

**Colored Conventions Project Teaching Guide for K-12**  
**EXHIBIT:**  
**To Stay or to Go? The 1854 National Emigration Convention**

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**EXHIBIT:**

[\*To Stay or to Go? The 1854 National Emigration Convention\*](#) curated by Ashley Durrance, Hannah Harkins, Nicholas Palombo, Leslie Rewis, Melanie Berry, Christy Hutcheson, Eli Jones, and Morgan Shaffer. Taught by Benjamin Fagan, Auburn University, Fall 2016

**A. RESOURCES**

**Keyword Definitions (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Accommodationism**---The idea that Black people should remain in the U.S. and fight for American citizenship. Frederick Douglass prominently advocated this view in opposition to emigrationism.

**Black Emigration**---The migration of Black people from the United States to other locations, particularly Canada, Haiti, and Africa. Emigrationists believed that Black people could or should not become full citizens of the U.S. and instead must establish a sovereign, national community elsewhere.

**Black Nationalism**---Seeks to unite all Black people in a larger ethnic community beyond the boundaries of specific countries, suggesting that Black people across the globe share a common identity. Black Nationalism continued to develop through the nineteenth century with figures like Henry McNeal Turner and Marcus Garvey and emerged with particular force during and after the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century.

**Black Press**---daily, weekly, monthly newspapers and magazines published by and for Black people.

**Fugitive Slave Law**---Enacted in 1850, the law required free citizens in northern states to apprehend escaped slaves and return them to the south, where they would be re-enslaved. This law was a major catalyst for Black emigrationism, because after its passage many felt that freedom became impossible anywhere in the United States, even the north.

**Self-reliance and Self-determination**---In this context, self-reliance and self-determination refer to Black people creating political power for themselves without depending on or working with white governments that excluded them.

**People (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Harriet Beecher Stowe**--Author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she wrote an essay on the necessity of women's political activism in the U.S. that circulated in the Black Press.

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**Mary Bibb**--Emigration advocate who attended the 1854 Convention along with her husband, Henry. They moved to Canada in response to the Fugitive Slave Law.

**Martin Delany**--Prominent editor, author, doctor, and emigrationist. Delany worked with Frederick Douglass on his newspaper until their differences on the subject of emigration caused Delany to leave the paper and devote his public work to the cause of emigration. Delany is the one who called for the 1854 Emigration Convention, and he delivered speeches and books advocating for Black national emigration.

**Frederick Douglass**--One of the most prominent abolitionists of the nineteenth century. Proponent of the accommodationist perspective, arguing that Black people should have American citizenship.

**Mary Ann Shadd**--Founder of the *Provincial Freeman*, Shadd was the first known Black woman newspaper editor North America. Born in the United States, she moved to Canada after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and published books and articles arguing that other Black people in the US should do that same. Presented a speech arguing for emigration to Canada at the 1855 Colored Convention.

**Places (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Canada**--Mary Bibb, Mary Ann Shadd, and many other Black emigrationists before the Civil War settled in Canada, where they felt they could have freedom without the oppression and terror of life in the U.S., especially after the Fugitive Slave Law.

**Cleveland, Ohio**--location of the 1854 National Emigration Convention.

**Key Texts (minimum 2 to 5)**

**“An Appeal to the Women of the Free States” by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1854)**--Stowe’s article advocated for women’s political participation in the struggle against slavery. Mary Ann Shadd printed it in her newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, in 1854.

***Provincial Freeman* (1853-1857)** ---Shadd’s paper printed numerous articles on women’s political participation and Black emigration.

***The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States by Martin Delany (1852)***--Delany’s book contended that Black people could and should not rely on the U.S. government to grant them freedom and citizenship. Instead, he argued, Black people could best achieve independence by leaving the country.

**Predominant Themes (minimum 2 to 5)**

**Self-determination/Sovereignty**--The debate over emigration was a debate over where and how Black people could achieve independence and citizenship. Some, like Frederick Douglass, believed that Black people should fight for the rights that the U.S. Constitution guarantees to American citizens. Contrary to this, emigrationists did not want to wait for the U.S. government to bestow the rights of citizenship upon them, arguing that Black people must take their freedom and independence into their own hands and start communities outside of U.S. jurisdiction.

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**Black National Identity**---Central to the emigration debate is how Black people conceptualized their national community. Were they African *Americans* despite being held in bondage and denied the basic rights of American citizenship, or did Blackness constitute another national identity entirely?

**Consensus and Dissent in the Black Press**---This exhibit shows that members of the Black Press did not always agree with each other. Some newspapers like the *Provincial Freeman* staunchly advocated for emigration, while others such as *Frederick Douglass' Paper* ran articles opposing emigration and calling for Black people to see themselves as Americans.

**Points of Interactivity**

Exhibit Page Name + Link	Data Visualization Name	Visualization Type
<a href="#">Timeline</a>	Timeline and Events Related to the 1854 Emigration Convention	Interactive story map

**Further Reading**

[Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the \*Provincial Freeman\* \(SUNY Buffalo\)](#)

[Martin Delany: The First Transformatist \(Temple University\)](#)

[Henry and Mary Bibb, Publishers of the \*Voice of the Fugitive\* \(Harriet Tubman Institute\)](#)

[Black Emigration Movements: Foreign Support and Opposition, 1787-1865 \(Stanford University\)](#)

## B. METHODS

To successfully teach these exhibits we strongly encourage teachers to explicitly teach the following methods used to tell more complete stories of African American, African Diaspora history and American:

### Historiography

1. What is **historiography**?

*Historiography can be understood as the history of history. A historiographical piece or essay discusses how history has been written over time and tracks the debates historians grappled with in a certain field. (Included is a link to video by Study.com; the first two [2] minutes of the video are free.)*

2. How can students practice historiography as they study this exhibit?

3. How does historiography get written? Who gets to write history?

*Exercise: Have students discuss the historiographical contributions of each exhibit.*

### Primary Documents

1. What are **primary documents**?

2. How do we **research and analyze** primary documents?

3. Is there a **tool** that we can use to help us think about primary documents?

4. What is the proper MLA **citation** practice for primary documents?

*Exercise: Students must locate, review and use the following primary documents:*

- See articles in the [Women's Contributions to the Periodicals](#) section of the exhibit for resources.

### Data Visualization

1. What is **data visualization**?

*The act of showing data (information) using images such as pictures, maps, graphs, drawings. This [infographic](#) is a good example. (Source: Simon Rogers. *The Guardian* newspaper, International Edition. Friday, March 7th, 2014)*

2. What does **digital data visualization** allow you to see and analyze differently than data presented in textbooks?

*Exercise: Have students choose one data visualization in the exhibit and narrate the story it tells.*

### Attribution and Citation

1. Why is it important to cite sources?

2. What information does citation communicate?

*Suggested Exercise: Students will learn to accurately and appropriately cite this exhibit and the works referenced within, including:*

- [Primary documents](#) within the exhibit (eg. Letter from D. Jenkins discussing emigration reprinted in the Black Press)
- [Secondary documents](#) within the exhibit (eg. Text in exhibit that discusses the 1854 Convention.)

### C. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

**1. What is the argument or main idea of the exhibit?**

The main idea of *To Stay or to Go? The 1854 National Emigration Convention* is that emigration was a significant debate beginning with the first the Colored Conventions and was reflected in the Black Press particularly during the years between the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the Civil War in 1861. The exhibit acknowledges the division within ideology among Black intellectuals, while also validating the arguments of both accommodationism and emigrationism. Moreover, the 1854 Conventions saw a marked increase in the number of women delegates, and women like Mary Ann Shadd and Mary Bibb were prominent voices for emigration.

**2. Who are the subjects of the exhibit?**

Prominent emigrationists including Mary Ann Shadd, Martin Delany, and Mary Bibb.

**3. What are the topics of the exhibit?**

The exhibit explores: Black emigration, the Black Press, Accommodationism/Black Nationalism, women's activity and women's rights in the Colored Conventions and the Black Press, and the style and nature of political debate in the Colored Conventions and the Press

**4. What is the timeline of the exhibit?**

This exhibit begins with the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 and runs through early Reconstruction in the 1860s and 1870s, which temporarily shelved the emigration debate.

**5. What are the major events of the exhibit?**

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the 1854 Emigration Convention.

**6. Where do these major events take place?**

These events take place in Canada and Cleveland, Ohio.

**7. What are other places/things of significance discussed in this exhibit?**

*North Star/Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Harriet Beecher Stowe.

### D. QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

**8. Now that you have learned more about these events, why does this exhibit matter?**

This exhibit demonstrates that nineteenth century African Americans engaged in vigorous and sustained dialogue interrogating and defining the term African American. One of the forums for these

debates was the Colored Convention Movement as recorded in the Black Press. The emigration debates offer historical context for conversations about Black identity that continue today; the debates over emigration in the Black Press show that Black culture and Black thought has been and remains both animated and structured by rigorous intellectual debate and thought. The exhibit also highlights women's leadership in issues outside of suffrage, as Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Mary Bibb were influential activists for Black emigration.

**9. Why do these events matter?**

These events matter because the debates which were a part of the discourse contributed to the complex meanings that Blackness carries today, both in and outside of the United States. The presence and participation of emigrationists in the development of the term African American contributed to the concept of the Black Nation which has at its core the idea of diasporic Blackness that is less tied or connected to land--terrain--than it is to people and culture. As emigrationists tend to occupy a less prominent space in American historiography than accommodationists, these events reveal themes of Black thought that have been highly influential but largely ignored. Moreover, these events marked a distinct development in women's participation in Black politics. Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Mary Bibb are featured in this exhibit because they both participated in Colored Conventions in roles usually only open to men. Their presence as activists women was not unusual as women were always active at all levels of Black intellectual organizing but they marked new territory by fighting for and claiming traditional leadership in places previously denied them by misogyny.

**E. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

The prompts below in purple are from the Exhibit, [\*To Stay or to Go? The 1854 National Emigration Convention\*](#).

**1. How does this exhibit help fill gaps in the following?**

- Civil Rights and Black citizenship
- Black diaspora
- Black women's history

**2. How does this exhibit create a richer context for the following?**

- The Black Press
- Emigration
- Black-white interactions

**3. How does this exhibit address or intervene in the historiography of the following themes?**

- Women's participation in the CC movement
- The idea of African American identity

- Black Nationalism

## F. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out for you the most in reviewing and studying this exhibit?
2. What did you find most exciting about what you learned from this exhibit?
3. Why does this exhibit matter?
4. Putting yourself in the shoes of the people in the exhibit, would you remain in the United States or emigrate abroad? Explain your reasoning.

## G. STANDARDS

Standards are taken from the [Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies and Writing](#) in grades 11 and 12. Note: *Teachers should use these standards as a guide and align their lessons with the specific standards for their individual state.*

### Key Ideas and Details:

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3**

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### Craft and Structure:

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5**

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6**

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7**

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8**

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9**

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.