

**Volume 5**

**Number 087**

**The American Colonization Society**

**Lead: Believing that the United States was not hospitable for Blacks, the American Colonization Society was organized to resettle them in Africa.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In the years just after the American Revolution a debate began to grip the African-American community. Despite the rhetoric of the Revolution, the new republic was overtly hostile to blacks, slave as well as free. Symbolized by the Three-fifths Compromise by which enslaved blacks**

**were counted in the U.S. Constitution as a mere fraction of a human for the purpose of determining representation in the House of Representatives, the future for African-Americans was by no means assured. Grave doubts ran through the community and its white allies about the prospects for equal treatment in American society.**

**The majority of African-Americans wanted to stay and fight for equality but others felt that the best course for Blacks would be to recognize the futility of fighting racism in America and re-settle at some point on the West Coast of Africa. Among whites advocating colonization, motives were mixed. Some had religious motives hoping a vast exodus of Christian**

**blacks to African would help evangelize that continent. Many felt that true freedom would only be possible if blacks removed themselves to their own homeland. Henry Clay felt that deportation would spread civilization and rid the country of "a useless, pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population." Most slave-owners supported the various schemes as a way of securing their investment, since with free blacks removed, there would be less pressure to free the slaves.**

**The American Colonization Society was formed in 1816 to provide an African home for free blacks wishing to emigrate. Reaction in the black community was, for the most part,**

**firmly negative but some blacks emigrated and in 1822, the society purchased land for and established a colony which later became the nation of Liberia. Until recent years descendants of those settlers, though in the minority, dominated political and social life in that West African country.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

**Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.**

## Resources

**Bennett, Lerone. *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc.**

**Foner, Philip S. *History of Black Americans: From Africa to the Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975.**

**Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing Company, 1967.**

**Toppin, Edgar A. *The Black American in United States History*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973.**