

Colored Conventions Project Teaching Guide for College/AP
EXHIBIT:
**Henry Highland Garnet’s “Address to the Slaves and its Colored Conventions
Origins”**

Prepared by Samantha de Vera in collaboration with P. Gabrielle Foreman
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This teaching guide can be taught in conjunction with Derrick R. Spires’s article “Flights of Fancy: Black Print, Collaboration, and Performances in ‘An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America’ (Rejected by the National Convention, 1843),” which appears in the volume *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* (2021), edited by P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Paterson, published by the University of North Carolina Press. For more information on the contents of the volume and where to find it, [click here](#).

“Henry Highland Garnet’s ‘Address to the Slaves and its Colored Conventions Origins”
curated by Harrison Graves and Jake Alspaugh, graduate students University of Delaware Department of English, and Derrick Spires, Cornell University ([link](#))

Questions:

1. *How does considering Garnet’s “Address” in relationship to David Walker’s “Appeal” make you reconsider the contexts of political speeches and writing?*
2. This exhibit maps out [Garnet’s many addresses](#), speeches, and public appearances, providing newspaper reports on their content, and where and how they were received. *How does this map help you conceptualize the evolution of his ideas?*
3. While Garnet’s address was controversial, nearly half the delegates supported it in the first round of voting. The exhibit offers [visualizations](#) of how many delegates changed their minds later on and where these delegates were from. *How do these visual representations help us understand the atmosphere of the convention and the voting delegates themselves? What do you think the second round of voting reveals about political debate and collective decision making?*
4. Derrick Spires’s article “Flights of Fancy,” he argues that Julia Williams Garnet may be the most influential hidden voice in the crafting of this address. The exhibit also acknowledges [Williams Garnet’s authorship](#), noting that Garnet invoked the sanctity of matrimony to claim that the two of them are one flesh, therefore, one voice. *How does “acknowledging her role further [destabilize] interpretations of the ‘Address’ as ‘Henry Highland Garnet’s ‘Address to the Slaves’”?*¹

¹ This is one of the central questions that Spires poses to his readers. See Derrick Spires, “Flights of Fancy: Black Print, Collaboration, and Performances in ‘An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America’ (Rejected by the National Convention, 1843),” *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century*,

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5. *While on the surface, Black women's voices seem marginal in the 1843 convention, think of approaches we can adopt to acknowledge and center their uncredited intellectual and organizational labor. Explain this approach in detail.*
6. This exhibit looks at the life of Garnet's address beyond the nineteenth century by including a 1964 *Ebony Magazine* article about Garnet and his address. While the exhibit's curators note the masculine undertones of the article, *what else can you observe about the article's content? Why do you think the author and the editors of the magazine felt compelled to revisit Garnet's address in this period (1960s)?*
7. Prompt: *Conceptualize a visualization that would highlight the context of and the influences on Garnet's address. Write a paragraph explaining how you came up with this visualization and how you think it could be used as a teaching tool.*
8. CLASS ACTIVITY: If your class were to create/hold a convention today, what issues would be its focus? Write a convention call that outlines the convention's objectives, urgent issues at hand, and the active measures delegates and attendees would need to consider, discuss, and plan. Write a comprehensive call and brief version of it (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)). Prepare to address the following questions:
 - a. How would your convention be organized?
 - b. What organizations and which leaders would be invited? Who are the non-famous people who would need to be there and from what communities/entities would they draw? Consider how an unprecedented number of Black women participated in the 1854 Emigration Convention and how their presence informed the issues that were discussed and the resolutions that were passed.
 - c. What objectives do you think most attendees would agree on?
 - d. What major differences in approaches do you think delegates might have?
 - e. How do you think it would be covered by the press?

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Suggested Readings:

Dinius, Marcy J. "Look!! Look!!! at This!!!!": The Radical Typography of David Walker's "Appeal". *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (2011): 55-72.

Glaude, Eddie S. "Religion and Violence in Black and White." In *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America*, edited by Carlson John D. and Ebel Jonathan H., 128-42. University of California Press, 2012.

Spires, Derrick R. *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019.

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Wall, Cheryl. "Voices of Thunder: Nineteenth-Century Black Oratory and the Development of the African American Essay." In *On Freedom and the Will to Adorn: The Art of the African American Essay*, 36-83. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.