal’ ” were denounced as “*incendiaries and fanatics, the enemies of their country.*”²⁸

But verbal attacks failed to appease the proslavery press and politicians of the South, who literally called for the blood of abolitionists, urging white Northerners to “teach the fanatics a lesson they can never forget.” James Henry Hammond, a fiercely racist South Carolina politician, opined to a proslavery New York editor that abolitionists could be silenced only by “*Terror and Death.*” Northerners were already rising to the bait. In September 1834, Connecticut anti-abolitionists destroyed the Canterbury school of Prudence Crandall, a white Garrisonian who had dared to offer education to African American girls. Crandall had been tried the previous summer for breaking a May 1833 state law that prohibited black students who lived outside the state from attending school in Connecticut without permission from local authorities. Although her case was dismissed by an appeals court on technicalities, it had sparked heated exchanges between the prosecution and the defense—both parties, significantly, invoked disunion as the inevitable consequence of defeat. On Crandall’s behalf, lawyer William Ellsworth condemned the North’s discriminatory black laws as “chains” that bound it to slavery and called slavery a “volcano” that would destroy the Union. The chief prosecutor, Andrew Judson, declared for his part that abolitionist agitation “will inevitably destroy the government itself.” After her school was shut down, Crandall retreated from the reform field, but her mentor Garrison soldiered on, himself the subject of physical attacks. On October 21, 1834, for example, Garrison was mobbed in Boston, even as members of the New York Anti-Slavery Society were being assaulted in Utica, New York.²⁹

However shocking to modern sensibilities, these Northern mob actions paled in comparison to Southern attacks on alleged abolitionists and insurrectionists. As Grimsted has stated, Southern riots were much more likely to be deadly, sadistic, and to go unpunished by the authorities than those in the North. Whereas Northern mob actions generally were exercises in intimidation and targeted property, Southern ones were punitive and targeted people. Four “abolitionists” were killed by mobs in South Carolina and Louisiana, and over forty alleged insurrectionists were murdered in Mississippi and Louisiana. An extension of the network of extralegal vigilantes who enforced the slave codes, Southern anti-abolition mobs represented a “tolerated, even a sanctioned mode of social control.” Proslavery Southerners sought to justify

violence by invoking the regional "cult of honor." To maintain their dominance over the nonslaveholding majority, elite slaveowners practiced rituals, such as dueling, that made conspicuous their personal courage, their willingness to use force, and the fact that they considered themselves above the law. This cult, no less than the principle of manly mastery that nullifiers had invoked to attract yeomen to their cause, served as a bond between elite and nonelite white men. According to defenders of Southern honor, abolitionists represented a threat not only to the security of Southern whites but also to their reputations.³⁰

Even as distinct patterns of sectional violence were taking shape, so too were distinct stereotypes of abolitionists and their allies. An anti-abolition wood engraving, printed and circulated in the North, featured the heading "THE RESULTS OF ABOLITIONISM!" and depicted the edifice of a building under construction, with black craftsmen and a black employer exerting authority over white menial laborers. Such an image dramatized both the widespread fear that emancipation would bring an influx of former slaves to the North to compete for white men's jobs and the fear that abolitionism connoted not just social equality but black dominance. A second Northern anti-abolition lithograph, called "PRACTICAL AMALGAMATION," pictured the couch of a middle-class parlor on which a black man embraced a white woman and a white man kissed the hand of a black woman. Obviously, this image was intended to associate abolitionism with the social taboo of miscegenation. Northern newspapers such as the *New York Commercial Advertiser* hammered away at the abolitionists with charges that they were "traitors" who wanted to reduce white men "to the condition of mongrels"; if slaves were freed, they would of necessity "displace the whites."³¹

The Southern press, for its part, excelled in "verbal violence" and hyperbole. The image of abolitionists as insurrectionists predominated. A Georgia newspaper warned that the abolitionist mail campaign was calculated to "destroy the lives of our whole white population—men, women, and children, and lay waste the country." In Virginia, the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald* charged that abolitionist fliers would "excite sedition among the colored population of the South." Notably, moderate gradualists such as John Hampden Pleasants, editor of the *Richmond Whig*, changed their tune and adopted a posture of "outraged antiabolitionism." Pleasants thundered that the tariff controversy was "a light and trivial matter" compared to the anti-

slavery mail campaign and that Garrison and company were “demons and fiends” intent on stirring “the slaves to rebellion.”³²

Although the anti-abolition tirades of Northerners and Southerners had different emphases, they were mutually reinforcing. Abolitionists tried to dispel Americans’ fears of emancipation by imagining that if the nation strove for the ideal of social justice, it could achieve a new sort of moral rectitude and domestic tranquility. But this vision of Christian fellowship was condemned by anti-abolitionists as a dangerous perversion of the divinely ordained social order and as a threat to the nation’s survival.

SLAVERY AND PARTISAN POLITICS

Such hyperbole could flourish because of the nature of antebellum political culture. All the major newspapers in the North and South were unabashedly partisan and favored either the Jacksonian Democrats or the emerging Whig Party. Press coverage had no pretense of neutrality and no aspirations to objectivity. Character aspersions, exaggeration, and fraudulent claims were standard fare in the coverage of electoral politics. This atmosphere reflected the Jacksonian era’s establishment of mass political parties and extension of the franchise to unpropertied white men—the “partisan contagion,” which in the early republic had been restricted to the elites who voted and held office, had by the 1830s “spread to the masses.” Thanks to the advent of new print technologies and to the transportation revolution, newspapers could reach mass audiences and bring them a steady fare of political coverage. Partisan newspapers perfected a new “middling rhetoric” that both celebrated the highbrow oratorical styles of the great speakers, such as Clay and Webster, and offered editorials and commentaries laced with lowbrow slang and even vulgarity. Attacks on a man’s honor had long been a staple of American politics, but now a new kind of aspersion came to the fore: the charge that a politician was a mere “party hack,” lacking in principle and motivated only by ambition. Although Jacksonian speakers and editors were the first to make such overheated partisan appeals to the masses, the Whigs eventually followed suit.³³

As the election campaign season of 1836 geared up, mob violence subsided and political energies were channeled into partisan rituals. But the spirit of sectional antagonism did not abate. Already in the presidential contest,

soundness on the slavery issue was the main test by which white Southern men judged the contenders. Andrew Jackson's chosen successor was his vice president, New Yorker Martin Van Buren. Van Buren, who had risen to political influence in his home state in no small part because of alliances he formed with Virginians in the Monroe administration, was committed to maintaining the Democratic Party's standing as a bastion of Southern political dominance. Van Buren was well aware, as other leading free-state Democrats were, that Northerners were the "subservient wing" of the party and that they had to cater to Southern demands if they wanted to remain in power. Southerners held the majority of top governmental posts under Jackson and had disproportionate control over patronage appointments.³⁴

But although Southern voters had regarded the Democratic Party as a vehicle for their views in 1828 and 1832, the party could not take Southern support for granted in 1836. The Whig Party, a new anti-Jackson coalition, had emerged in 1834, formed by disparate elements opposed to the "executive tyranny" of the Jackson administration. The majority wing was comprised of former National Republicans, such as John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, who favored nationalizing the Northern market revolution through a program of government-sponsored economic development. They reviled "King Andrew" for the way he had escalated the "Bank War" in his second term (Jackson had unilaterally, without congressional approval, removed the federal government's deposits from the national bank before its charter ran out). The other, minority wing was made up of states' rights Southerners who had been alienated by Jackson's antinullification stance. While they generally rejected the National Republican economic agenda, many of these Southerners believed that Jackson, with the removal of the deposits, had gone too far—"By placing deposits in state banks chosen for their loyalty to the administration, Jackson had increased his patronage, his power to corrupt politics, and his capacity to yoke politicians to his will."³⁵

Too divided to pick a single presidential candidate, the Whigs in 1836 offered three, including Southern slaveholder Hugh White. Southern Whigs claimed that Van Buren's record in office, especially his position during the tariff debate, was anti-Southern and even abolitionist. Democrats fired back that Van Buren would protect the rights of slaveholders and that the two Northern Whig candidates, William Henry Harrison of Ohio and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, represented the real—Federalist and antislavery

core of the party. To shore up his pro-Southern credentials, Van Buren endorsed the stance of Postmaster General Kendall, who encouraged Southern postmasters to destroy rather than distribute any abolitionist mailings that arrived in their offices. Van Buren also registered his opposition to abolition in the District of Columbia and sent letters to key Southern individuals and newspapers assuring them of his support for slavery and states' rights. The core Democratic argument on slavery in the election, directed at both Northern and Southern voters, was that "intersectional comity, achieved through the brotherhood of the national Democracy, offered the surest remedy for abolition agitation." In essence, Democrats lauded Van Buren's party loyalty and discipline—and promised that such loyalty and discipline were bonds that would keep the Union intact.³⁶

Van Buren won the election, but by a margin that was too close for the Democrats' comfort. His inaugural address of March 4, 1837, declared optimistically that antislavery agitation had "signally failed" to "reach the stability of our institutions," and that the "masses of the people" remained devoted to the "bond of Union." The Whigs had done something that the former opposition party, the National Republicans, had never managed to do—that is, place "themselves securely on the southern political map." The first great contest between the two parties had, in the words of William J. Cooper Jr., "spotlighted the politics of slavery." In this overheated political climate, in which each party tried to taint the other as antislavery, the average white Southerner simply did not have access to what we might today consider a fair and balanced depiction of abolitionists. And to the severe disappointment of Garrison and his followers, politicians and the partisan press found, among the nation's foremost clergymen, staunch allies in their anti-abolitionism.³⁷

CLERICAL ANTI-ABOLITIONISM IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH

No goal was more important to immediatists than that of enlisting the major Protestant denominations in the battle against slavery. But in the 1830s, that goal seemed to recede into the distance, as both Northern and Southern churches adopted positions that were hostile to abolitionists. As John R. McKivigan has pointed out, the Revolutionary era's "burst of antislavery vigor" in Northern churches "barely lasted out the [eighteenth] century."

Since the beginning of the new century, residual antislavery sentiment had been channeled into support for gradualist schemes such as colonization and into missionary work among slaves. Northern clergymen rationalized their toleration for slavery on the grounds that they needed slaveholder support to compete in the denominational scramble for converts and to pursue ameliorative programs in the South; clergymen also feared that abolitionism would divide congregations and introduce political controversy into a sphere in which it had no place. Most important, Northern ministers who condoned slaveholding, John Patrick Daly writes, did so “to protect and promote interests concomitant to slavery, namely biblical traditionalism, and social and theological authority.” They perceived abolitionism not only as a threat to slavery but also to the very principle of social and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The focus of their anxiety was a small but growing cadre of ecclesiastical abolitionists—white ministers such as Luther Myrick and African American ones such as Samuel Ringgold Ward and Willis A. Hodges—who wedded their opposition to slavery with a determination to democratize and decentralize Protestant churches. Thus the immediatist controversy of the early 1830s split the Northern clergy into three camps—the majority of ministers, including such influential men as William Ellery Channing and Lyman Beecher, clung to gradualism, while minorities on either flank either supported outright abolition or actively promoted the proslavery position.³⁸

Southern ministers rallied to the defense of slavery in the wake of the abolitionist mailing campaign of 1835. These clergymen assumed a leadership role in convening anti-abolitionist assemblies; “Presbyterian synods, Baptist associations, and Methodist conferences passed resolutions condemning abolitionist agitation.” The South’s burgeoning religious press also sounded the alarm against abolitionism, with journals—among them, the *Religious Herald*, *Southern Religious Telegraph*, *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, and *Southern Baptist and General Intelligencer*—accusing immediatists of perverting religion for their fanatical agenda. Well aware that politicians like Virginia’s John Floyd suspected Southern ministers of lending aid and comfort to the antislavery cause, the region’s clergymen tried to outdo each other in protestations of support for slavery. With a “striking unanimity,” Southern clergymen decried Northern meddling with the South’s institutions and feared that “abolitionism might lead to disunion.”³⁹

Southern clergymen sought to establish the righteousness of slavery by

biblical exegesis that highlighted scriptural support for human bondage. As a resolution of the Synod of South Carolina put it, slavery had existed “from the days of those good old slaveholders and patriots, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” They believed they found a justification for black slavery in Genesis 9:25, interpreting the story of Noah’s curse on Ham’s descendants as a curse on Africans. Building on the proslavery template of Thomas Dew, clergymen also marshaled “providential facts” about life in the South. For proslavery ministers, as for Dew, the very spread of evangelical religion and slave labor in the South was a sign of divine favor. Ministers did not focus on defending slavery in the abstract but rather championed Christian slaveholding as it was practiced in the American South. Though conceding that some forms of slaveholding might be evil, they insisted that Southern slavery was not. Finally, Southern clergymen increasingly not only condemned abolitionists but also “stereotyped all northern religion on the basis of the biblical ‘errors’ of radicals”—they attributed to abolitionists a far greater influence than they actually had and charged them with leading Northerners down the path of heresy, away from the true religion. The “sectionalization” of religion—Southerners’ tendency to associate the North with heresy—was intensified by the 1837 schism within the Presbyterian Church into a “New School” and an “Old School.” The New School promoted a liberal Calvinism, with emphasis on man’s agency to overcome sin and on interdenominational cooperation in benevolent projects. The Old School “defended Presbyterian orthodoxy,” and in an effort to stem the reform tide, conservative Northerners reached out to slaveholding Southerners, attacking abolitionism as a variety of New School heresy. The Old School majority in the South characterized New School doctrines as “subversive” and “poisonous,” as toxins that needed to be purged from the church. In the mid-1830s proslavery politicians, faced with a surging antislavery petition campaign, developed their own case for the ideological purification of the South.⁴⁰

PETITIONING AND THE GAG RULE

In the aftermath of the 1835 postal campaign, sectional tensions found a new channel in debates over the “gag rule.” From 1831 to 1836, Garrisonian abolitionists used petitions to Congress as vehicles for moral suasion, demanding that the lawmakers abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and

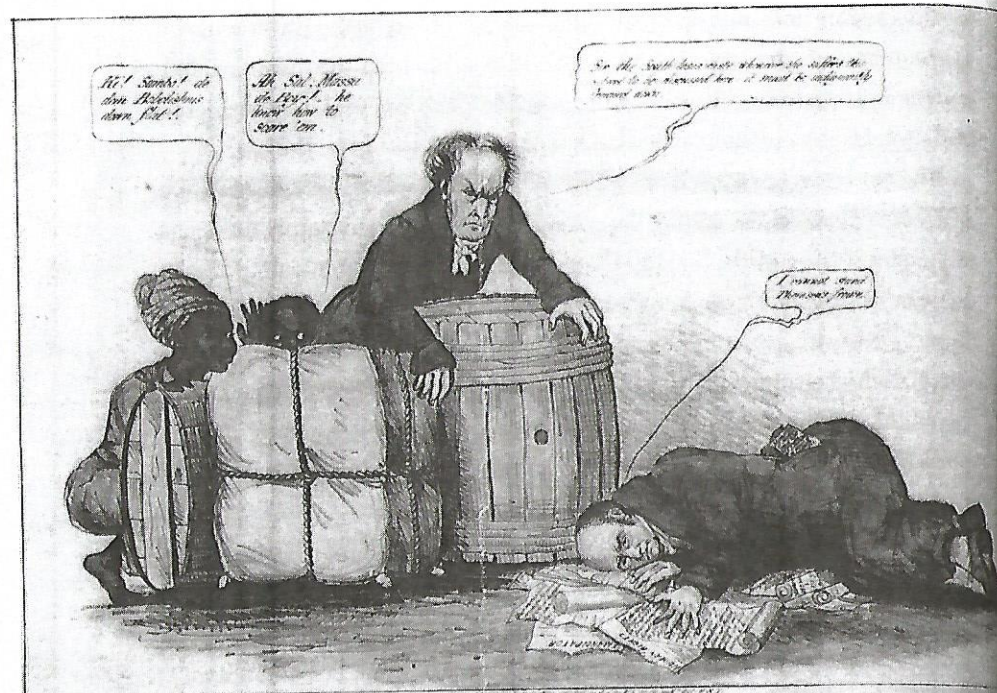
federal territories. The trickle of petitions had swelled to a flood by 1835, thanks in part to a concerted effort by the antislavery press to call on Northern women to exercise their right of petition. As Susan Zaeske explains, "petitioning was seen as a pure expression of the moral conscience" and therefore as an appropriate political outlet for women. Female petitioners heeded the call, and thousands signed memorials that portrayed antislavery activism as a Christian duty. Despite their deferential cast, however, the petitions sparked controversy. As early as 1835, South Carolina's states' rights leaders, Representative James Henry Hammond and Senator John C. Calhoun, began giving "gag rule" orations, urging Congress to take a stance of "nonreception" of antislavery petitions and reject them outright. This uncompromising position was rejected by the lawmakers in favor of a more moderate one—namely, that antislavery petitions would be received and then immediately tabled, without being debated, printed, or referred to committee for consideration. Invoking a useful metaphor, William Lee Miller has noted that this rule allowed Congress to treat all antislavery petitions the "way that a sorting machine on an assembly line spits out misshapen parts." The architects of the modified gag rule were none other than presidential candidate Martin Van Buren and a former nullifier, Representative Henry L. Pinckney of South Carolina. Thanks to the strong support of Democrats in the North and South alike, their gag rule was enacted by the House of Representatives in the spring of 1836 and was repeatedly renewed until antislavery forces overturned it in 1844; in the Senate, an informal gag rule prevailed during this era to stifle debate on slavery.⁴¹

Supporters of the gag rule viewed antislavery petitions as attempts to vilify the South. The sheer volume of these memorials was alarming; by 1836 Congress had received over three hundred petitions containing over forty thousand signatures. Senator William C. Preston of South Carolina said that the "domineering insolence" of abolitionist "calumniators" had "impugn[ed] the honor" of the South. The end result of such meddling, which played on the fears aroused by Nat Turner's Rebellion and used appeals to martial manhood that he had honed during the nullification controversy, would be a servile war—"A War upon women and children. A war that spares no sex, respects no age, pities no suffering; that consigns our hearths and altars to flames and blood." Preston's colleague, Senator Alfred Cuthbert of Georgia, purported to expose the mechanism by which antislavery agitation

would escalate into race war: abolitionists had “established a medium of intercourse with the slaves of the South, through which they were made to understand whatever is done in Congress.” If Congress took one antislavery step, “could any one satisfy the slaves that that step would be the last?”⁴²

The gag rule had the unanticipated consequence of ratcheting up the antislavery petition campaign. The 1836 resolution expired in July, at the end of the first session of the Twenty-fourth Congress. When the second session was under way in December, John Quincy Adams, the former president turned Massachusetts congressman who led the counterattack against the gag rule, had the “chance to present stacks of antislavery petitions” before a new gag could be imposed in mid-January 1837. Refusing to be deterred by the renewed rule, Adams tried a variety of parliamentary procedures to corner his colleagues into discussing abolition memorials and debating the gag resolution itself. In his most nervy stunt, he asked the Speaker of the House what he should do about a petition purporting to be from twenty-two slaves—What were the House rules on whether slaves had the right of petition? Southern representatives howled in fury, demanding that the petition be “committed to the flames” and that Adams be expelled or, at the very least, censured. Adams then delivered his coup de grace—he revealed that the slave petitioners were not abolitionists but were asking to remain in slavery (Adams suspected that they had been coerced to do so, and that the petition was really the work of slaveholders). Outraged that Adams had so mockingly turned the tables on them, the Southerners pressed for the passage of a resolution denying slaves the right of petition, and with ample support from their Northern colleagues, they succeeded. The Southern press meanwhile lambasted Adams as a “mad and mischievous” dotard who, by insulting Southern honor, was “recklessly sowing” the “seeds of disunion” in the public mind. There was a method in Adams’s “madness.” His slave petition gambit was not merely intended to raise the hackles of Southern congressmen and journalists. Rather, it was part of a deliberate strategy to cast the gag rule debate as a free speech issue. Adams repeatedly disavowed any sympathy for radical abolitionists and their aims; rather, he was defending their right—and the right of all Americans—to speak their minds.⁴³

The gag rule controversy in Congress had an unmistakable partisan dimension, and it highlighted and exacerbated the sectional rift within the Whig Party. Northern Whigs, who constituted the nationalist/modernizing



ABOLITION FROWNED DOWN.

Here, South Carolina Whig Waddy Thompson “frowns down” upon abolition petitions, while John Quincy Adams lies prone in defeat on a stack on antislavery appeals and newspapers. This commentary on the gag rule captured divisions in the Whig Party, and suggested—erroneously—that slaves believed that abolition was beaten “down flat.” In truth, Adams and his allies had not given up the fight. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

core of the party, “took a decidedly more antislavery stance than Northern Democrats,” even as Southern Whigs were claiming to be more proslavery than Southern Democrats. Northern Whigs such as Adams and William Slade of Vermont introduced petitions before gag rules could be imposed during the congressional sessions of 1837 and 1838, then tried various methods to subvert the gags once they were reenacted. Their less daring colleagues stood behind them—Northern Whigs were “consistently more unified against the gag rule than were Democrats.” Slade was the most zealous champion of antislavery petitioners; unlike Adams, he openly avowed his support for immediatism and his hostility to slavery. In December 1837 Slade used the occasion of presenting a petition to deliver an impassioned antislavery speech in which he argued that “‘all men’ of all colors, and all

conditions, are, in respect to *rights*, 'equal' and that the gag rule was "an arbitrary and unconstitutional infringement on the liberty of speech." This prompted some fifty or so Southern members of the House to storm out in anger. The result of this "memorable secession," as Rhett of South Carolina called it, was the drafting and passage of a new gag rule that tabled petitions relating to abolition not only in the states and District of Columbia, but also in the territories.⁴⁴

What impact did the imposition of these successive gag rules have on rank-and-file abolitionists and on Northern public opinion? Senator Thomas Morris of Ohio observed that the gag rule had backfired, for abolition societies were proliferating in his home state, where citizens believed in the right of the petitioners to be heard, although many disagreed as to the object of the petitioners. Abundant evidence confirms his impression that abolitionists were galvanized by the gag. When Congress convened in December 1838, it was greeted by abolition memorials signed by more than 400,000 Americans. Edward Magdol has established that the average number of signatures per petition to Congress rose steadily, from 32 in 1836 to 107 in 1840. Garrisonian agitators joined Northern Whig politicians in arguing that proslavery forces were infringing on the constitutional right of free speech. At the annual convention of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society, for example, a delegate named S. Gould declared that just as the patriots of the Revolution had defied the British government to preserve their rights, so too must abolitionists defy the gag rule. Invoking the metaphor of slavery to dramatize the gag rule's threat to the rights of free citizens, Gould argued:

In other lands the people do not rule. Who rules in America? THE PEOPLE. The matter, then, is to settle the question whether the people rule, or aristocrats rule among us. . . . [Proslavery politician Henry A.] Wise, of Virginia, may have his slaves, but we are not his slaves and never will be. . . . If we give up the right of petitioning, or cease to exercise it in this cause then we are indeed slaves. Let our representatives know that we are their masters. I despise the man who says our representatives will not mind our petitions. Suppose they will not. If they refuse, the next year will have a million of signatures to the petitions [*sic*], and the year after a million more.⁴⁵

Gould's remarks demonstrate the growing currency of the notion that not only the South but also the national government was in the thrall of a "slave

power conspiracy” comprised of planter “aristocrats” who followed the “dictates of their own selfish passions” and who were intent on extending their domain of influence into the North. The editor of the antislavery *Weekly Advocate*, after learning of the December 1837 gag resolution, drew the grim conclusion that “the actual slavery of one portion of a people must eventually lead to the virtual slavery of the other.”⁴⁶

African American abolitionists in the North, for their part, supported the free speech stand that John Quincy Adams and others were taking in Congress. But for free blacks, the gag rule was merely part of a broader attack on their precarious rights, on their virtual freedom, in the North. Free blacks focused their petition efforts on memorializing Northern legislatures to preserve and restore their rights. In February 1837, for instance, African American men and women of New York City petitioned that “persons of color arrested on a claim of being fugitive slaves” be given a trial by jury so the courts could protect blacks from fraudulent claims by slaveholders and their agents; the petitioners also asked that the right to vote, which New York had stripped from black men in 1822, be restored to them. For blacks, the gag rule represented not only the encroachments of the Southern Slave Power but also, more broadly, of white racism in both North and South.⁴⁷

PETITIONING IN THE SOUTH

Even as the petition war unfolded in Washington, D.C., Southern free blacks were presenting their own state legislatures with memorials, a process that has largely escaped the notice of historians of sectionalism. Southern states moved, one by one, to restrict or outlaw the manumission of slaves by their masters. One restrictive device was the passage of laws that exiled manumitted slaves and thus prevented the growth of the free black population. Blacks fought back against these laws by petitioning Southern legislatures for exemptions from them; no less than the memorials of Northern free blacks against colonization, these Southern petitions asserted the citizenship of blacks and their deep connections to their kinfolk and to their home states. A Tennessee man named Stephen Lytle, for example, protested his threatened exile from Nashville on the grounds that “*there* are all his associations and feelings—his preferences are *there*—his attachments are *there*—he could not live and enjoy life *any where* else.” A free black woman named Rebekah, of