

“You know it is me jest three years from slavery”:  
A Fugitive Slave Makes a Place for Himself in the  
Anti-Slavery Movement

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要 約

奴隷解放や奴隷制度廃止運動は、19世紀初頭の米国改革運動の中の最も大切な動きのひとつである。歴史の伝統的な見方では、白人の奴隷制度廃止論者のことがとり上げられてきたが、過去30年の間の研究では白人と共に奴隷廃止運動に重要な役割を果たしてきたア

フリカ系アメリカ人に注意が向けられるようになってきた。この論文は、1846年から1850年にかけてボストン市内で職業的及び経済的基盤を築き、奴隷解放運動の指揮者として堅固な地位を確立したルイス＝ヘイデンという逃亡奴隷が実際に直面した諸問題を調査し、まとめたものである。

The anti-slavery movement was one of the most important American reform movements of the early 1800s. Traditional histories of the movement focused on the activities of white abolitionists. Studies in the last thirty years, however, have pointed out that African-American abolitionists worked together alongside whites to play a major role in the anti-slavery movement. This paper will examine the practical problems that one such abolitionist, Lewis Hayden, found in securing a place for himself as an anti-slavery leader, as well as in finding work and a financial base in the city of Boston between 1846 and 1850.

Lewis Hayden was born in 1811. As a child he witnessed the sale of his father and his mother's gradual insanity due to sexual and physical abuse by her white master. He, himself, was traded by his master, a Christian minister, for a team of horses. From an early age he was exposed to the worst of slavery and looked for a way to escape to freedom.

In the late 1840s, Hayden, his wife, Harriet, and their son finally escaped from Kentucky with the help of a white couple, Calvin Fairbank and Delia Webster. Fairbank and Webster were tricked into returning to Kentucky, arrested and imprisoned for helping the Haydens escape. The escape and arrest gave Lewis Hayden the status of a celebrity in anti-slavery circles. But Hayden wanted more than freedom and momentary fame, he wanted to work in the fight against slavery.

Hayden settled in the Boston area by 1847. He had settled briefly in Detroit and was active in church and fundraising work. While Detroit had a strong African-American community and provided a gateway for fugitive slaves to escape to freedom in Canada, Boston was one

of the major intellectual, political and financial centers of the anti-slavery movement.

The African-American community of Boston was fairly small. In 1830, there were 1,875 people; in 1860, 2,261. It was a poor community with few "black elite." Yet despite its small size it was organized into a strong network of social organizations and had an unusually strong influence on the abolitionist movement. Lois Horton attributes this to four factors: the relatively free atmosphere in Boston; the high literacy rate in the community; the presence of the white abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper, the Liberator in the city; and the formal and informal networks that tied members of the community to networks of other African-American communities throughout the north.

The population of the African-American community of Boston can be seen as being divided into three occupational classes: professional; skilled or entrepreneurial; and unskilled or semiskilled. The professional class was very small. The names of these lawyers, doctors, ministers, and teachers appear repeatedly in the Liberator's reports of community and anti-slavery meetings. The skilled or entrepreneurial class consisted of barbers, others with various skills in the trades, and the owners of small business.

The community had its class and social divisions as well as political disagreements. But the African-American community in Boston seemed to suffer from less factionalism than in other communities, such as Philadelphia, which was roughly ten times Boston's size. Lois Horton suggests that slavery was the salient issue which held Boston's community together.<sup>2</sup>

Hayden, as a fugitive slave, was somewhat of a celebrity in anti-slavery circles because of his family's escape and the publicity surrounding the imprisonment of Fairbank. Throughout the north there was a broad interest in African-American orators, particularly fugitive slaves who could eloquently recount their experiences.<sup>3</sup> It was this interest and Hayden's connection with the Anti-Slavery Society which brought him to Boston to work as an anti-slavery agent, or representative. Although he was uneducated when compared to Boston's African-American professional elite, fugitive status allowed him to use his personal talents to address the issue of slavery and to create a place for himself among Boston's African-American community and its anti-slavery leaders.

One of Hayden's most important considerations must have been to find a way of providing a living for himself and his family. He and his wife had to make a transition between work as slaves and work in a wage earning society. Hayden had been a waiter in a hotel in Kentucky before he escaped from slavery. Rising from the status of a slave and waiter to that of a free man and agent of an anti-slavery society was a big jump. He had gained a reputation as a community organizer and fund raiser in Detroit. But he also had to gain the support or sponsorship of the white abolitionists in Boston who headed and ruled paternalistically over the movement in order to make this change.

Hayden had expressed his interest in moving to Boston in 1846. At the Anti-Slavery office, he met the city's abolitionists who urged him to "go upon the platform." In May and July of

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1846, mention in the correspondence of Maria Weston Chapman suggests that arrangements were being made for Hayden to find work as an anti-slavery agent.<sup>4</sup>

The first report of Hayden's public speaking career was of a meeting on 31 July 1846. Hayden spoke in Boston at a memorial for Charles T. Torrey, an abolitionist who had died in a Maryland prison. By May of 1847 Hayden was on tour, writing letters to the editors of anti-slavery newspapers which reported on his work as an agent. In a letter dated 7 May 1847 Hayden states that he had "travelled through several of the New England States and have generally met with a cordial reception." On 20 May 1847 he mentions a meeting in South Woburn, Massachusetts, and attacks "slaveholding religion" along with the institution of slavery because of which "the wife of my youth, and my first born child, is dragging out a life on some tyrant's plantation."<sup>5</sup>

In the 1840s the African-American anti-slavery agent's sphere of activity included civil rights as well as anti-slavery work. On 22 July 1847 Hayden reported the story of his and Harriet Hayden's journey to Vermont and their fight for equal treatment on racially segregated railroads and steamships.<sup>6</sup> The campaign against racial segregation on the railroads began in 1841, soon after they were first built in Massachusetts. White and African-American abolitionists would refuse to move to segregated seating when ordered to do so by the conductors. They were often removed by force and then sued the conductors and the railroads for assault. A statewide campaign successfully pressured railroad corporations to voluntarily abandon segregated seating in an attempt to avoid government regulation. The fight, however, continued outside of Massachusetts.<sup>7</sup>

In support of this campaign, Lewis and Harriet Hayden bought first class tickets in Massachusetts. They insisted on, and after a fight, succeeded in continuing to ride first class when they switched trains in Rhode Island, which required all African-Americans to ride in second class. The Haydens also demanded and received equal service on their steamboat. Lewis Hayden's report gives the sense that he and Harriet worked together as a team. Women in the anti-slavery movement often joined in protesting segregation and demanding equal service in the 1840s and 50s.<sup>8</sup>

The story of the journey to Vermont was the last of Lewis Hayden's reports to appear in anti-slavery newspapers. The next record of his activity during this period comes from a letter written by Hayden to Wendell Phillips, a white anti-slavery leader and public speaker, well known for his oratory.

In February 1849, while in the middle of a lecture tour, Hayden received news through a third party that the anti-slavery group which was sponsoring his tour had decided to stop his "agency." In effect, he was fired. Hayden wrote to Wendell Phillips in protest. An examination of Hayden's letter gives us an idea of some of the difficulties former slaves may have found in working within the abolitionist movement.

Agents were representatives of a society but had to personally finance their tours. This

involved some financial risk. The agent's livelihood apparently came from contributions received during lectures and from other voluntary donations. In a sense, the agent was a performer dependent on predominantly white audiences for support. Hayden had invested two month's salary in his tour as an agent in 1848. His response to being fired called the anti-slavery committee to account for deserting him financially.

...You will I have no doubt consider where I am how far I am from home the season of year and that you will remember it cost me more than two month wages to get here I do not complain at all though it will place me in a poor situation for by the time I get home I hope to be as well of as I was when I left home do you not think I ot to be well I do not think I shall be and I have not spent no more than I could help<sup>9</sup>

Northern audiences were used to a high level of accomplishment among speakers. Frederick Douglass, another fugitive from slavery and one of the most highly acclaimed speakers of the day, shared the circuit with Hayden. Many of the leading white authors and philosophers of the period also went on lecture tours. They were, so to speak, Hayden's competition. William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of the anti-slavery newspaper, the Liberator, wrote that Hayden had potential but that his "chief embarrassment seems to be to find language to express the facts of his history, and the thoughts and emotions of his mind."<sup>10</sup> Hayden may not have lived up to the expectations of his audiences.

Garrison, however, had a reputation for being very paternalistic. He expected African-Americans to adopt white, middle class values and living habits. "The necessities of the case require not only that you should behave as well as the whites, but better than the whites," Garrison would tell African-American audiences.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Hayden was under this kind of pressure concerning his lecturing style.

The letter to Wendell Phillips suggests that Hayden's level of literacy and speaking ability were the reasons given for his "agency being stop(ped) ." But Hayden protests, as a fugitive just three years from slavery, how could anyone expect his level to be any different?

...for he [one of the sponsors of the tour] did not know then what I was he did not know but what I was a second yourself but he and you all know it is not so you know it is me jest three years from slavery well let me say to you if I am not Wendell Phillips now: it [ ] ought not appear what I shall be for I shall not leve one stone returned to [obtain] light I shall do all I can to make myself a man<sup>12</sup>

This letter, in contrast with Hayden's correspondence with Garrison, Chapman, and his letters to the editors of abolitionist newspapers, is not written in a very polished style. The penmanship and spelling suggest that it was written hurriedly and without editorial assistance. It is similar, in these respects, to Hayden's letter to his wife, written several months before it. Neither has the polished style of formal correspondence.<sup>13</sup>

Hayden did not have the polish of a white, middle class abolitionist. Nevertheless, his letter to Philips has eloquence and an ability to speak directly to the point which can be

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found in earlier, more formal correspondence. He reminds Phillips that he is involved in the process of going from slavery to freedom—doing "all I can to make myself a man." In doing so, he also challenges Phillips' commitment to the movement.

...that is if nature has done her part this you know has some to do with the matter without her I can not be of any use to my Brothren in Bonds.. If you will you may do something to aid me on my way upward and onward to manhood you will please write to me at west winfield you me not like my composition it is as good as any of yours when you was but three years old which is my age...<sup>14</sup>

This language brings to mind that used by Frederick Douglass in explaining the break between himself and the Garrisonians. In 1847-1848, Douglass came under fire as he sought more of an equal role with white abolitionists, became involved in electoral politics, and began to start his own newspaper, a rival to Garrison's Liberator. Douglass was condemned by the "Boston Clique," a group which centered around Garrison.

Douglass grasped that Clique insurgents considered it absurd for a man "but nine years removed from slavery" and in many phases of "mental experience" only nine years old to purport to "instruct the highly civilized people of the North."<sup>15</sup>

African-American speakers had to contend with paternalism, quarrels, factionalism, and political rifts within the abolitionist movement. In 1848, at the time Hayden lost his agency, many African-Americans had broken with Garrison's boycott of politics and supported the Free Soil party, one of the anti-slavery antecedents of the Republican party. Hayden may also have become involved in political activity. Garrison may have been alluding to this when he wrote to Sydney Gay, that Hayden "needs to be more with us, fully to understand the position that we occupy, in regard to Church and State."<sup>16</sup>

What happened to Hayden? Did Phillips reply to his letter? Did he continue to work for the Anti-Slavery Society? His reports no longer appear in abolitionist periodicals published between 1848 and 1853. Although the 1849-50 Boston Directory lists him as a lecturer, Hayden's role seems to have changed.<sup>17</sup>

In 1849 Hayden was attempting to raise money to secure Calvin Fairbank's release from prison. Fairbank had been arrested after helping Hayden to escape from slavery. If Hayden could reimburse his former masters the money that they lost because of his escape they would petition the Kentucky state government to set Fairbank free. He, in effect, would be buying himself from his former owners. Hayden raised money from 160 donors. In 1849 payment was arranged for compensation "to the parties claiming redress for the loss of their slaves." Six hundred dollars was passed on to them after Fairbank's release. From this time, a new name appears in connection with Hayden's: Francis Jackson, a radical anti-slavery advocate who became one of the leaders of the future Republican Party. Jackson was one of the intermediaries who arranged Fairbank's release.<sup>18</sup>

Sometime, between 1848 and 1850, Hayden began a new career, based in Boston's African-

American neighborhood, as the proprietor of a clothing shop on Cambridge Street. Hayden's business provided support for his family, clothing for fugitives and also a profit that could be used to aid runaways passing through Boston. At one time he acquired a stock valued at \$10,000, which made his establishment the second largest African-American business in Boston. Hayden remained in the retail business until 1858, despite the financial crisis of 1857, which forced him to continue the business from his home. The Boston Globe reported that he first moved to a smaller store, was burned out, and later "took to peddling jewelry" during the panic of 1857-58.<sup>19</sup>

Hayden also became an agent for the Vigilance Committee during this period. The Committee was established in 1850 to provide for the welfare and protection of fugitive slaves in Boston. Francis Jackson, who had assisted Hayden in securing Fairbank's release from prison, was the treasurer of the committee.

The Account Book of the Vigilance Committee lists Hayden as distributing money to individuals in the African-American community for food and shelter, funeral expenses, coal, and the secret transportation of fugitive slaves to Canada. Harriet Hayden was also involved with the welfare of fugitives in Boston. She boarded fugitives in her home. The boarding house was more than just a residence. It also provided an extended family for the single individuals who lived there, oriented newcomers to social, church, and other community groups, and often helped them to find work.

Hayden also protected the fugitives in his home. He took part in armed resistance to government officials and bounty hunters who were searching for escaped slaves. He, himself, led two attacks on a Boston courthouse in an attempt to free slaves held in custody.<sup>20</sup>

Although Hayden's business seems to have failed by the end of the decade, he was a strong supporter of the Republican Party, and with the election of Republican John Andrew as governor of Massachusetts, was given a patronage position in the Secretary of State's office in 1858 or 1859. This position provided him with a new financial base for his political and anti-slavery activities until retirement.<sup>21</sup>

Hayden's career points out some of the obstacles that a former slave could expect to face if he or she wanted to become involved in the anti-slavery movement as a full time activist. Hayden had to provide for himself, his wife and their son. This meant finding a secure financial base within the movement. He failed as a lecturer because the expectations of white audiences were too demanding for most individuals just out of slavery to meet. As a lecturer he was not "as good as the whites" or "better than them." He may also have lost his position as an agent because his political inclinations were at odds with those of the white abolitionists who controlled the anti-slavery society.

Hayden's career was affected by the paternalism of white abolitionists and the politics of anti-slavery in a movement that was as much influenced by 19th century ideas of race and class as any other. Hayden finally found a financial base in Boston's African-American

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community as a small businessman. He made new alliances with supportive whites, notably Francis Jackson, and was able to act as an agent of the Vigilance Committee. The practical necessity of finding work that would allow him to participate actively in anti-slavery leadership was a major challenge. He finally found both a place in the movement and an economic base as a sort of go-between working with both white and African-American communities.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup>For a brief account of Hayden's life see Anita and Stanley Robboy, "Lewis Hayden: From Fugitive Slave to Statesman," New England Quarterly, 3rd. ser., 56 (1973): 591-613.

<sup>2</sup>James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979) and Lois E. Horton, "Community Organization and Social Activism: Black Boston and the Antislavery Movement," Sociological Inquiry, 184-5, 190-1, for a thorough description of Boston at the time of the Haydens' arrival.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence J. Friedman, Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 163.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis Hayden to Maria Weston Chapman, 14 May 1846, Black Abolitionist Papers (BAP) 04 :0220; Edmund Quincy to Maria Weston Chapman, 11 July 1846, Manuscript, A. 9.2.22. 73. Boston Public Library, Boston Massachusetts; Boston Globe, 8 April 1889, 5.

<sup>5</sup>Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 164-5; Emancipator, 7 Aug 1846; L. Hayden to C.C. Nichols, Emancipator, 12 May 1847, BAP 05 : 420; L. Hayden (letter dated 8 May 1847), National Anti-Slavery Standard, 20 May 1847, BAP 05 :0421.

<sup>6</sup>L. Hayden to S.H. Gay (letter dated 11 July 1847), National Anti-Slavery Standard, 22 July 1847, BAP 05:041.

<sup>7</sup>Louis Rucharmes, "Jim Crow Railroads in Massachusetts," American Quarterly, 8 (1956): 61-75.

<sup>8</sup>BAP 05:0441.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis Hayden to Wendell Phillips, 21 February 1848, BAP 05:0596.

<sup>10</sup>William Lloyd Garrison to Sydney Howard Gay, 31 March 1846, in The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Walter M. Merrill and Louis Rucharmes, eds., (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971-81): 334.

<sup>11</sup>Friedman, Gregarious Saints, 165-6.

<sup>12</sup>BAP 05:0596.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis Hayden to (Harriet Hayden), 22 April 1847, BAP 05:0281.

<sup>14</sup>BAP 05:0596. The "three years old" probably refers to Hayden's time as a free man, which would place his escape from slavery in 1844 or 1845.

<sup>15</sup>Frederick Douglass, Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, ed. Foner, 2:210, in

Friedman, Gregarious Saints, 189-90.

<sup>16</sup>Quarles, Black Abolitionists, 58 ; William Lloyd Garrison to Sydney Howard Gay, 31 March 1846, The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, 334.

<sup>17</sup>Boston City Directory, (1848-49):159.

<sup>18</sup>Quarles, Black Abolitionists, 164. Quarles mentions \$650 as the sum and also points out that blacks in Detroit, led by George DeBaptiste, took up a collection for Fairbank when he was released. See also Anti-Slavery Standard, 13 September 1849 ; Calvin Fairbank, How the Way Was Prepared, (1890), 54-5.

<sup>19</sup>Robboy and Robboy, 598 ; Dictionary of American Negro Biography, 296 ; Boston Globe, 8 April 1889, 5.

<sup>20</sup>Francis Jackson, Treasurer, The Account Book of the Vigilance Committee, Massachusetts Historical Society ; Horton and Horton, 15-18. See Robboy and Robboy, 598-607 for an account of Hayden's anti-slavery activities and the attacks on the courthouse.

<sup>21</sup>Robboy, 608-9.