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The Philadelphia Catto: Bridging the Racial Gap in the City of Brotherly Love

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The Philadelphia Catto: Bridging the Racial Gap in the City of Brotherly Love

By:

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for
Honors in the Department of History

UNION COLLEGE

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Abstract:

WYMAN, RACHEL The Effect of 19th Century Religious, Secular Revolutionary Ideology, and White Middle Class Values on the Social and Civil Rights Activism of African American Trailblazer Octavius Valentine Catto. Department of History, 2016.

ADVISOR: Professor Kenneth Aslakson

This thesis seeks to examine African American activist Octavius Valentine Catto's social and civic contributions to the African American community in Philadelphia and the nation during the Reconstruction era. Catto's militancy, courage, and devotion to the black cause, as a result of major religious and secular revolutionary ideology, offers an alternative view of the black experience in the North which was overshadowed by the myriad of research on Reconstruction in the South. Octavius Catto is part of a long tradition of black activists who led a wave of antislavery reform rooted in the secular political ideology of the American Revolution, which proposed that slavery was hypocritical and inconsistent with the ideals proclaimed in the foundational traditions of America, the Declaration of Independence.

Intense racism and discrimination, due to the sociopolitical framework of the period, provides a focus for Octavius Catto's civil rights activism. How did Octavius Catto challenge the white sociopolitical structure? How did he gain the respect of Philadelphia's white population while combating racist sentiment? Through the examination of Octavius Catto's formal liberal arts education, intense involvement in sociopolitical societies, recruitment efforts for black Union troops during the Civil War,

and baseball career, this thesis demonstrates that Octavius Catto was influential in directing the progress of blacks within a white prejudiced nation. Octavius Catto founded the Pythian Baseball Club, the first all black baseball club to participate in and win an interracial challenge, which provided an alternative and novel path of civil and social activism. Evidently, the Pythian Baseball Club used baseball as a vehicle to battle race relations, uplift the status of blacks, and assimilate into the mainstream fabric of American society.

This thesis is a qualitative study supported by extensive primary source documents which allow further examination of Octavius Catto's life. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania contains the Leon Gardiner Collection and American Negro Historical Society Collection, which constitutes the bulk of the primary source records researched for this project. These primary sources consist of the Banneker Institute Papers, the Pythian Baseball Club Papers and the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League Papers. Through the meticulous examination of the language and content in correspondence letters, speeches, weekly periodicals, and social and literary organization law, this thesis outlines the ways in which Octavius Catto and fellow black leaders forged a path to social and civic equality in their respective communities.

Despite the availability of primary source material relevant to Octavius Catto's life, secondary sources have provided extensive sociopolitical contextual information integral to the Reconstruction era and primary source material. The Department of History at Villanova University maintains a permanent online exhibit entitled "A Great

Thing for our People: The Institute for Colored Youth in the Civil War Era,” which seeks to tell the early history of its graduates, including Octavius Catto, and how they helped shape the history of postwar America. This exhibit, along with other secondary sources, constitute the bulk of my secondary sources.

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Introduction

"How much of the course of this terrible revolution remains yet to be run, or how many political evolutions our Government may yet be forced to make, no man can foresee. But it must be the most superficial view, indeed, which concludes that any other condition than a total change in the status which the colored man has hitherto had in this country, must of necessity grow out of the conflicting theories of the parties to whose lands this question is at present committed. There must come a change, one now in process of completion, which shall force upon this nation, not so much for the good of the black man, as for its own political and industrial welfare, that course which Providence seems wisely to be directing for the mutual benefit of both peoples."¹

-Octavius Valentine Catto, May 10, 1864

Octavius Valentine Catto (February 22, 1839-October 10, 1871), a leading Renaissance man for equal rights, electrified a biracial audience at the Twelfth Annual Commencement of the Institute for Colored Youth when he called on free men and women to take action. "There must come a change," he proclaimed. He demanded that they liberate the minds of their enslaved brethren by challenging current racial injustices that plagued the African American community throughout the nineteenth century. Catto became a martyred hero due to his sociopolitical contributions within Philadelphia and beyond. He was the Dr. King of the first civil rights movement. Thus, Catto left a permanent footprint on America's first civil rights movement, and was critical in propelling the nation to question race relations and American identity during the Reconstruction era.

¹ Octavius V. Catto, "Our Alma Mater. An Address Delivered at Concert Hall on the Occasion of the Twelfth Annual Commencement of the Institute for Colored Youth," May 10th, 1864. Published by Direction of the Alumni Association. Philadelphia: C. Sherman, Son and Co., Printers

This thesis examines the life of Octavius Valentine Catto, the "forgotten hero of Philadelphia," through his civic and social contributions in shaping the culture of Philadelphia's black community and advancing the African American race at the national level. This thesis argues that Catto was influential in directing the progress of blacks within a racially prejudiced society through his intense involvement in politics, education, Civil War recruitment, and baseball career. Octavius Catto aimed to expunge the racial perception that African Americans were inferior by embodying manhood, possessing impeccable academic credentials, and fighting for citizenship with an eloquent and charismatic bearing. Octavius was central in the fight for equality during the first Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement is a defining period in American history, during which Americans fought to make true the ideals of justice and equality embedded in our founding documents. The popular perception, or standard way of looking at the Civil Rights Movement, surrounds the importance of standing against oppression, a handful of heroic figures, and the four words "I have a dream." The twentieth century Civil Rights Movement is popular among historians, many of whom have emphasized the integral role of Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks in challenging the racial prejudices plaguing the African American community and leading the fight towards powerful institutional change. Historians have provided plentiful insight on the importance of King and other civil rights leaders, the centrality of nonviolent protest, and the socioeconomic conditions of African Americans post-abolition. The popular

narrative surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Brown V. Board of Education*, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have created the impression that a very short period of time in American history is responsible for profound civil rights gains. Supporting this notion is the stripping of context and richness in primary school textbooks and core materials to present a limited account of the twentieth century Civil Rights Movement. As the movement recedes from recent memory into history, it is more imperative than ever to highlight the sometimes forgotten stories of those who fought for social justice and equality. While the twentieth century proved integral in the success of civil rights, the nineteenth century presents a focus on gaining citizenship and expunging racial prejudice through the efforts of prominent black leaders.

The Reconstruction era remains a heated topic among historians as it provides powerful lessons and reflections of cultural prejudices, popular stereotypes, and civil issues still affecting our world today. The traditional, historical version of the Reconstruction emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century led by William A. Dunning, creator of the Dunning School of Thought, who claimed that Reconstruction was a scheme implemented by radical Republicans motivated by hatred of white southerners to enforce depraved authority over blacks, carpetbaggers, and scalawags.² Authors Claude G. Bowers and George F. Milton also offer comparable views by stressing the hate demonstrated by radical Republicans towards the defeated South, the inferiority of African Americans, and the corruption prevalent

² John Payne and Gloria Sesso, "A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 31, no.4 (1998): 468.

within the federal government. These authors illuminate the image of African Americans as second-class citizens while reinforcing the prevailing racism of the period.

The post World War II era which influenced the birth of a revisionist version of Reconstruction that established a more sympathetic perspective on the fundamental sociopolitical changes promulgated by the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. In the 1960s, revisionists such as John Hope Franklin, James McPherson, and Kenneth Stampp argue a much more complex story than established by Dunning. They argue that Southern whites were not subjected to northern brutality and that Andrew Johnson was an incompetent political leader whose inflexible policy and refusal to embrace basic civil and political rights for newly free blacks ultimately placed him against the Republican Party.³ While the Dunning School of Thought criticizes the immense expenditure of southern states during Reconstruction, the revisionists defend the expenditure as it was used for noble causes such as public schools and hospitals. While the Dunning School of Thought views Reconstruction as a dismal failure, the revisionists see Reconstruction as a success because of the extraordinary sociopolitical gains made by African Americans.

In the last two decades, a third school of writers introduced an alternative view of the Reconstruction era which generally agrees with the revisionist view of Reconstruction, but identifies more with pessimism and skepticism regarding the Reconstruction era's outcome. Post-revisionists view many of the alleged gains made

³ John Payne and Gloria Sesso, "A Humanities Approach," 471.

by African Americans as superficial because of the continuation of racial turmoil in the 1960s and the lingering economic disparity between whites and African Americans.

They believe that the inherently limited view of Federalism coupled with the persistent racism and older planter aristocracy restricted the gains made under Reconstruction.⁴

In his novel, The Second Reconstruction: A History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement (1999), Gary A. Donaldson mentions The First Reconstruction following the Civil War. He neglects, however, to mention anything regarding the North's social activism and instead argues that post-Civil War Reconstruction was a dismal failure.⁵

The lack of research on civil rights activism pre-twentieth century has become a broader issue plaguing scholarly work surrounding the Civil Rights Movement in American history. Gary A. Donaldson is representative of this broader issue. Scholarly works focused on civil rights activism have been overwhelmingly located in the South, recent studies, however, have begun to shift their direction and locality to another hot spot of black activism, Philadelphia in the Reconstruction era. While the focus on civil rights activism is similar, the time period and Northern location sets it apart from standard historical research. Philadelphia's reconstruction period was characterized by a complex political and social structure built upon the foundations of slavery and discrimination.

⁴ John Payne and Gloria Sesso, "A Humanities Approach," 471.

⁵ Gary A. Donaldson, *The Second Reconstruction: A History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement* (University of Michigan: Krieger Pub, 2000) 4.

Until the mid twentieth century, African American participation in the Civil War was largely removed from scholarly work. While contemporary black abolitionists, such as William W. Brown, George W. Williams, and Joseph T. Wilson, published books revealing the role of the black military in the Civil War, it was not until Dudley T. Cornish's *The Sable Arm* appeared in 1956 that the U.S. Colored Troops received book length treatment.⁶ Since then, a surge of scholarly effort has been made to reevaluate and revise the role of colored troops during the Civil War. James M. McPherson's *The Negro's Civil War* (1965) and Joseph T. Glaathaar's *Forged in Battle* (1990) are publications, which provide a study of the Colored Troops' off duty behavior as well as a battle narrative. William A. Dobek's *Freedom By The Sword* (2011) offers an extensive history of the origins of the Union Army' black regiments, their accomplishments, and how their conduct affected the course of the war. Scholarly work that has analyzed regimental histories and the relationship between black enlistment and social change has led to a clearer understanding of the black wartime experience, military contributions, and struggle for civic equality.

Although the focus of scholarship has remained largely unchanged since 1997, a select few historians have begun to explore what black soldiers and veterans can tell us about broad questions like emancipation, the meaning of freedom, race, gender, and politics. Evidently, these questions have not been neatly answered, as recent work on black veterans is beginning to acknowledge. Barbara Gannon's *The Won Cause*

⁶ The three books by nineteenth-century black authors are William W. Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867); George W. Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861–1865* (1888); and Joseph T. Wilson, *The Black Phalanx* (1890).

(2010), James Marten's *Sing Not War* (2011), and Donald Shaffer's *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (2004) analyze the experience of Union war veterans in the antebellum, wartime, and post bellum periods, which was largely characterized by the struggle for equality.⁷ Scholars have provided ample information regarding African American participation in the Civil War, but have yet to provide an extensive history of black soldiers who used their wartime experiences to lift themselves in society in the post bellum period. While blacks felt the effects of racial prejudice sentiment on the battlefield, other sectors suffered as well, including education.

For nearly a century, historians have traced the relationship between education and the struggles of the African American community to further contribute to social action. The earliest scholarly writing on black education dates back to the 1890s with Carter G. Woodson's *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*, which elaborates on the significance of several higher institutions, including Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth, in preparing advanced African American pupils of both sexes for the higher vocations of teaching and preaching.⁸ Scholarly sources were rare regarding black education in the North were W.E.B. DuBois' *The Negro Common School* (1901) and Woodson's *Education of the Negro* (1919) due to the overwhelming emphasis of

⁷ Manning, Chandra, "Civil War Sesquicentennial: Union Soldiers' Motivations," *LSU Libraries' Special Collection Civil War Book Review*, last modified Winter 2012.

⁸ Carter Goodwin Wilson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*, (Washington D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1919).

southern black education, which was rooted in the fear of the educated Negro.⁹ Black education in the postbellum period was characterized by the theme of moral uplift and the image of black America, as asserted by Richard R. Wright in his *Historical Sketch of Negro Education in Georgia* (1894).¹⁰ More recently, historians have been concerned with documenting the moral progress, which contributed to the agenda of black education in the post-bellum period.

On the other hand, many black historians, such as Dorothy B. Porter, expand on the theme of black autonomy while documenting the civic and communal progress. In her article published in 1936, entitled "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies 1828-1846," Porter acknowledges the progress of black education. Arutheus Ambush Taylor, author of "Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia" (1969), and other historians have written at length of the efforts made by southern blacks to uplift themselves and enable other blacks to do the same through the construction of schoolhouses, black literary societies, black magazines, and the training of black schoolteachers. Within both themes lies education for the creation of black leadership, which has been highlighted by historians interested in this period of black educational history.

During this same period, a second group of historians, all of whom are white, created a different, darker history of black education, which worked from within a racist framework. They focused on post bellum southern black education, which was

⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro Common School*, (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University, 1901).

¹⁰ Richard R. Wright, *Historical Sketch of Negro Education in Georgia* (Savannah, GA: Robinson Printing House, 1894)

characterized by race issues, black ignorance, and a concern for the freedmen's moral education. Edgar W. Knight, a leader of this group of historians, argues that black directed education would create unbearable tolerance in the South and actually slow public interest in public education. Knight and others felt that southerners would have educated the freedmen if left to themselves. Henry Lee Swint, author of *The Northern Teacher in the South* (1941), summarized this stance by condemning northern educators for creating violence toward freedmen's schools in the Reconstruction period, which further poisoned race relations.¹¹ This group of historians justified oppression and exclusion by using the racist view of African Americans and the errors of the Reconstruction period as historical evidence. While there was much debate regarding equal access to education, the emergence of baseball as a national pastime quickly became an activity that everyone, no matter the race, could participate in.

Baseball history has become an increasingly legitimate subject of analysis as historians recognized the cultural and political significance of the sport during its infancy. Written during the early twentieth century, baseball histories attempted to trace the origin of baseball in order to legitimize baseball as an American game tied to the nation's identity. Sol White's *History of Colored Base Ball* (1907) in which he recalls his own playing career in a personal account. White, a prominent nineteenth century baseball player, used his own experiences beginning in the 1880s to examine white

¹¹ Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1967).

and colored baseball clubs.¹² Harold Seymour's *Baseball: The Early Years* (1960) is considered the first scholarly work on baseball, which highlights baseball's rise to professionalism in the late nineteenth century as well as its growth as an urban phenomenon. Additionally, George Kirsch published *Baseball in Blue & Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War* (2003), which includes a lengthy discussion on baseball's emergence and popularity among the white and black communities following the Civil War.¹³ These works articulate the beginnings of baseball and its effect on the making of America's identity. Undoubtedly, this identity includes not just baseball as a game for whites, but also a game with an equal playing field for blacks.

In the past few decades, there has been a push to integrate the histories of white and black baseball as they developed simultaneously and, therefore, are intimately connected. Harold Seymour published *Baseball: The People's Game* (1990) which examines the racial struggles that plagued black baseball clubs and their players in Jim Crow America. Other authors illuminated the struggles of black baseball clubs, including Lawrence Hogan's *Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African American Baseball* (2006). Hogan discusses how black baseball teams functioned and the logistical limits imposed upon them as a result of their race, which includes the limited use of fields, umpires, and the difficulties in raising money to

¹² Jerry Malloy, comp., Sol White's *History of Colored Base Ball, with other Documents on the Early Black Game, 1886-1936* (Lincoln:University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xxxvii.

¹³ George Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue & Grey: The National Pastime During the Civil War*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

sponsor the teams. Despite these limits, baseball became increasingly influential within the black community, especially for Philadelphia's Pythian Baseball Club.

Sol White's *History of Colored Baseball* (1907) compares the Pythian Baseball Club to the professional Columbia Giants of 1900. Both clubs consist of black middle class members, however, White claims that the baseball games engaged in by earlier black clubs like the Pythians “were little more than festive social romps, a sufficient excuse for the smashing buffet that inevitably followed.”¹⁴ White focused on the story of professional black baseball and simultaneously downplays the story of the predecessor and amateur, Pythian Base Ball Club. Following Sol White’s scholarly work, Harry Reed published “Not by Protest Alone: Afro-American Activists and the Pythian Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, 1867-1869” (1985). Reed’s work provides a short overview of the Pythian’s activities and also identifies the club’s members as African American political activists, further suggesting they held a purpose beyond playing ball. Reed goes on to minimize any of their sociopolitical efforts with respect to race relations by concluding that the Pythian’s activities were “entertainment” and “play activities.”¹⁵

The early twenty-first century reveals a surge in scholarly work specific to the Pythian as evidenced by Christopher Threston’s *The Integration of Baseball in Philadelphia* (2003). Threston argues that the Pythian Base Ball Club embodied an

¹⁴ Jerry Malloy, comp., Sol White’s *History of Colored Base Ball, with other Documents on the Early Black Game, 1886-1936* (Lincoln:University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xxxvii.

¹⁵ Harry A. Reed, “Not by Protest Alone: Afro-American Activists and the Pythian Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, 1867-1869,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 9.3 (1985) 144, 150.

“attempt to end the massive segregation prevalent throughout American society.”¹⁶ He fails, however, to provide evidence to support this conclusion and only elaborates on the Pythian’s formal exclusion from the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) in 1867. George Kirsch also discusses the Pythian Base Ball Club in regards to Reconstruction-era race relations, and the opportunities available to blacks. Kirsch argues that members of the Pythian worked to improve the status of Philadelphia’s blacks by citing the various sociopolitical organizations and educational background of its members. Michael Lomax’s *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs, 1860-1901: Operating by Any Means Necessary* (2003) includes the Pythian Base Ball Club in his revisionist explanation of the nineteenth century Negro leagues. Lomax suggests that the Pythian, and others like it, wished to assimilate into mainstream American society and gain respectability from the white population.¹⁷ Using the Pythian as a starting point, Lomax’s interpretation is intrinsically economic as he attempts to trace baseball’s history from its grass-roots to commercial enterprise. As a result, Michael Lomax offers an alternative view of the Pythian legacy in terms of its exclusion from the NABBP and baseball’s emergence to segregated black baseball leagues.

Despite the influential feats of the Pythian Base Ball Club in Reconstruction-era Philadelphia and the present day baseball community, scholarly work regarding the team’s influence in the larger context of civil rights is sparse. The story of the Pythian

¹⁶ Christopher Threston, *The Integration of Baseball in Philadelphia* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 8.

¹⁷ Michael E. Lomax, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs, 1860-1901: Operating by Any Means Necessary* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 21.

Base Ball Club has been omitted from general histories of baseball as well as its subcategory of African American baseball, which has been more recently considered a subject worth analyzing due to its significance as a cultural institution. Written in the late nineteenth century, the early histories of baseball focused on tracing the origins of the game and legitimizing baseball as an American game bound by America's national identity. Moreover, the records of Pythian were not available until they were donated to the American Negro Historical Society in 1897. The earliest scholarly works, therefore, were focused on white players, teams, and institutions.

Baseball's socioeconomic influence on the African American community is a hot topic for scholars Michael Lomax, Jerrold Casway, and authors Daniel Biddle and Murray Dubin. These historians hold polarizing opinions when referring to African American motives in forming a baseball club in 1860s Philadelphia. Michael Lomax argues that the mulatto elite of Philadelphia formed baseball clubs as a business enterprise for the purpose of their own personal ventures. Lomax also argues that the mulatto elite utilized their upper class contacts, such as power brokers and financiers, in an effort to strengthen their already impressive entrepreneurship. Historian James Threston, author of *The Integration of Baseball in Philadelphia*, argues that the Pythians became more than just a baseball team but came to symbolize another attempt by Catto to end the prevalent and all encompassing segregation throughout American society.¹⁸ Threston believes Catto's involvement in professional baseball proves two

¹⁸ James Threston, *The Integration of Baseball in Philadelphia*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003.

very important points. First, the fact that Catto became well known as an early activist for civil rights demonstrates the importance of baseball in the American consciousness. To Catto, the Pythians served as another vehicle for the African American sociocultural integration. Second, Catto fails to embody the stereotypical baseball entrepreneur because he set his goals far higher than mere profits. Threston elaborates on the integration of professional baseball and its significance in creating opportunities for African Americans in other institutions, like politics and education. Building on this idea, Threston argues that as a result of the success and strong following of the Pythians, Catto proved that blacks could run their own businesses effectively, which connects to Historian Michael Lomax's argument.

Historians Daniel Biddle and Murray Dubin argue that baseball was a public exhibition of "Negro equality" and a way blacks could establish themselves without whites through the formation of all black baseball clubs. Similarly, Jerrold Casway, author of "Octavius Catto and the Pythians of Philadelphia," argues that the Pythian Baseball Club believed black credibility and acceptance could be promoted by competing against 'our white brethren' on a baseball diamond. Having elaborated on the competition between the Pythians and various white clubs, Casway then argues that the Pythians assumed a moderate playing schedule in future years as politically fueled racial tensions heightened and interracial baseball contests were considered taboo. Historian Janak B. Lewis takes a different approach by using Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington as examples of African American authors who

interpreted sport in their daily lives to support her argument. She argues that baseball offered a new politics of physical engagement, which African Americans could participate in and eventually gain recognition from. Lewis also argues that baseball presented a framework across communities for determining social conduct, manipulating stereotypes, and articulating social norms. She believes that African American institutions and communities used baseball to increase educational opportunities and to promote racial respectability amongst themselves.

Although there has been a surge in scholarly work that includes the Pythian's story, the Pythian Base Ball Club has still yet to be made central to the study of sociopolitical organization in Reconstruction-era Philadelphia. Recent literature, however, expands on the effects and meanings of black participation in sport that can be attributed to the Pythian's story. David K. Wiggins' "The Notion of Double-Consciousness and the Involvement of Black Athletes in American Sport" (1994) places black sport within a larger tradition of racial uplift. Wiggins argues that elite black athletes have always needed to outperform their white counterparts because they carry the extra burden of representing their race, whether they want that burden or not. As they are characterized first and foremost by their race and then their athleticism, Wiggins believes that these athletes must meet "an obligation...to reach out to less fortunate members of their race" while exceeding in their skill.¹⁹ Complimenting this notion is Jon Bloom and Nevin Willard's *Sports Matters: Race, Recreation, and Culture*

¹⁹ David K. Wiggins, "The Notion of Double-Consciousness and the Involvement of Black Athletes in American Sport," in *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997) 134.

(2002), who identifies that there exists a possibility for social transformation in black sport by starting a dialogue regarding the struggle for human rights.²⁰ Further, they argue that sport has provided blacks with another social arena to challenge racial injustices and demonstrate their equality. While organized athletics provided a space to combat racial prejudice, black leaders in the first half of the nineteenth century were successful in alternative ways.

Historians have begun to explore the roots of social activism in antebellum America within black reformers such as James Forten and Absalom Jones, a generation older than Octavius Catto. Their feats can be considered a foundation for Octavius Catto's civil rights activism. Historian Julie Winch, author of "A Person of Good Character and Considerable Property: James Forten and the Issue of Race in Philadelphia's Antebellum Business Community," argues that James Forten's success in his various business endeavors was crucial to his emergence as one of the most forceful and articulate African American leaders of the first half of the nineteenth century. Further, Winch believes that Forten's ability to make money was central to his social activism. Similarly, Thomas E. Will, author of "Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic: The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen," expands on the tension between the republican and liberal visions of America's future development in relation to the gradual abolition of slavery. Will argues that within the ideological context defining the early republic, Absalom Jones

²⁰ Jon Bloom and Nevin Willard, eds., *Sports Matters: Race, Recreation, and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 1.

gave republican expression in his vision of community unity and liberal expression to his vision of freedom and independence. Further, Will argues that freedom and independence would be forged by individual African Americans who wished to advance personal interests in a market society.²¹

Very little scholarly work exists on civil rights in the North, yet the story aids in the expansion of our focus beyond the decades preceding the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, World War II, and towards the city of brotherly love. Most importantly, telling the story of the Northern civil rights movement requires us to understand the problem of race in American society as a national rather than just a Southern issue. Although racial segregation was not as institutionalized in Philadelphia as in the South, African Americans in Philadelphia's public transportation, education system, neighborhoods, and ball fields experienced segregation and prejudice. In the half century leading up to the Civil War, Philadelphia attracted the largest African American population of any non slave state with 32,000 by 1880.²² The especially privileged mulattos of the upper echelons of society established and developed a strong following for social and civil rights activism. One of these important black leaders was Octavius Catto.

Despite Octavius Catto's achievements, few historians of the Reconstruction Era have written about Catto. Harry C. Silcox, author of "Nineteenth Century

²¹ Thomas E. Will, "Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic: The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 69 no.4 (2002): 563.

²² James Wolfinger, "African American Migration," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, Rutgers University, last modified in 2013.

Philadelphia Black Militant: Octavius V. Catto (1839-1871)," argues that reconstruction historians believe Catto is "a rather unimportant black leader." This opinion has led historians to focus on Reconstruction in the South, which "tended to minimize the importance of events taking place in the North."²³ W.E.B. DuBois, author of *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), is an exception to this claim as DuBois wrote of Catto's courage, militancy, and passion to further black causes. Almost one hundred years later, a trend towards research of Philadelphia's influence in the beginnings of Civil Rights has promulgated scholarly work with Octavius Catto at the forefront.

Historians have investigated the relationship of Octavius Catto's military involvement to better his future and his future athletic pursuits with the Pythian Baseball club. Andrew Diemer, Harry Silcox, and George Kirsch utilize Catto's military involvement to reveal its influence on different aspects of Catto's future attainments. Historian George Kirsch offers a perspective surrounding the intense connection between the Civil War and the emergence of baseball as a national pastime. Kirsch argues that the Civil War period fostered the growth of baseball as an emerging national pastime as Union soldiers took up the bat on the battlefield. Andrew Diemer, author of "Reconstructing Philadelphia: African Americans and Politics in the Post-Civil War North," elaborates on the social history of Philadelphia in which he argues that the enlistment of black soldiers and Catto's involvement in forming and leading all black

²³ Silcox, Harry C. "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Black Militant: Octavius V. Catto (1839-1871)." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 44.1 (1977), 52-76.

regiments contributed to his efforts to desegregate Philadelphia's streetcars.²⁴ Diemer supplements his argument by stating that Catto's military involvement led to the fostering of important relationships between Catto and members supporting the Union cause. Harry Silcox, author of "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Black Militant: Octavius V. Catto (1839–1871)," writes a sociopolitical history which argues that Catto's military leadership and role in recruiting all black troops shaped his political views as an ardent and confirmed Republican. Silcox's argument expands on Diemer's argument by stating that Catto's military experiences paved the way to his political identity and activism.²⁵ While the battlefield provided an opportunity for leadership, the baseball field represented an opportunity for blacks to play on an equal playing field, per say. Scholars have carried out an examination of the influence of Octavius Catto's leadership within the Pythian Baseball Club, and its relation to the National Association of Base Ball Players, which was comprised of all white teams at the time, more recently. Catto's decision to apply for membership at the National Association Base Ball Players, and ultimately his rejection, has sparked an interest in historians. Scholar Jared Wheeler argues that the Pythian's wish to emerge as a recognized amateur organization led to their rejection to the NAABP based on their race, which drew a color line that would not be broken until Jackie Robinson. Wheeler also contends that reconstruction, racism, and the desire to maintain the status quo influenced the passing of a clause, which would prohibit the admission of African American clubs in

²⁴ Andrew Diemer, "Reconstructing Philadelphia: African Americans and Politics in the Post- Civil War North," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 13 no.1 (2009).

²⁵ Silcox, Harry C. "Nineteenth Century," 54.

the NABBP's constitution.²⁶ Contrastingly, Scholar John Schiffert argues that the NABBP's rejection of membership to the Pythian Baseball Club was based on the heavy involvement in political activism of its players, as well as their skin color.²⁷

Complimenting Catto's pursuit of baseball was the pursuit of education, which has been studied by an immense amount of scholars who have concluded that the education was integral in African American advancement. Several historians have examined the importance of education in propelling African Americans, like Octavius Catto, into a position of power within the Philadelphia's social structure. Scholar Stephen Berry and Harry C. Silcox argue that Octavius Catto's early education, coupled with his father's moral teachings, laid the groundwork for his future pursuits and accolades in the Philadelphia social and political scene.²⁸ Further, Silcox argues that Catto's education at the Vaux Primary School, Lombard Grammar School, and the Institute for Colored Youth, shaped his growing reputation as a talented intellectual who devoted his life to civic and social equality for blacks within a white dominated society. Emma Lapansky, author of "Discipline to the Mind, Philadelphia's Banneker Institute," offers a view of Octavius Catto's intellectual pursuits as an increasingly mature adult. She argues that Octavius Catto's membership in the Banneker Institute, of which his father was a founder, shaped his Civil Rights platform and expanded his

²⁶ Wheeler, Jared, "Philadelphia," in *Baseball Founders: The Clubs, Players, and Cities of the Northeast That Established the Game* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013).

²⁷ Schiffert, John, *Baseball in Philadelphia: A History of the Early Game, 1831-1900*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

²⁸ Silcox, Harry C. "Nineteenth Century," 66.

liberal arts education.²⁹ Catto's position as corresponding secretary and influential member of the Banneker Institute, an exclusive intellectual society for Philadelphia's African American elite, provided the opportunity for intellectual growth as the institute held discussions on scholarly subjects such as mathematics and philosophy. Additionally, Lapansky argues that social justice debate topics such as emancipation, voting, equal wages, and Republican politics were central to Octavius Catto's social and political future.

Scholar Tony Martin, of Wellesley College, argues that the Banneker Institute focused on posterity and the elevation of role models within Philadelphia's intellectual arena as a tool for collective advancement for African Americans. He notes that the members were consumed by the goal of uplifting the African American race from oppressive racism.³⁰ Through this collective advancement, Martin believes that the majority of Banneker members were overwhelmingly an "elite" of service to Philadelphia, rather than an elite characterized by pretension and dissolution. While Berry refers to Catto's education at the Institute for Colored Youth and Lapsansky refers to the Banneker Institute, both scholars reveal the significance of black education in affording Catto a status deserving of social and political spotlight.

Catto's legacy has not totally been forgotten, as historians have reminded us of Catto's dedication to social justice for all African Americans and his lasting legacy.

²⁹ Lapsansky, Emma, *Discipline to the Mind, Philadelphia's Banneker Institute* (Philadelphia, PA: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1993).

³⁰ Martin, Tony. "The Banneker Literary Institute of Philadelphia: African American Intellectual Activism Before the War of the Slaveholders' Rebellion." *The Journal of African American History* 87. (2002) 305.

Entitled “The Beginning Horrors of Jim Crow,” Roger A. Bruns argues that Catto’s death signaled the plight ahead for black baseball players who attempted to navigate their way through white society but also foreshadowed racial violence in postwar America.³¹ Andy Waskie PhD., author of “Important Pennsylvanians,” indicates a different view from Bruns by stating the assassination of Octavius Catto generated sympathy and acceptance of the voting rights of blacks, moved the black community solidly behind the rising Republican Party, and broke the resistance to equal civil rights led by the Democratic Party.³² Historians Sam Donnellon and Ron Avery share similar perspectives regarding Octavius Catto’s influence post-assassination. Sam Donnellon, author of “Civil Leader Changed Society on the Baseball Diamond,” argues that Catto foreshadows the dreams and efforts of famous Civil Rights leaders and also propelled the nationwide examination of the corrupt city politics that Catto successfully overturned.³³ Ron Avery, author of *City of Brotherly Mayhem: Philadelphia Crimes & Criminals*, argues that Catto could have very well become a national figure for the Civil Rights movement, or at least the first Philadelphia African American elected to political office.³⁴ Octavius Catto’s widespread notoriety attests to just how influential his contributions were to the nation.

³¹ Roger A. Bruns, “The Beginning Horrors of Jim Crow,” in *Negro Leagues Baseball* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012).

³² Andy Waskie PhD, “Important Pennsylvanians,” *PaCivilWa150*, last modified 15 July 2015.

³³ Sam Donnellon, “Civil Leader Changed Society on the Baseball Diamond,” *Philly.com* (Philadelphia, PA), 10 July 2014.

³⁴ Ron Avery, “An Election Day Murder: Octavius Catto,” in *City of Brotherly Mayem: Philadelphia Crimes & Criminals* (Philadelphia, PA: Otis, 1997).

Beginning with the city of Charleston, South Carolina, this thesis traces the major events in Octavius Catto's life. The Introduction frames the overall argument by providing brief explanations of current scholarship on topics that identify with Octavius Catto, such as reconstruction, black education, blacks in the military, black baseball, and black activism in Philadelphia. Chapter One describes the life of Reverend William T. Catto, father of Octavius, who navigated the theological and social barriers within communities of the slave South and the free North. This chapter reveals how William T. Catto's religious affiliation, advocacy for education, and relationship with fellow abolitionists shaped his son's path to civil and social activism. Chapter two demonstrates the educational and social influences on Octavius Catto including his liberal arts education at the Institute for Colored Youth and involvement in literary societies that shaped his future in social and civil rights activism. Chapter Two presents Catto's emergence as a community leader devoted to the advocacy of education whose political views were strengthened through lasting friendships created at the Banneker Institute. Chapter Three, situated during the Civil War years, demonstrates Catto's leadership in recruiting black Union troops and a reinforcement in Catto's commitment to emancipation, citizenship and republican ideals. This chapter presents Catto as an increasingly influential leader who appealed to blacks through secular revolutionary ideology by preaching that enlistment meant full eventual citizenship and emancipation. Chapter Four analyzes Catto's sociopolitical activism on the state and national level, including the fight to desegregate Philadelphia's streetcars

and, most importantly, the fight to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment. This chapter examines Octavius Catto's strategy in using secular political ideology to gain widespread attention regarding the hypocrisies present in the foundational traditions of the nation. Chapter Five establishes the ways in which Octavius Catto used baseball, the national pastime, as a vehicle for civil rights activism and to demonstrate white middle class values such as manhood, discipline and formality. Through the Pythian Baseball Club, Octavius Catto presented an all black team whose gentleman like character, athleticism, and organization rivaled that of white clubs in order to gain respect and alter popular perceptions of the black community.

Chapter One: William T. Catto's Journey From Charleston to Philadelphia

William T. Catto's journey from the slave South to the free North was characterized by a slew of controversies and struggles. Despite intense racial prejudice

and qualifications, William T. Catto's acceptance as a Presbyterian Minister reveals his path in navigating evolving racial law within the Methodist church. Furthermore, this chapter examines the circumstances that led William T. Catto to flee to Philadelphia with his family and his strong religious and voice within Philadelphia's black community upon his arrival. Ultimately, this chapter aims to demonstrate that William T. Catto's religious affiliation and sociopolitical activism in Philadelphia had a lasting impact on his son, Octavius.

After passing a lengthy rigorous presbytery examination in November 1846, William T. Catto, his wife, Sarah Isabella Cain, and their nine year old son, Octavius, traveled North expecting to depart on a Liberian Presbyterian missionary trip promptly after their arrival. As a Presbyterian minister, William T. Catto initially intended to pursue missionary work in Nanna Kroo, a Liberian coast town. However, the Catto family never made it to Liberia, or any other African country for that matter. The Catto family put down roots in Philadelphia as a result of a previous controversy related to William Catto's early years in Charleston, South Carolina.

Antebellum Charleston, South Carolina was the epicenter of the North American slave trade and the home of a small population of a privileged and sophisticated free black and mixed race community that had existed in the infancy of the nineteenth century. For the majority of the nineteenth century, blacks comprised the majority of the population with black slaves as the dominant labor source. Slaves occupied a greater range of occupations such as industrial and skilled jobs like carpentry,

blacksmith and mechanical work. Free persons of color tended to live in the city as there were more economic and social opportunities present.

As a member of the sophisticated free black community, William T. Catto proved himself a standout in 1831 through his specialized work in the mechanical trade by making significant improvements in the efficiency of a thrashing machine. This accomplishment led to further involvement in the sophisticated free black and mixed race society and more work within the city of Charleston.³⁵ To Charleston's white population, William Catto was useful in fixing the mills that served the abundant rice plantations. To Charleston's black population, he was the writer of petitions, a lobbyist, and leader of sermons. Evidently, the wealthy, the poor, the white population, and the black population appreciated William T. Catto's skills.

William T. Catto's career achievements and his involvement in literary societies awarded him with the credentials worthy of marrying Sarah Isabella Cain, which introduced him to opportunities only available to free blacks and those of mixed race.³⁶ Cain was a member of the DeReefs, a wealthy and prominent mulatto family in Charleston. Catto's marriage into the DeReef family revealed his degree of success and respectability within the upper echelons of free black society. Complimenting this respectability was Catto's membership in the Bonneau Literary Society. One of his earliest documented writings is dated September 6, 1833 in which he invites Richard Holloway, a free black, to join the Bonneau Literary Society. The Bonneau Literary

³⁵ Stephen R. Berry, "William Catto's Pursuit of God's Calling in Slaveholding America," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 83.1 (2005): 42.

³⁶ Berry, Stephen R. "William Catto's," 42.

Society was “formed for the purpose of obtaining further progress in literary improvement and to establish the improvement of our [free blacks] mental faculties.”³⁷ Catto’s refinement through formal education is highlighted through his membership in the Bonneau Literary Society and his sophisticated, elegant writing. William Catto developed leadership skills and knowledge as Secretary to the society and his son, Octavius, would become Secretary of a very similar literary organization entitled the Banneker Institute, founded by his father, in Philadelphia almost ten years later.³⁸

In the 1830s, Catto was an ardent worshipper of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church of Charleston, which proved controversial for Catto when racial law changed in the church. Although William T. Catto consistently sat with whites, Trinity and many other churches struggled to determine where Free Negro worshippers should sit.³⁹ When Trinity changed its stance on segregation and enforced segregation during sermons, Catto initially refused to leave and, instead, sat upstairs with slaves.⁴⁰ Catto and fellow mixed race friends finally became impatient because “the slaves had made it intolerable.” Therefore, Catto broke ties with the Church.⁴¹ It is possible that Catto embodied the elitist thinking of a mixed color free man, which was characterized by an attempt to distinguish oneself from slaves as much as possible. This thinking was present in the Brown Fellowship Society, the oldest all male Funeral Society in

³⁷ William Catto to Richard Holloway, September 6, 1833, Holloway Family Scrapbooks; available from <http://lowcountrydigital.library.cofc.edu/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/hol>; Internet.

³⁸ Emma Lapsansky, “Discipline to the Mind, Philadelphia’s Banneker Institute.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 117 (1/2). Historical Society of Pennsylvania: 90. (1993)

³⁹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 21.

⁴⁰ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 19.

⁴¹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 23.

Charleston. The Bonneau Literary Society provides a historical example of how racial prejudice affected the African American community.⁴² This society saw lighter skinned African Americans as superior to darker skinned African Americans and, although both groups were considered inferior to the white population, lighter skinned African Americans tended to receive their freedom at a much higher rate. The Society only admitted lighter skinned, prosperous men to establish a social unity among them and did nothing to help slaves. Although it is unknown whether William T. Catto was a member of the Brown Fellowship Society, his elitist thinking and social status aligns with its members. Moreover, Catto's decision to separate himself from the "intolerable" slaves suggests that his elitist thinking may have originated from his involvement in social societies such as the Brown Fellowship Society.

With the establishment of segregation and his departure from the church, William and his family moved to Charleston's Second Presbyterian in 1844, which had a lasting impact on Catto's religious views. While this church was also racially segregated, William T. Catto found more opportunities to discuss sermons and preachings from Irish born minister, Thomas Smyth. As a result of his passion for scripture and teaching, Catto decided to become a Presbyterian missionary. Considering the prevalent racial prejudice that enveloped the antebellum South, the process of becoming a Presbyterian minister proved extremely difficult for Catto. *The Presbyterian Constitution* outlines that the applicant must have a working knowledge of

⁴² Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Charleston's Free Afro-American Elite: The Brown Fellowship Society and the Humane Brotherhood," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 82 no. 4 (1981).

the Latin language, arts and sciences, theology, ecclesiastical history, the sacraments, and church government.⁴³ In addition, Catto was required to present a Latin exegesis, a critical exercise, a lecture and a popular sermon.⁴⁴ The educational and literacy requirements were daunting and difficult for anyone, regardless of color. In addition to these requirements, Catto had an additional feat to overcome: racial prejudice. William T. Catto's religious instruction and rigorous examination, however, proved successful in his admittance into the Ministry of the Second Presbyterian Church as revealed by Charleston Presbytery Minutes:

The Presbytery having duly considered the examination of William Thomas Catto and all the circumstances connected with the case, have come to the conclusion that though the literary attainments are not such as the standards require, yet the decided evidence that he gives of personal piety--of a call to the Sacred Ministry and particularly of the call to the work of missions in Africa--the importance and urgency of that field of labour--coupled with the fact that he has been eminently useful among the Coloured People here justify in his case a departure of the ordinary rule and authorize his licensure.⁴⁵

There is no evidence that detail Catto's shortcomings. Two Presbyterian guests from Tuscaloosa, Alabama sat on the licensing committee and had ordained Harrison E. Ellis, a black missionary to Liberia, the previous year.⁴⁶ Their corresponding involvement may have significantly contributed to the committee's final decision to license William T. Catto. It is possible that white Presbyterian leaders of Charleston

⁴³ *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842) 492-493.

⁴⁴ *The Constitution*, 492-493.

⁴⁵ Charleston Presbytery Minutes, quoted in Daniel Biddle, *Tasting Freedom* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 69.

⁴⁶ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 68.

struggled to accept that any black person could meet the standards set by white religious professionals. It is also possible that whites were unwilling or unable to accept black achievement. In this case, it was much easier to accept blacks for spiritual achievement rather than intellectual advancement. Evidently, William T. Catto exemplified favorable qualities that excused him from the required standards of licensure. As a result of “decided evidence that he gives of personal piety” the Ministry of the Second Presbyterian Church, which was composed of all white men, accepted Catto’s application. The ministry indicated that a “departure of the ordinary rule” would be granted, which speaks to the personal success and respectability of William Catto as a colored man and intellectual. Reverend Catto followed his calling through hard work, challenging odds, and racial prejudice; Catto succeeded in reaching his calling. His dedication to advancing his intellect and respectability was successful and unanticipated opportunities, like the possibility of moving his family to Philadelphia, were now viable and bold options.

William T. Catto’s plans to travel to Liberia for missionary work became increasingly complicated due to unforeseen circumstances, such as the scuttle between Frederick Douglass, abolitionist leader and Methodist, and Thomas Smyth, Catto’s Charleston pastor. Douglass and Catto became connected through this controversy in Great Britain during the summer of 1846.⁴⁷ Two years prior, the Presbyterian Church gifted \$9,000 to the Free Church of Scotland, of which Thomas

⁴⁷Stephen R. Berry, "William Catto's Pursuit of God's Calling in Slaveholding America," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 83.1 (2005): 48.

Smyth personally raised \$2,000. Douglass joined British abolitionists in criticizing the Free Church of Scotland for “accepting ‘blood’ money from the hands of slaveholders” and Douglass and fellow prominent British abolitionists challenged Smyth to a debate in the summer of 1846, which Smyth promptly declined.⁴⁸ Smyth’s public statement described Douglass and fellow abolitionists as “men whose general character and reputation as religious men is such as it is attributed, and I fear too justly, to the parties in question.”⁴⁹ In turn, Douglass sued Smyth for libel and, although Smyth wrote an apology to Douglass, Smyth's reputation was ruined amongst the Evangelical leaders of Great Britain.

It is possible that Catto’s decision to terminate his journey to Liberia and gravitate towards the Methodist faith may have been affected by this controversy and his exposure to ideals presented by the Colonization Society. In 1848, Catto and his family left Charleston and journeyed to Baltimore to prepare for their trip to Africa. William felt the trip to Africa was a grand opportunity for preaching and black leadership, civil strife, however, was plaguing Liberia and the Catto family’s departure was delayed.⁵⁰ In the meantime, Catto wrote letters from the office of the Baltimore Colonization Society to Secretary Walter Lowrie of the Presbyterian’s Board of Foreign Missions.⁵¹ The Colonization Society exposed Catto to free blacks and abolitionists looking to establish schools and a pulpit for Catto to preach, including old Charleston

⁴⁸ Berry, Stephen R., “William Catto’s,” 49.

⁴⁹ Berry, Stephen R., “William Catto’s,” 49.

⁵⁰ Emma Lapsansky, *Back to Africa* (College Park: Penn State Press, 2005) 148.

⁵¹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 72.

acquaintance Daniel Payne, an A.M.E. Church leader in Baltimore and Philadelphia.⁵²

Catto's exposure to ideas considered farfetched in the antebellum South was intriguing. It is reasonable to believe that Catto was apprehensive about endangering his family amidst a country experiencing civil strife and felt that the Colonization Society would provide an alternative career option suitable for his family. Having contemplated his options, Catto and his family fled north of the Mason Dixon Line. The Presbytery was notified and revoked Catto's license and a warrant was placed for his arrest and return to South Carolina.⁵³ Luckily Catto and his family reached Philadelphia and his story gained some serious attention from his new community.

The Catto family connected with Douglass just months after moving to Philadelphia and Douglass was impressed by Catto's education and vision for African American advancement. In his newspaper entitled *The North Star*, Douglass wrote an article, which read, "Mr. Catto, being a man of fine talents, was just such a person as slaveholders are generally glad to dispense with."⁵⁴ The article characterized Catto as having "the head, the heart, and the experience which would make him a powerful instrument, under God, for breaking prejudice, and elevating the colored man in the public estimation."⁵⁵ With the promising words and approval of Frederick Douglass, it is possible that the African American community of Philadelphia anticipated change directed by William T. Catto, whose family legacy had just begun. William T. Catto

⁵² Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 73.

⁵³ Lapsansky, Emma, *Back*, 150.

⁵⁴ Frederick Douglass, "W.T. Catto," *The North Star* (October 20, 1848), available online from African-American Newspapers: the 19th Century.

⁵⁵ Douglass, "W.T. Catto."

found his life above the Mason-Dixon Line intertwined with influential African Americans such as Frederick Douglass, Robert Purvis, and Daniel Payne.

William T. Catto and his family relocated to Philadelphia when the city was becoming a hotspot for the fight for civil and social rights. Nineteenth century African American social contributions cultivated an atmosphere that would undoubtedly support the rise of Octavius Catto as a prominent leader within the African American community. Situated just above the Mason Dixon Line, Philadelphia's geographic location positioned it to be a center for black solidarity, community building, civil rights, and social equality struggles. Philadelphia contained the largest free black population in the North, with 22,000 African American residents in 1860.⁵⁶ African Americans attempted to foster a sense of identity within a majority white population, pushing the racial envelope of white popular opinion regarding blacks. Important figures to come out of Philadelphia were James Forten, Absalom Jones and Frederick Douglass. In addition, important Philadelphians such as Daniel Payne, Robert Purvis, and William T. Catto came from Charleston, South Carolina. It is possible that free blacks and those of mixed race in the South followed a pipeline to the North during the nineteenth century. This suggests that, although there were some opportunities afforded to free blacks in the antebellum South, these opportunities failed in comparison to those in Philadelphia. Though these individuals effectively removed a source of leadership for southern blacks and slaves, this demographic difference explains why free blacks from

⁵⁶ Berry, Stephen R., "William Catto's," 49.

the North were leaders in directing the future of African Americans within the antebellum period.⁵⁷ Compared to Charleston, Reverend Catto found many more opportunities available for free blacks including numerous active social institutions, school networks, literary groups, and churches, which Octavius Catto would find integral to his vision for the African American community in the near future.⁵⁸ Tired of the discrimination faced in church, Catto found opportunities in Philadelphia to preach his own message to entirely new congregations while escaping a majority racist congregation. William desired the power to influence church decisions and develop religious doctrines that guided his congregation through the trials and tribulations of institutionalized racism.

Due to the controversy between Pastor Thomas Smyth and Frederick Douglass in Great Britain, Reverend Catto became involved with the A.M.E. Church of Philadelphia and was ordained as a deacon alongside Daniel Payne. The A.M.E Church provided Catto with an opportunity to return to the denomination, which shaped his early years in Charleston and lecture amongst influential black voices including Frederick Douglass. The *North Star* printed articles addressing the cause of abolition and equal rights, citing "Rev. Wm. T. Catto" among others as Methodist leaders in the African American struggle. Within the first few years in the North, Catto joined the

⁵⁷ Shelby Callaway, "Free Blacks in Antebellum America." in *African Americans in the Nineteenth Century*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010) 17-19.

⁵⁸ Winch, Julie, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 152.

efforts of abolitionists in the fight against slavery, colonization and any church, including his former Charleston church that provided comfort to slaveholders.⁵⁹

Catto left the A.M.E Church in 1854 for undetermined reasons, one could speculate, however, that Catto always identified with the theology and polity of Presbyterianism.⁶⁰ Presbyterianism spoke to the religious and moral values of William T. Catto, which is evident in Catto's sermons in subsequent years. Evidently, William T. Catto's intellectual achievements and aspirations for his son, Octavius, were derived from Presbyterianism. This can be seen in Reverend Catto's sole surviving sermon in May 1857 entitled "A Semi-Centenary Discourse," which was preached to a congregation composed of whites and blacks at the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. His sermon became widely popular and inspirational among the African American community as it encouraged blacks to form communities rather than accepting an inferior place in society. His sermon reads:

Every one of us has work to do, around us as well as within us. We begin in childhood to act our part upon the stage of life: as we grow in age, in size, in strength, so grows our labor; as we develop our physical and mental man, so we must produce qualifications necessary for the employments and engagements of life, every man for his calling.⁶¹

This excerpt emphasizes the need to live up to duties and responsibilities through an incredible work ethic. This incredible work ethic would lend itself to the religious element of the calling of each individual. The Presbyterian Church was less focused on

⁵⁹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 81.

⁶⁰ Berry, Stephen R., "William Catto's," 51.

⁶¹ Catto, William T., 9.

preaching about white discrimination and oppression and more focused on promoting the idea that African Americans could work for respect, intellect, and perseverance. These ideas increasingly identify with antebellum religious ideology which contends that, through education and the establishment of organizations, the African American community will be strengthened from the inside. Reverend Catto utilized the Presbyterian value of the calling to motivate his congregation to make a difference within their community by adopting a proactive lifestyle. This religious ideology supported and influenced Octavius Catto's future attainments tremendously. William T. Catto's previous affiliation with the A.M.E Church preached the idea of demanding individual rights and the essence of discrimination. Unlike the A.M.E. Church, the Presbytery taught African Americans to achieve rights through personal application and education to prove one's calling. Catto believed that Presbyterian sermons "are addressed more to the conviction of the conscience and understanding of the people, than to the prejudices and passions."⁶²

The goals of the Bonneau Literary Society are echoed in Catto's sermon as he encouraged congregants to take action, apply themselves, and persevere to ensure political, economic, social success. Reverend Catto's message struck a chord within the African American community as he attempted to breakdown racial stereotypes of black complacency. By focusing on the development of "our physical and mental man," Catto suggests education as a means of uplifting oneself. His sermon continues

⁶² Catto, William T., 60.

“In the case, then, of raising a colored church, the prevailing opinion seems to be, an organization of colored people where church government could be committed to, and governed by them.”⁶³ Philadelphia’s African American Presbyteries wished to separate from white religious institutions because they wanted their own minister and control over their own local church government. In this way, African Americans in local church power could hold power of ideas about the individual and collective identity. Central to Reverend Catto’s preaching was education as a means of improving one’s life for the betterment of community and its race. These ideas are evident in the future activism and formal education of Catto’s son, Octavius.

William T. Catto’s strong religious voice became increasingly tangled with politically motivated organizations as a result of his relocation to Philadelphia. Though illegal in the slaveholding South, William T. Catto joined an organization in the North entitled the National Negro Convention that held national antislavery meetings “to create a representative forum in which the specific needs of the African American community could be discussed.”⁶⁴ An antislavery convention in Philadelphia occurred on October 3, 1848 and the attendees elected William T. Catto as secretary. Catto was also a member of a committee which addressed the “Colored Citizens of the City and County of Philadelphia,” criticizing African Americans who shared ecclesiastical affiliation with slaveholders.⁶⁵ Philadelphia provided William T. Catto with freedom of

⁶³ Catto, William T., 19.

⁶⁴ Berry, Stephen R., “William Catto’s,” 50.

⁶⁵ Berry, Stephen R., “William Catto’s,” 50.

expression that was not available in the slaveholding South. As a result of these newfound freedoms, Catto's religious beliefs became increasingly political because he became involved in organizations that identified with Presbyterian religious principles. His son, Octavius, who navigated the increasingly influential African American sociopolitical activism of 1860s Philadelphia, would enjoy these freedoms.

Chapter Two: Octavius V. Catto's Liberal Arts Education and Literary Society

Involvement

This chapter highlights the ways in which Octavius Catto's liberal arts education at the Institute for Colored Youth and involvement in the Banneker Institute shaped him as an educator, civic activist, and defender of his country amidst prevalent racial prejudice. By examining the construction and activities of the Institute for Colored Youth and the Banneker Institute, this chapter aims to prove that Octavius Catto became an increasingly educated citizen who held political leadership potential and white middle class ideals of manhood, resulting from the connections he fostered with fellow Banneker members.

Philadelphia's numerous social institutions, school networks, literary groups, and churches offered opportunities for the free black population, including William Catto and his son, Octavius, to become active and engaged citizens for the promotion of African American civil rights. Catto's involvement in various organizations complimented a strong religious following.⁶⁶ The developing social scene and increasing African American population were beneficial conditions for William's fight against negative perceptions attached to African Americans and for Octavius to begin his own. With the insistence of his father, Octavius enrolled in the segregated Vaux Primary School, the segregated Lombard Grammar School, and lastly the newly opened all black Institute for Colored Youth in 1854. Catto's education shaped his

⁶⁶ Winch, Julie, *Philadelphia's*, 152.

development as a talented intellectual and he used this gift to promote an active lifestyle among African Americans. Evidently, the Institute for Colored Youth became known for academic excellence and producing community leaders equipped with the necessary tools and resources for uplifting African Americans. The ICY faculty held their students to high academic standards with a rigorous curriculum, which included advanced mathematics, sciences, English, philosophy and classical languages.⁶⁷

In a time when African American educational opportunities could be described as, at best, substandard, the Institute for Colored Youth was exceptional for many reasons. The official By-Laws and Rules of the Institute are detailed and strict, further emphasizing the high standards of academic and behavioral performance expected by ICY faculty. Discipline, a lengthy subtopic of the official By-Laws and Rules, outlined that any student exemplifying disobedience in the classroom would be subject to expulsion. In addition, the subtopic states that “loud talking in the buildings” and “boisterous, rude, or turbulent deportment” would not be tolerated because ICY students were responsible “to promote their own respectability and the good character of the Institution.”⁶⁸ The Institute for Colored Youth upheld strict guidelines to instill qualities of respect, honor, diligence, and discipline. Along with its By-Laws, the Institute for Colored Youth provided invaluable resources and opportunities for Octavius Catto, including a massive lending library of almost 2,000 books, annual

⁶⁷ "Library Exhibits :: History." *Library Exhibits :: History of the Institute for Colored Youth*. Villanova University History Department, n.d. Web. 09 Jan. 2016.

⁶⁸ *Institute for Colored Youth By-Laws of the Board of Managers, and Rules For the Government of the Schools, and For the Regulation of the Library and Reading Room*. Leon Gardiner Collection, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1865)

lecture series, the Banneker Debating Society, and an alumni network with some of Philadelphia's most important African American leaders.⁶⁹ The ICY molded Octavius Catto into an informed and educated citizen of Philadelphia, whose education would help defy prevailing racial stereotypes in the city.

Catto graduated as the valedictorian of the Institute for Colored Youth's class of 1858 and many considered him a promising future community leader and intellectual destined for a career in social reform. Unsatisfied with his level of education, Catto supplemented his studies after graduation with private tutoring in the Latin and Greek languages, which granted him a teaching position at the ICY in 1859 and President of the institute's alumni council in 1861.⁷⁰ Catto's passion for education echoed through the ICY halls as he expanded the liberal arts curriculum and became deeply entrenched in the efforts to secure a political voice for Philadelphia's African American community. His famous address at the ICY's twelfth annual commencement ceremony urged continued support of the school and advocated for black education by black educators:

It is for the good of the Nation that every element of its population be wisely instructed in the advantages of a Republican Government, that every element of its people, mingled though they be, shall have a true and intelligent conception of the allegiance due to the established powers. Now this cannot be done in any other way than by properly educating the masses in the South; then these States will, indeed, be regenerated and the elements of their population be

⁶⁹ "Library Exhibits :: History."

⁷⁰ Silcox, Harry C., "Nineteenth Century," 57.

made ministering agents for the profit of the whole Nation and the lasting security of the Government.⁷¹

Octavius Catto's speech is undoubtedly a commentary regarding the realization of the American dream. By realizing the American dream, African Americans would force America to live up to its founding promises. In other words, what was great for all Americans was good for America. Catto criticized the hypocrisy within America's founding documents, which states equality for all, by emphasizing that all Americans should be knowledgeable of the government's stated ideals. Catto also recognized the present opportunities for African American in the North and lack thereof in the South. These differences contribute to the pervasive sectionalism illustrated by the two disparate regions. Catto determined that, in order for the nation to move forward as one, the South must improve. For the South to improve, it must abolish slavery and unite with the North in advancing the welfare of all African Americans. Octavius Catto highlighted antebellum secular revolutionary ideology, which argues that human bondage and racism are inconsistent with the ideals proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. It is possible that Catto believed that, by educating the masses, they would have a clearer understanding of the deeply entrenched hypocrisies of the foundational traditions of America.

Speaking in front of a group of budding young black leaders, Catto's statements signified the importance of educating African Americans "in the advantages of a

⁷¹ Octavius V. Catto, "Our Alma Mater. An Address Delivered at Concert Hall on the Occasion of the Twelfth Annual Commencement of the Institute for Colored Youth," May 10th, 1864. Published by Direction of the Alumni Association. Philadelphia: C. Sherman, Son and Co., Printers.

Republican Government” for the benefit of the race, which may be carried out through a liberal arts education. Similar to his father’s preaching of black leadership within the church, Octavius recognized the need to strengthen the African American community from the inside through liberal arts education. This education emphasized the development of critical thinking, reflection, and questioning within a broad institutional curriculum. Catto’s emphasis on education as a means of becoming more politically cognizant reflects his attempt to promote an active, rather than passive, lifestyle. Liberal arts education, according to Catto, would improve one’s life for the betterment of the community and its race, further highlighting Catto’s increasing development of republican values and secular ideology. Octavius Catto recognized that education was not solely for job training, it was about self awareness and teaching African Americans to be responsible and active citizens in order to gain respectability from white society. Jacob C. White Jr., fellow ICY pupil and close friend of Catto, supported Catto in the idea of education as a means of uplifting the African American race.

The families of Jacob C. White and Octavius Catto consisted of educated and eloquent African Americans who contributed energy and passion for civic and social reform and public service. The Catto and White family were intimately connected for many decades as William T. Catto served on the board of managers of the Lebanon Cemetery, which was the White family business.⁷² In addition, Jacob C. White, Sr. was the director of the First African Presbyterian Church Sunday School where William T.

⁷² Lapsansky, Emma, “Discipline,” 89.

Catto served as pastor.⁷³ Considering their parallel political views and passion for education and literacy, the relationship between the Catto and White family aided in the cohesive environment and values of the Banneker Institute.

Born in 1836, Jacob C. White Jr. came from a wealthy elite African American family which included his father, Jacob C. White Sr., his mother, Elizabeth White, and seven siblings.⁷⁴ Two of his siblings, Martin and Joseph, graduated from the Institute for Colored Youth in 1841 and 1843. At the impressionable age of eighteen, White had already published two articles that discussed the need to boycott slave produced goods and the importance of temperance. Following these accomplishments, Jacob C. White Jr. studied at the Institute for Colored Youth and graduated on May 6, 1857.⁷⁵ His father's lucrative business endeavors made the White family a household name within the upper echelons of Philadelphia's black community.

As a result of his family background, Jacob C. White Jr. was afforded the finest education and leadership involvement in a multitude of organizations, of which Octavius Catto was a member of many, which aligned his personal political and social ideologies with Catto's. White was an educator at the ICY and a principal at the Vaux Primary School while he managed leadership positions in a plethora of African American organizations. He was President of the Banneker Institute, Secretary of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Secretary of the Pythian Baseball Club,

⁷³ Lapsansky, Emma, "Discipline," 89.

⁷⁴ "Library Exhibits :: Graduates." *Library Exhibits Jacob C. White Jr.*. Villanova University History Department, n.d. Web. 09 Jan. 2016.

⁷⁵ "Library Exhibits :: Graduates."

member of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, President of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Training School, and President of the Alumni Association of the Institute for Colored Youth.⁷⁶ In addition, Jacob C. White Jr. aided Octavius Catto in the recruitment of blacks for the Union side during the Civil War years. He was undoubtedly an influential presence in the life of Octavius Catto.

Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. joined the Banneker Debating Society during their ICY schooling, which provided discussions on scholarly matters and oratorical training.⁷⁷ Their experiences granted them admission into the Banneker Institute, an exclusive intellectual society for Philadelphia's African American elite established in 1854. Amidst an already flourishing intellectual and literary network of societies, the Banneker Institute promised serious discussions on scholarly subjects, debates on social justice, and public lecture series to benefit the African American population.⁷⁸ The Banneker Institute wished to create an intellectual environment cemented by "a unified black consciousness that would, in turn, provide an informed social and political leadership for African Americans."⁷⁹ Jacob C. White, a charter member, became the charismatic leader of the Banneker Institute who sought to "shed

⁷⁶ "Library Exhibits :: Graduates."

⁷⁷ "Negro Activities," Papers of the Pythian Baseball Club, *Leon Gardiner Collection* (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1856)

⁷⁸ "Library Exhibits :: History."

⁷⁹ Emma Lapsansky, "Discipline to the Mind, Philadelphia's Banneker Institute." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 117 (1/2). Historical Society of Pennsylvania: 87. (1993)

a halo of literary light throughout this city and to reflect great credit on those who constituted this association.”⁸⁰

With literacy, payment, and demonstrated intellectual achievement as a membership requirement, the Banneker Institute heavily recruited students from the Institute for Colored Youth who were well versed in the liberal arts curriculum. These students held “values based on the belief that the first step in effective political action was self-education,” and could afford a sustained expenditure.⁸¹ Undoubtedly, Octavius Catto was one of these recruits and became an influential member of the Banneker Institute in subsequent years. The Banneker Constitution outlined laws and “regulations against drinking and gambling” which ensured that members behaved in a way that reflected the elite and educated free blacks of Philadelphia whose purpose was to demonstrate the refined, gentlemanly ability of blacks.⁸² Similar to the Bonneau Literary Society and Institute for Colored Youth, the Banneker Institute held high standards for its members and regulations were imposed and enforced to ensure no reason for white disapproval in society. The necessity for bureaucracy and discipline were a conscious attempt to incorporate structures similar to the white community in effort to foster African American respectability. As a result, the Banneker Institute was concerned with uplifting blacks through education as well as displaying gentlemanly

⁸⁰ “Banneker Constitution” Papers of the Banneker Institute, *American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1856) .

⁸¹ Emma Lapsansky. “Since They Got Those Separate Churches”: Afro-americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia”. *American Quarterly* 32 (1980)

⁸² “Banneker Constitution”

qualities associated with their white counterparts in order to achieve respectability and honor.

The Banneker Institute forged relationships with similar organizations in Philadelphia including the Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons, Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Moral and Mental Improvement Association, the National Lincoln Monument Association and the predominantly white Pennsylvania Abolition Society in order to create a stronger, unified force for equality.⁸³ From September 1854 to March 1855, the Banneker Institute held a series of twenty lectures and invited intellectuals of all disciplines from similar organizations to speak. Robert Douglass Jr., charter member of the Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons, lectured on "The Utility of Phenography," Reverend James Underdue, executive board member of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, lectured on "The Mission of Woman," and Robert Forten, son of famous abolitionist James Forten, lectured on "Slavery and Human Rights."⁸⁴ Banneker's affiliation with various political and literary organizations suggests that the middle and upper class blacks understood the bigger picture regarding civil and social rights. The cooperation and willingness for African Americans of different societies to come together and share their knowledge is evidence of the common understanding and goal of the advancement of the black race. Octavius Catto found himself amidst the most powerful and brightest African

⁸³ Tony Martin, "The Banneker Literary Institute of Philadelphia: African American Intellectual Activism before the War of the Slaveholders' Rebellion." *The Journal of African American History* 87. Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc.: 313. (2002)

⁸⁴ Martin, Tony, "Banneker Literary," 308.

Americans in Philadelphia, which helped to develop his civil rights activism platform and republican values. The Banneker Institute and the Philadelphia Library of Company of Colored Persons, both of which sponsored public lecture series, worked together to create a library open to the public and co-sponsored a lecture series.⁸⁵ Evidently, Octavius Catto was privy to the inner workings of a wide array of organizations, further strengthening his ties to republican politics, education activism, and secular revolutionary ideology.

Among its literary and political affiliations, the Banneker Institute organized, led, and funded commemorations integral to the African American community, which included a celebration held in 1858 commemorating the August 1st anniversary of British West Indian emancipation. Caribbean emancipation proved, as Haitian independence had, that the Negro was capable of overcoming immense struggle and oppression. The Banneker Institute formed a committee who set up a venue, transportation, and printed handbills and billets. The Institute invited Abolitionist Robert Purvis to be the celebration's principal orator. In the summer of 1846, Douglass and his fellow prominent British abolitionists challenged Smyth to a debate, which he declined. Like William T. Catto, Robert Purvis was born in Charleston, South Carolina and moved to Philadelphia with his family. Purvis helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society and the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia, and would later join

⁸⁵ Martin, Tony, "Banneker Literary," 316.

Octavius Catto at the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League in subsequent years.⁸⁶

Following his speech, the Banneker Institute's celebration committee addressed the attendees:

The celebration of West India Emancipation keeps before the minds of the American people *their* duty to the millions of slaves upon the Southern plantations, and, coming right in the wake of the 4th of July, gives abolitionists a fine opportunity to expose the hollow-heartedness of American liberty and Christianity, and to offset the buncombe speeches made upon our national anniversary.⁸⁷

The West India Emancipation proved that enslavement was not impregnable and the African was capable of success, therefore its celebration was an opportunity to reinforce support for those freed from enslavement. The secular revolutionary ideology employed in this speech reminds the audience that in order for America to move forward as a nation, its people must first accept their responsibility in supporting those who cannot support themselves, "the millions of slaves." By exposing "the hollow-heartedness" of the American nation, the Banneker Institute argued, African Americans would force America to live up to its founding principles. Complementing the secular revolutionary rhetoric was the Institute's concern with the welfare of African Americans recently freed of their chains and the backhanded politics that characterized America's day of independence. The Banneker Institute attempted to instill the message that Philadelphia's blacks had a responsibility to become educated, active members of the

⁸⁶ "Robert Purvis Historical Marker." *Explore PA History*. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Web. Accessed 17 Jan. 2016

⁸⁷ Report of the West India Emancipation Committee (William H. Minton, chair, W.H. Johnson, A.W. Campbell, John Wesley Johnson, Davis D. Turner), *Leon Gardiner Collection*, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 13, October 1858).

community in order to uplift those in inferior positions. This view exemplifies African American intellectual and racial uplift activism.

The Banneker Institute also displayed its political inclinations by utilizing Independence Day, a complicated and possibly dangerous day for African Americans during the mid nineteenth century, to their advantage. Though public celebrations were overwhelmingly attended by whites, Octavius Catto and the Banneker members chose to promote July 4, 1859 as a day to unite Philadelphia's African American community in peaceful protest. Followed by hundreds of free blacks, Catto and the Banneker members marched through Franklin Hall. Jacob C. White delivered a speech intended to rally the Philadelphia's blacks together. He stated, "Ladies and Gentleman, we have rights, and having rights dear to us as the apple of our eye, will maintain them. Have we not heard of all the daring exploits of our patriotic progenitors? has not infancy learned them from maternal lips?"⁸⁸ On behalf of the entire institute, this message made clear that the time had come to enforce the founding ideals of this country, ideals that were never meant for blacks. The institute referred to the simple notion that blacks have rights and those rights need to be fought for and maintained just as the rights had been maintained by their "patriotic progenitors" who came before them. By encouraging a new stage of black activism, Catto, White, and the other Banneker members hoped to foster the goal of complete equality. The Bannekers no longer wished to solely improve the socioeconomic conditions of their fellow African

⁸⁸ The Celebration of the Eighty-Third Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, by the Banneker Institute, July 4, 1859. Philadelphia: WS Young. printer. 1859.

Americans, their eyes and hearts were set on gaining full citizenship with the right to political participation in government, as laid out by the Declaration of Independence. The Franklin Hall demonstration was public, calm, and organized, further displaying the black's capability of refinement, discipline, and fearlessness within a white dominated society. Even if it was for a short time, racial stereotypes were overcome thanks to the leadership of the Banneker Institute.

Frederick Douglass provided an extremely similar message in his speech on July 5, 1852 entitled "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?," which harped on the evils which plagued the sacred American ideals—democracy, freedom, and equal rights. Like the Banneker Institute, Douglass condemned the attitude of American society towards blacks by stating, "The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine."⁸⁹ Douglass argued that asking a black man to celebrate a day dedicated to the white man's freedom from tyranny and oppression was blasphemous and mockery. Further, Douglass utilized quotes from the Constitution and former President Thomas Jefferson to urge his listeners to adopt the work of America's great revolutionaries, who advocated for freedom and democracy on this land. Douglass' speech was delivered five years before the *Dred Scott Decision*, which declared that, according to the Constitution, blacks were not citizens and did not possess any rights. The *Dred*

⁸⁹ Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852"

Scott Decision undermined the abolition movement and the message of Douglass' July 4th oration, the contradiction between slavery and America's founding documents. His message, like that of the Banneker Institute, preached that the inconsistency of American ideology permits freedom to a select people; this inconsistency needs to change.

The period from the late 1850s to the early 1860s was considered treacherous for the African American community as a result of intensifying racial tensions due to increasingly public black activism like that of Frederick Douglass and the Banneker Institute. The Banneker members exercised their privileged education and status by dispersing it throughout all areas of struggle. In a call for a Convention of Literary Societies in 1859, the Banneker Institute stated that, "there can be no more effective manner of elevating our people than by a spread of literature, and more speedy way of demonstrating to those in authority in our government that we are susceptible of the highest degree of mental culture and worthy of rights which have been so long withheld from us."⁹⁰ The Institute supported Octavius Catto's development of views connected with the American republic. The Banneker Institute expanded his education, taught him eloquence, and refined his political views of republicanism. He believed in suffrage and the importance of education in achieving equality as an African American within a white dominated world. The Institute identified with the principles of republicanism, the value of civic virtue, and the importance of political participation in

⁹⁰ The Papers of the Banneker Literary Society, *Leon Gardiner Collection*, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

government as a means of gaining acceptance from the white community. By 1859, Octavius Catto rose to the office of secretary within the Banneker Institute and regularly delivered lectures on topics such as religion, history, and racial injustice to the public.⁹¹ Formal education afforded Bannekers with the opportunity to participate in debates and provide series of lectures that revealed, “an intellectually engaged community passionately interested in learning and in the history and present condition of African peoples in particular.”⁹² The Banneker members and countless others benefited from the public lectures and participation in celebrations and performances.

With the Civil War on the horizon, the Banneker Institute displayed the ideology of republicanism, more specifically civic virtue, by preparing to fight for their rights. By January 1861, seven states had seceded and Abraham Lincoln had won the presidential election but had not yet taken office. J. Wesley Simpson, President of the Institute delivered an annual report in January 1861 entitled “Our Duty in Regard to Our Country,” which encouraged all Banneker members to arm themselves. He stated, “We are all aware what position we occupy at the present time as a people and I think we who represent in a measure the intelligence of our people should in a manner inquire what is our duty in the present crisis of alarm and danger.”⁹³ During this time of crisis and uncertainty, blacks could not predict whether a war would be fought or whether slavery would become an integral force of the fight. The virtuous citizen, as J. Wesley

⁹¹ Martin, Tony, “Banneker Literary,” 310.

⁹² Martin, Tony, “Banneker Literary,” 309.

⁹³ J. Wesley Simpson, President’s Report, January 9, 1861, Leon Gardiner Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Simpson characterizes in his report, is known to be an active, independent and selfless individual who sacrifices private desire for civic interest.

Simpson conceived that the Banneker Institute could not exist without certain freedoms afforded to them and, therefore, it was imperative to take up arms and protect those freedoms against threats. Simpson continued, "We are in the midst of a revolution and it is well that we should be prepared to act. We must not stop [to] consider whether it is literary or not. If we are such we must be prepared to defend ourselves from encroachments and look at things without formality."⁹⁴ Simpson expanded on the idea of a citizen soldier, someone who exemplifies a statesman and soldier who ultimately gains respect and honor within society. Civic virtue stemmed from the broader secular revolutionary ideology of republicanism. Despite the disapproval of an armed literary society, the Bannekers became increasingly active and supportive of the Union cause. It is possible that the Bannekers wished to place themselves in the forefront of the war cause because they saw an opportunity to make the fight about slavery. As encouraged by President J. Wesley Simpson, Banneker members redirected their efforts and perspective to the impending threats on their freedoms and livelihoods.

⁹⁴ J. Wesley Simpson, President's Report, January 9, 1861, Leon Gardiner Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Chapter Three: The Civil War and Union Recruitment

This Chapter explores the activism of Octavius Catto and fellow black leaders in raising all black regiments and volunteer militias to defend the Union during the Civil War years. This chapter highlights Catto's growing influence within Philadelphia's African American community through his military leadership at Camp William Penn, a training site for thousands of colored troops. Catto used secular revolutionary ideology and white middle classes values of manhood as a political strategy to successfully recruit blacks with eventual full citizenship and emancipation as the war's outcome. As a result of his military experience, this chapter demonstrates how Octavius Catto's activism confirmed him as a Republican.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, it was unclear where abolition fit in the puzzle, or if it fit at all. Slavery became increasingly complicated as fugitive slaves sought shelter among Union troops and military commanders were forced to make difficult decisions regarding their fate. As the war raged on, African Americans became eager to offer their military service to the Union side. The Lincoln administration, however, rejected the colored organized militias pursuant to the Militia Act of 1792, which barred blacks from bearing arms in the U.S. army. By mid-1862 casualties became insurmountable and the Lincoln administration reconsidered the enlistment of colored soldiers as a potential supply for emergency troops. As an extension of the first and second Confiscation Acts, the Lincoln Administration presented the first draft of the Emancipation proclamation to the Cabinet on September 22, 1862, which

declared that, by January 1, 1863, all slaves would be free. Slaves heard this and thought freedom; slaveholders heard this and felt fear of rebellion. As promised, the Lincoln Administration presented the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which called for black enrollment in the U.S. Army and Navy. The Union government took an official and unequivocal stance for the cause of emancipation. The proclamation was a war message, but also a political document that permanently changed the course of the Civil War.

As a result of lengthy public debates, blacks were convinced that service could really achieve the fundamentally transformed nation that had long treated them as non-citizens. They fought because, by 1863, blacks viewed the war as an opportunity to expunge slavery from the nation and gain full citizenship. Although racism was present in the Union army, approximately 200,000 black men had served as soldiers in the United States Colored Troops.⁹⁵ Influential black leaders pursued recruitment and encouraged black men to enlist to ensure eventual full citizenship. Unfortunately, 40,000 of these men would never experience full citizenship as they died during the war—30,000 died due to infection or disease. Those who did not enlist contributed to the war effort by providing supplies or skilled work.

Philadelphia was home to the largest free black community in the North and was a center for abolitionism, which aided in a surge of almost unmatched patriotism that infected black Philadelphians. Black men ran to recruitment stations to enlist with the

⁹⁵ "Black Civil War Soldiers."

desire to end slavery and gain full citizenship. Philadelphia had raised black regiments and equipped its volunteers with necessary uniforms and supplies as a result of fundraising. Following the June 1863 invasion of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia into Pennsylvania, Philadelphia's African American men felt a duty to respond.⁹⁶ Many slaves served the Union army and almost 12,000 of those men were trained at Camp William Penn, a government funded training site for the United States Colored Troops.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, many black enlisted soldiers found themselves assigned to noncombatant tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and washing uniforms at Camp William Penn as a result of persistent racism within white officers. Despite this reality, Philadelphia's blacks were eager to contribute to the Union and help emancipate their Southern brethren.

Frederick Douglass toured the country with the intention of encouraging blacks to enlist and on March 17, 1863 he arrived in Philadelphia. Douglass delivered a lecture entitled, "Men of Color, To Arms" which stated, "A war undertaken and brazenly carried on for the perpetual enslavement of colored men, calls logically and loudly for colored men to help suppress it."⁹⁸ In this instance, Douglass recruited African Americans to join the Union cause by demonstrating that, if black men fought to end slavery, they would prove their capability and, therefore, gain respectability and honor. Douglass ends his speech with echoes of secular revolutionary ideology. He stated, "In

⁹⁶ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War." *Falvey Memorial Library*. Villanova University History Department, June 2014. Web.

⁹⁷ Diemer, Andrew, 37.

⁹⁸ "Men of Color, To Arms! Now or Never!" (accessed online, Philadelphia, 1863), available from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/lprbcsmscsm0556>; Internet.

your hands that musket means liberty; and should your constitutional right at the close of this war be denied, which, in the nature of things, it cannot be, your brethren are sage while you have a Constitution which proclaims your right to bear arms.”⁹⁹

Douglass equates the musket with the founding principles of liberty and equality. Therefore blacks need to enlist in the Union army to live up to the state of ideals aforementioned in the Constitution.

Complementing the work of Frederick Douglass were Octavius Catto, Principal Ebenezer Bassett, and Jacob C. White, Jr, the enthusiastic blacks of Philadelphia. These men worked together to utilize the newfound unity of Philadelphia’s young black elite in effort to rally the city for the Union Cause. Catto, White and Bassett formed a supervisory committee to promote African American enlistment and troop organization. The committee produced ample advertisements in city newspapers and recruitment broadside urging black men to join the Union cause. Considering the activities of Banneker members Catto and White, it is no surprise that these men were integral to the recruiting and organizing efforts of colored troops. Philadelphia awoke to recruitment broadsides plastered on its walls and fences with the title, “*Men of Color, To Arms! Now or Never!*”, which demanded the services of Philadelphia’s black men. Listed at the bottom were fifty-four signatures of prominent African Americans in the city, including Frederick Douglass, the Cattos, the Whites, James Forten, and Andrew

⁹⁹ “Men of Color, To Arms! Now or Never!”

Burr.¹⁰⁰ The broadsides were an effective recruiting tool because they appealed to the sense of duty and honor to the United States, and also an immeasurable opportunity to demonstrate moral values consistent with white society. In addition, advertisements in city newspapers were extremely popular as the literacy rate in the African American population continued to soar as a result of literary societies and educational opportunities. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran an advertisement on June 30, 1863 which read, "For our own sake, and for the sake of our common country, we are called upon now to come forward, let us seize this great opportunity of vindicating our manhood and patriotism through all time (See Appendix, Image D)."¹⁰¹ The idea of establishing manhood correlated with the fight against negative contemporary racist views, which Catto and fellow African American leaders aimed to destroy. Never before had black social activism been so important to the cause of uplifting the race. Joining the Union cause, according to Philadelphia's black leaders, was a conscious step towards racial equality and achieving full constitutional rights.

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, Philadelphia's supervisory committee commissioned a recruitment broadside from famous lithographer Peter S. Duval in the Spring of 1863, which energized Philadelphia's blacks and stressed the significance of enlistment. The broadside depicts an African American regiment, a white officer, and the message, "Come And Join Us Brothers."¹⁰² During this time it was common to for

¹⁰⁰ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

¹⁰¹ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

¹⁰² Donald Scott, *Camp William Penn*. (Charleston, S.C: Arcadia Pub, 2008) 26.

blacks to be depicted in a cartoon-like fashion, or in otherwise insulting ways. This recruitment broadside, however, portrays black soldiers as masculine and dignified. Duval placed careful attention to the facial expression of each soldier and the full, new uniforms and rifles which debunks reports that black men were not being fully outfitted for military service. The recruitment broadside compliments the speech of Frederick Douglass at the Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments at National Hall on July 6, 1863. He preached, "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on the earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States."¹⁰³ The collective work ethic of Douglass and the supervisory committee made clear the message that, enlisting and displaying manhood on the battlefield would confirm citizenship. The same lithograph was used to create another recruitment poster with the title, "United States Soldiers at Camp 'William Penn' Philadelphia, PA," and message, "Rally Round the Flag, Boys! Rally Once Again, Shouting the Battle Cry of Freedom."¹⁰⁴ The title is conflicting because it relays the message that the black men pictured are soldiers of the United States, but at this time they were not considered citizens of the United States. In any case, these recruitment broadsides were persuasive in raising colored troops for the Union army as the lithograph portrayed moral values desired by

¹⁰³ Frederick Douglass, "Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments." The Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments." Philadelphia. 1 Feb. 2016. *Frederick Douglass: Speeches and Writings*. Web

¹⁰⁴ Scott, Donald, *Camp*, 26.

Philadelphia's black men with a complimenting, clear message to join the fight for freedom, citizenship, and a fundamentally new nation.

The Institute for Colored Youth faculty and students encouraged enlistment and ultimately answered their own call. Catto and the ICY understood that, through military service, African Americans could showcase their bravery, manhood, and equal capabilities as their fellow white soldiers. This understanding was founded on the theoretical framework of civic virtue in that masculinity and self-sacrifice were necessary to the recruitment process. Governor Andrew G. Curtin issued a proclamation in June 1863 urging volunteer enlistment for defense in the capital of Harrisburg. An enlistment headquarters was opened at the Institute for Colored Youth to recruit blacks for purposes of forming an all black militia and, interestingly enough, the students were central to this recruiting effort. Catto was one of the first African Americans to volunteer and was promptly selected to lead the company. Catto and White became prime organizers of Philadelphia's first all black volunteer regiment to defend the capital against the Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁰⁵ Their colored company was composed of ninety volunteers, many of whom were students and friends from the ICY. On the morning of June 17, 1863, Catto's company was mustered into service at Independence Square and joined other volunteer troops who were train bound for Camp Curtin near Harrisburg. Despite Governor Curtin's proclamation, Major General Darius Couch cited the Militia Act of 1792 which

¹⁰⁵ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom* 291.

prohibited short term enlistment. Therefore, Catto's emergency militia was forced to return to Philadelphia.¹⁰⁶ Their social activism, however, did not falter. The day following Catto's return, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton permitted the committee who created the "Men of Color" broadsides to "oversee the immediate recruitment of Negro troops and to form three regiments in the Philadelphia area."¹⁰⁷ This official permission was proposed after Stanton chastised Major General Couch's decision in rejecting Catto's company at Camp Curtin. On June 26, 1863, Camp William Penn opened on the outskirts of Philadelphia and became the first and largest training facility for colored troops. Many of the same men in Catto's company formed Company A of the Third Regiment of U.S. Colored Infantry, which was the first black regiment in Philadelphia.¹⁰⁸ Catto, White and the ICY worked diligently to recruit black men, as ordered by Stanton, to be trained at Camp William Penn and join the Union fight.

Camp William Penn and the United States Colored Troops (USCT) benefited directly from Octavius Catto's militant leadership as encouraged enlistment as the path to manhood and citizenship. Approved by Commander General Louis Wagner, Catto served as a major and inspector for the fifth brigade of the USCT. General Louis Wagner, commander of Camp William Penn, recognized Catto's ability and found him to be a "conscientious and faithful officer...[who] labored effectively in the organization of this command...[an] honored and respected soldier of the Commonwealth."¹⁰⁹ This

¹⁰⁶ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

¹⁰⁷ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

¹⁰⁸ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 293.

¹⁰⁹ *The Press* (Philadelphia), 14 October 1871.

quote reveals the importance of Catto within the Camp William Penn's leadership.

Wagner describes Catto without a label designated to his ethnicity while also recognizing the characteristics Catto has been longing to achieve: honor and respectability. Wagner's compliment was significant because it originated from a white man of power. Along with his increasing military status, Catto also served with Pennsylvania National Guard, though it is believed he never saw active combat. On April 21, 1865 Catto presented the regimental flag, adorned with the message "Let Soldiers in War be Citizens in Peace," to Lieutenant Colonel Trippe, commander of the 24th United States Colored Troops at Independence Hall. The following day, the *Christian Recorder* reported on Catto's presentation speech. The newspaper proclaimed, "The speaker then paid a tribute to the two hundred thousand blacks, who, in spite of obloquy and the old bane of prejudice, have been nobly fighting our battles, trusting to a redeemed country for the full recognition of their manhood in the future."¹¹⁰ The regimental flag's message was consistent with Catto's because both recognize fighting for the Union cause as a means of achieving citizenship and manhood. By living up to the duties and responsibilities of their country, black soldiers demonstrated, respect, perseverance, and manhood while demanding citizenship. Catto took advantage of his privileged social and military position at Camp William Penn and in Philadelphia to advance the republican ideal of civic virtue and race politics of citizenship and full equality.

¹¹⁰ Presentation of Colors to the 24th Regt., U. S. C. T., *Christian Recorder*, April 22, 1865.

Throughout the Civil War years, Octavius Catto identified with the principles of republicanism, which guided his social and civic work resulting in influential contributions to military enlistment, education, and race relations. Evidently, Catto's military experience is attributed to his ardent commitment to the principles of republicanism, which is characterized by the willingness to set aside private concerns to participate in public debate and decision-making. Douglass, Catto, White and Principal Bassett led the Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments at National Hall, which was attended by approximately 5,000 people.¹¹¹ The meeting aimed to promote enlistment and the ideals laid out by the Institute faculty, specifically that black men could seize the right of citizenship by demonstrating manhood amongst their white counterparts while serving their duty to the Union government. Principal Bassett read an excerpt from the broadside entitled, "Men of Color, To Arms! Now or Never!," which challenged black men to seize the opportunity to serve and rise above their present inferior position in society (See Appendix, Image A). He stated, "We must now awake, arise, or be forever fallen. If we value liberty; if we wish to be free in this land; if we love our country; if we love our families, our children, our homes--we must strike now while the country calls; we must rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arms that we are worthy to be free men."¹¹² This excerpt revealed the dire need for black men to seize equality by force. Blacks saw the impending opportunity as a way to elevate the status of free blacks while also relieving

¹¹¹ "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

¹¹² "Students in Arms: The Institute for Colored Youth and the Civil War."

fellow brethren from servitude in the South. Just as they actively created social and educational institutions and opportunities within their community, Philadelphia's African Americans were called upon to once again act for their freedom.

Blacks saw the opportunity to enlist in the Union army as an opportunity to become full members of society. Black activism reached a new stage in Philadelphia as black enlistment meant fighting to defend freedom for citizenship. The broadside continues, "This is our golden opportunity. Let us accept it, and forever wipe out the dark reproaches unsparingly hurled against us by our enemies."¹¹³ Octavius Catto sought to utilize black military service as a means of changing the nation by forcing America to live up to its founding principles. Douglass, Catto, White, and Bassett believed that black men should not enlist to preserve the Union, but should enlist to fight to construct a new nation that would finally fulfill black aspirations of citizenship and full equality. This unifying principle was supported by newspapers such as the *Weekly Anglo-African*, which wrote that black enlistment should be on the "ground of the highest patriotism, not to save the government as it was, but to uphold it as it ought to be."¹¹⁴ According to Octavius Catto and fellow black leaders, the government needed to uphold its foundational principles as outlined in the Declaration of Independence.

Frederick Douglass, the keynote speaker, concluded the meeting with powerful final words tied to Federalism and the *Dred Scott Decision*. He stated, "Citizenship in

¹¹³ "Frederick Douglass Project Writings: Men of Color, To Arms." *River Campus Libraries*. University of Rochester Frederick Douglass Project, February 2001. Web.

¹¹⁴ "The Reserve Guard," *Weekly Anglo-African*, August 24, 1861.

the United States will, in the end, secure your citizenship in the State. Young men of Philadelphia, you are without excuse. The hour has arrived and your place is in the Union army."¹¹⁵ It is conceivable that Douglass made a reference to the 1857 *Dred Scott Decision*, which ultimately strengthened states' rights, denied that African Americans could be citizens, and confirmed that Congress lacked power to abolish slavery in federal territories.¹¹⁶ Douglass attempted to reverse the decision by stating that, through enlistment, blacks would gain eventual full citizenship from the United States and therefore citizenship in the State is inherent. The role of the Federal government and the nature of the Union were central issues during the Civil War, especially with regards to accelerating tensions of slavery.¹¹⁷ Therefore, Douglass tested the principles of federalism by commenting on the potential role of the State and Nation in granting citizenship. His speech revealed the importance and urgency of the black Union soldier in securing citizenship for the African American race. Douglass, Catto, White, and Principal Basset utilized the image of the citizen soldier as a means of propelling blacks into service. According to these leaders, respectability, honor, manhood, and ultimately citizenship would result from enlisting and claiming their rights as stated in the foundational principles of the United States. Through military service, African Americans may gain security and citizenship.

¹¹⁵ Douglass, Frederick. "Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments."

¹¹⁶ Bonnie L. Lukes, *The Dred Scott Decision* (San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, 1997) 5.

¹¹⁷ Eugene Boyd, *American Federalism, 1776 to 1995: Significant Events*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 1995. Print.

The recruitment broadsides, along with the activism of Douglass, Catto, White, and Bassett represented an idealistic view of serving in the Union army. Yet, these portrayals did not always compare to harsh realities that many African American soldiers found in training camps and the battlefield. Discriminatory practices and racial prejudice were felt on the Union side in a variety of ways. Assignment duties were a prejudiced issue because blacks were often assigned to clean or participate in otherwise non-military types of work. As more white soldiers died or became injured, blacks were reassigned to serve in combat. In the case of capture, confederate troops threatened to enslave black Union troops and, in many cases, treated them harshly. Although the aforementioned circumstances are conditional, the recruitment broadsides and supervisory committee mention none of these possibilities. In the preliminary months of black enlistment, black soldiers were paid \$10 per month and were deducted \$3 for uniform costs while their white counterparts were paid \$13 per month and were not subject to uniform costs.¹¹⁸ By June 1864, Congress passed a law, which ensured equal pay for black soldiers and made the action retroactive.¹¹⁹ Equal pay for blacks in the military was just the start of a long journey towards other fundamental rights including suffrage and equal access to public transportation.

¹¹⁸ Freeman, Elsie, Wynell Burroughs Schamel, and Jean West. "The Fight for Equal Rights: A Recruiting Poster for Black Soldiers in the Civil War." *Social Education* 56, 2 (February 1992): 118-120. [Revised and updated in 1999 by Budge Weidman.]

¹¹⁹ Freeman, Elsie, Wynell Burroughs Schamel, and Jean West. "The Fight for Equal Rights: A Recruiting Poster for Black Soldiers in the Civil War."

Chapter Four: Postwar Activism and The Pennsylvania

State Equal Rights League

Chapter Four outlines Octavius Catto's political activism with respect to important political causes that affected the African American rights. Through Catto's membership in the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Catto rallied for suffrage, the desegregation of Philadelphia's streetcars, and equal justice initiatives such as formal education for African American students from African American teachers. This chapter reveals that, through the use of secular revolutionary ideology and political leadership and professional connections, Octavius Catto was influential in the success of political movements aimed to benefit the African American population politically and socially.

Octavius Catto was arguably the most influential leader in the fight for African American political advancement during the 1860s. Catto created connections with the National Republican Party and attended the October 1864 National Convention of Colored men in Syracuse, New York, which was led by Frederick Douglass.¹²⁰ The following month, Catto helped found the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, which fought for suffrage, streetcar desegregation, and education taught by African Americans for African American students.¹²¹ Catto was elected by fellow members, many of whom were involved in the ICY, as corresponding secretary with Jacob C.

¹²⁰ Diemer, Andrew, "Reconstructing," 36.

¹²¹ Diemer, Andrew, "Reconstructing," 36.

White as recording secretary.¹²² Catto led the promotion of auxiliary leagues in other Pennsylvanian cities and, by February 1865, sixteen branches were founded and active in the larger cities. His integral role in creating a political foundation for Pennsylvania's black leaders attests to his devotion to the goal of black civic rights.

Following the Civil War, Pennsylvania provided separate schools for black students, which caused an intense debate among African Americans regarding desegregation. Education was extremely important in improving the economic and social life of its students and the black community wished to provide the best opportunities possible for black children. Some African Americans believed that black schools were inferior in quality to white schools. Others believed that they were unfairly taxed to support white schools, which their children had no access. Another group of African Americans felt that racially mixed schools would contain discriminatory hiring practices, effectively leaving black students with white racist teachers. The debate even stretched to who should teach black students in segregated schools. The first state-wide convention in Harrisburg in February 1865 hotly debated its stand on education. James J. Wright of Wilkes-Barre argued that colored schools should be run by colored teachers because “colored children make greater advancement under the charge of colored teachers than they do under white teachers.”¹²³ John Quincy Allen, the first black teacher in Philadelphia’s public school system and at the time a ICY teacher, opposed Wright’s view and argued that, since the convention was established

¹²² Silcox, Harry C. “Nineteenth,” 62.

¹²³ *Proceeding of the State Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania held in the city of Harrisburg, February 8th, 9th, 10th, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), 19.

to protest proscription and prejudice, there shall be no discrimination based on color in the appointment of teachers for colored schools.¹²⁴ Reverend William J. Alston of Philadelphia's St. Thomas Presbyterian Church disagreed with Allen and advocated for the passage of Wright's amendment. These opposing views demonstrate the varying stances on education among black leaders during the Reconstruction era.

Catto's leadership skills among Pennsylvania's prominent voices were illuminated as he took on the role as mediator. After four hours of deliberation, Octavius Catto addressed the convention to amend the proposed resolution in hopes of ending the educational controversy. Catto's amendment stated, "In the appointment of teachers for these schools, colored persons, their literary qualifications being sufficient, should receive the preference, not by reason of their complexion, but because they are better qualified by conventional circumstances outside of the school-house."¹²⁵ The amendment passed unanimously. Considering his extensive primary and ICY education taught by African Americans, Catto favored the black teacher to black student philosophy because black teachers had a genuine concern for the welfare of the race. Catto, however, was concerned with the "phraseology" and the public's perception of such a law based on preference based on color. It is possible that the reasoning behind Catto's amendment may be connected to his father's Presbyterian licensure. Just as William T. Catto was afforded the rare opportunity to

¹²⁴ *Proceeding of the State Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania held in the city of Harrisburg, February 8th, 9th, 10th, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), 19.

¹²⁵ *Proceeding of the State Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania held in the city of Harrisburg, February 8th, 9th, 10th, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), 19.

preach and lead a church congregation, white teachers should be afforded to lead a school-house for black students. Octavius Catto was a prime example of the success achieved through black teachers and black students. This also meant a loss of control over black student by whites, segregated education with black teachers.¹²⁶ In any case, Catto reconciled opposition between black leaders regarding the educational platform while maintaining support from both sides.

Octavius Catto's stance on black education was extremely similar to that of W.E.B. Du Bois' in the 1930s, which demonstrates Catto's vision for the future of the African American race was ahead of its time. W.E.B. Du Bois, founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and twentieth century civil rights pioneer, asserted that black children would receive a better education from black teachers.¹²⁷ Considering the Federal Government's intensive efforts in nursing the economy post-Depression, Du Bois maintained that blacks should temporarily accept segregation and find solutions within the black community to provide liberal arts education to black children by black teachers.¹²⁸ His focus on the arts and sciences is identical to the liberal arts education, which Octavius Catto was provided as a student and taught as a teacher at the Institute for Colored Youth. Unlike Du Bois, Catto did not accept segregation, instead, he took on another fight: public transportation.

¹²⁶ Silcox, Harry C., "Nineteenth," 64-65.

¹²⁷ Wormser, Richard. "W.E.B. Du Bois." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2016.

¹²⁸ Wormser, Richard, "W.E.B. Du Bois."

The emergence of Philadelphia as an increasingly modern industrial city was complemented by a reorganization of race relations regarding public space, specifically streetcar ridership. Philadelphia's streetcar system represented the city's progression into an industrialized identity. Whites defined the streetcar system as a symbol of racial superiority and claimed this new industrial development as white space in order to maintain authority and articulate racial boundaries.¹²⁹ African Americans fought streetcar segregation for the freedom, equality, and mobility by launching a political attack with the end goal of integration. The integration of streetcars was especially important during the Civil War.

Octavius Catto led the fight to desegregate streetcars by using Camp William Penn as a political strategy to demonstrate logistical difficulties of segregated streetcars. Although located just thirteen miles outside of Philadelphia, it took three hours for African Americans to walk to Camp William Penn, many of whom carried food, clothing, and supplies donations to support the 11 regiments training from 1863 to 1865. For friends and family of black soldiers, the six hour round trip was an extremely arduous task as they hoped to visit their wounded soldier at one of the nine army hospitals located on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Nineteen streetcar lines traversed Philadelphia with eleven prohibiting blacks altogether and the remaining eight only allowing blacks to ride on the platform behind the horses, regardless of

¹²⁹ Zylstra, Geoff D. 2011. "Whiteness, Freedom, and Technology: The Racial Struggle Over Philadelphia's Streetcars, 1859-1867." *Technology and Culture* 52 (4): 678-702.

weather or the number of empty seats inside the car.¹³⁰ As the war progressed and more black soldiers came home wounded, black Philadelphians became increasingly intolerant to the idea that their family could die on the battlefield for the Union but could not ride equally in Philadelphia's streetcars. The purpose of fighting, to display manhood and gain eventual full citizenship, became illogical when soldiers could not receive the treatment and resources to heal them following battle. Octavius Catto's political action became increasingly militant as he protested these inconsistencies.

While Catto's influence in the League made him an impending threat to whites, he utilized the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League to push for the desegregation of Philadelphia's streetcars in 1866. Octavius Catto and the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League saw streetcar segregation as a civil rights issue and attacked the inequality with political action. Catto led the Equal Rights League Car Committee, composed of League members William D. Forten and John C. Bowers, to lobby support from legislators in Harrisburg to rule against streetcar segregation in Pennsylvania; he gained support from national representatives Thaddeus Stevens, William D. Kelley, and state representative Morrow B. Lowry. Lowry was influential in the state legislature by soliciting sympathy with stories of the barring of black veterans who were forced to endure long walks during stormy nights with only one leg, the other leg given to his country on the bloody battlefield. While lobbying legislators, the League raised money to support Congressman William Kelley's fight for universal suffrage on

¹³⁰ Zylstra, Geoff D., 682.

the floor of the United States House of Representatives.¹³¹ In his 1866 pamphlet entitled “Why Colored People in Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Streetcars,” William D. Kelley asserted that streetcar segregation was an attempt by whites to perpetuate the institution of slavery. He declared:

The chain of the slave was broke but his shackle was not taken off; and any degree of civil disability under which an emancipated slave is left, is just so much slavery left. It not only restrains his movements both of progress and self defense, but it keeps alive the spirit of oppression in the ‘master race’ as air keeps alive flame.¹³²

Kelley contends that streetcar segregation was not just about framing an exclusionary space but was a matter of negotiation over the conditions of black freedom within an emerging industrialized context. The streetcar system established a boundary between the progressive and the backward. Further, Kelley believed that blacks were barred from using industrial advancements, such as the streetcar system, because of the white perception that labeled African Americans as backward and barbaric. In this way, Kelley, Catto, and Bowers planned to challenge this pre-existing perception and white hierarchy through political activism.

The Ladies Union Association played a role in the streetcar desegregation movement by enforcing the newly passed law through streetcar ridership. The Ladies Union Association was primarily organized to aid black troops and army hospitals with food and medical supplies. Caroline LeCount, an 1863 ICY graduate, principal and

¹³¹ Diemer, Andrew, “Reconstructing,” 38.

¹³² Kelley, William Darrah, “Why Colored People in Philadelphia are Excluded from the ,ars,” *The Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1866).

fiancé of Octavius Catto, joined the Ladies Union Association in enforcing the law by allowing passengers and conductors to decide her fate.¹³³ In one case, ten black women from the association were “forcibly ejected from cars as they traveled to and from volunteer work at Philadelphia’s war hospitals or relief societies.”¹³⁴ The black community saw streetcar segregation as more than another opportunity to exclude blacks. Philadelphia’s black population understood the hypocrisy related to black enlistment and streetcar segregation. Enlisted men risked their lives protecting whites who rode Philadelphia’s streetcars and then those enlisted men were not afforded medical and food supplies because streetcar segregation prohibited those aiding in the war effort. With this in mind, Caroline LeCount and other members rode segregated streetcars to challenge company car policies and create a public dialogue about the legitimacy of racial discrimination. With knowledge that rejection and physical altercations may ensue, black women took matters to the city’s courts to sue the conductors and streetcar companies for injury compensation. Many judges sympathized, and sometimes even admired, the association’s efforts in aiding wounded soldiers and awarded them damages. This collective consciousness also gained sympathy from white streetcar passengers who were appalled by the violence endured by innocent black women. Octavius Catto addressed the actions of the Ladies Union Association with a gendered interpretation.

¹³³ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 325.

¹³⁴ "Street Car Desegregation." *Falvey Memorial Library*. Villanova University History Department, June 2014. Web.

Octavius Catto spoke at a meeting held at the Union League Club of Philadelphia on June 21, 1866 in Samson Street Hall to denounce the forcible ejection of numerous black women from Philadelphia's segregated streetcars. Catto preached to his racially mixed audience of the hypocrisies plaguing African Americans in a time of volunteer black enlistment:

We remind our white fellow-citizens of the glaring inconsistency and palpable injustice of forcing delicate women and innocent children, by the ruthless hands of ungentlemanly and unprincipled conductors and drivers, to places on the front platform, subjecting to storm and rain, cold and heat, relatives of twelve thousand colored soldiers, whose services these very citizens gladly accepted when the nation was in her hour of trouble, and they seriously entreated, under the chances of IMPARTIAL DRAFTS, to fill the depleted ranks of the Union army.¹³⁵

Catto employed the use victimization and strongly gendered language in order to achieve a response from his youthful audience. With no law to protect black passengers, Catto argues, women and innocent children were left to defend themselves when riding streetcars to the aid of their wounded husbands, sons, and fathers. It is possible that Catto suggested that, once again, men could not be protectors of the family, just as they could not be protectors under slavery. Catto also noted that these husbands, sons, and fathers were the men who volunteered to reinvigorate the Union army in time of need. Catto justified equal access to streetcars as part of an effort to meet the needs of wartime, particularly black wounded soldiers, and those aiding in the war effort, black women.

¹³⁵ Brown, J. W. (1866). Home Affairs: The Cars and Our People, *Christian Recorder*, June 30, 1866.

The streetcar movement became a strong force within Philadelphia's public space by the end of 1866. At the forefront of Philadelphia's political activism, Octavius Catto and the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League lobbied Republican lawmakers. On March 22, 1867, Governor of Pennsylvania John Geary signed a law prohibiting segregation on streetcars and railroads. Philadelphia's black community was successful and, although minor in the grand scheme of full equality, progress had been made. Just three days later, Caroline LeCount was refused streetcar service by the conductor, Edwin F. Thompson, and promptly filed a complaint in court.¹³⁶ The magistrate stated, "I know nothing of a new law, and I do not trust this paper."¹³⁷ LeCount took her fight to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth where she obtained a copy of the legislation and presented it to the magistrate, who ultimately had Thompson arrested and fined the company one hundred dollars.¹³⁸ This incident reveals that, although a law was passed to integrate Philadelphia's streetcars, blacks still had a huge challenge ahead of them as it was extremely difficult to change the actions and opinions of white individuals. In any case, a victory meeting at Liberty Hall was held to celebrate the success of the streetcar movement and applaud its leaders, Catto, Forten, and Bowser, and cultivate the relationship between state legislators and Philadelphia's black community. Some attendees believed that legislators felt the need to pass a bill to ensure future black votes while others thought that the gripping stories

¹³⁶ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 352.

¹³⁷ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 352.

¹³⁸ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 352

of women and innocent child being attacked and thrown from streetcars in violent storms was enough to convince legislators to reconsider their stance on streetcar segregation.¹³⁹ The desegregation of Philadelphia's streetcars signified the power that blacks obtained in lobbying politicians to pass a law without even having the right to vote. While this success was a sign of African American power and advancement, a Supreme Court decision would once again prove that African Americans had a long road ahead in terms of equal rights.

Three decades later, Philadelphia's black community found themselves at the same disadvantage as the rest of the nation's blacks when the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision (1896) upheld the constitutionality of state laws to mandate segregation of public transportation.¹⁴⁰ The Supreme Court's decision revealed that the "separate but equal" doctrine was unambiguously a part of the law of the Constitution. Homer Plessy, a man of mixed race who demonstrated civil disobedience by riding in a white rail car, defied this "separate but equal" doctrine, which applied to the Separate Car Act of Louisiana.¹⁴¹ Although Plessy's lawyers argued that train segregation denied Homer his rights under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, the Court rejected the view that Louisiana's law implied black inferiority. Instead, the Court stated that the public policy merely enforced the separation of races and that blacks were guilty of constructing a badge of inferiority.¹⁴² Despite the success of Philadelphia's blacks in

¹³⁹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 354.

¹⁴⁰ Wormser, Richard. "Plessy V. Ferguson (1896)." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2016.

¹⁴¹ Wormser, Richard. "Plessy V. Ferguson (1896)."

¹⁴² Wormser, Richard. "Plessy V. Ferguson (1896)."

desegregating streetcars, transportation segregation was still very much a prominent, national issue in future decades. For this reason, Octavius Catto and the League's relentless efforts in lobbying legislation can be considered impressive and radical for nineteenth century politics and race relations because it mandated that private streetcar companies integrate public transportation. Beyond the fight for streetcar desegregation, Octavius Catto made a conscious effort to connect with other associations for support and solidarity.

Octavius Catto, among other black activists in Pennsylvania, constructed a broad network of organizations focused on the suffrage issue during the mid to late 1860s. The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League cooperated with the Impartial Suffrage League, a predominantly white organization, and the Impartial Suffrage League, a predominantly white pro-suffrage group. The Pennsylvania league also had ties with Statistical Association of the Colored People of Pennsylvania, which financed lectures and held public meetings aimed at organizing black leaders for the purpose of lobbying legislature.¹⁴³ Octavius Catto widened his reach by joining the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Society, a biracial organization focused on black male and woman's suffrage.¹⁴⁴ With the aid of Frederick Douglass and Jacob C. White Jr., Catto utilized the principles of republicanism to express the purpose of helping blacks gain the right to vote. Unfortunately, these voluntary societies experienced a persistent shortage of funds as a result of systematic job discrimination and widespread poverty among

¹⁴³ Hugh Davis. "The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Black Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864-1877," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* CXXI, no. 4, 614.

¹⁴⁴ Davis, Hugh, "The Pennsylvania," 616.

league members. In addition to financial difficulties, these organizations were divided along ideological lines, such as the issue of women's suffrage.

An intense debate among black activists ensued regarding whether women's suffrage should be connected to the fight for black male suffrage. Octavius Catto, being a visionary, vigorously advocated for universal suffrage alongside members of the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Society. William Forten, son of famous abolitionist James Forten, opposed woman's suffrage citing that it would weaken the drive for black male political rights. Unsurprisingly, the white political establishment showed little support for the issue of suffrage. With the passing of the Fourteenth Amendment, however, African Americans felt their rights as citizens had been violated because they lacked the right to vote.

In April 1865 Frederick Douglass spoke before the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and preached the principles of republicanism that fellow African American civil rights activists, such as Octavius Catto, knew intimately. Douglass orated, "If the Negro knows enough to pay taxes to support government, he knows enough to vote; taxation and representation should go together. If he knows enough to shoulder a musket and fight for the flag for the government, he knows enough to vote ...What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply justice."¹⁴⁵ Frederick Douglass reminded his audience of the black soldiers' sacrifices to the Union during the Civil War and the financial sacrifices made to the government for social

¹⁴⁵ Douglass, Frederick. "What the Black Man Wants." Boston. April 1865. *Frederick Douglass: Speeches and Writings*. Web

projects, which, in many cases, could not be enjoyed by African Americans. Frederick Douglass preached the same message as Octavius Catto in that hypocrisies and inconsistencies existed within America's political framework. Douglass and Catto were extremely active in highlighting the fact that African Americans took upon a life threatening responsibility to serve their country, yet they did not have the right to vote.

Frederick Douglass' message was also addressed by the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, of which Catto was a leader, to the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1865 to highlight the present hypocrisies of black male disenfranchisement. The league asserted that their disenfranchisement infringed upon the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of a republican form of government. Further, the league stated that their disenfranchisement presented Pennsylvania's state government "an aristocracy the more intolerable because by it the insignia of republican nobility are conferred upon the many, while they are withheld from the few."¹⁴⁶ The league fought the Pennsylvania State government in the pursuit of suffrage by holding public meetings and mass rallies, writing letters to Republican newspapers, filing lawsuits, circulating petitions, and lobbying the state legislature.¹⁴⁷ Although Republicans held majority in both houses of legislature in 1865 and 1866, they considered equal suffrage premature, therefore no action was taken to grant voting rights.¹⁴⁸ Following the league's defeat,

¹⁴⁶ Foner and Walker, *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865*, 147, 160-61; *Christian Recorder*, Sept. 2, 1865.

¹⁴⁷ Foner and Walker, *Proceedings*

¹⁴⁸ Diemer, Andrew, "Reconstructing," 38.

they refocused their attention on the federal government and appointed a head committee, including Catto and White, to lead the national fight.

The league lobbied Congress in February 1866, which addressed suffrage rights by utilizing Revolutionary era rhetoric. Similar to their address to the Pennsylvania State legislature, the league's equal rights manifesto insisted that disenfranchising citizenry was in direct violation of the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of a republican form of government. The league expressed that, unlike many whites, they were "the true, tried, and faithful friends and supporters of the Government" who "have never been sullied by covering the brow of a single traitor."¹⁴⁹ Further, the League stated that the denial of fundamental rights, like the right to protection of life and liberty, and the principle of taxation without representation, were contrary to the moral law outlined in the government's oldest documents. The memorial was threatening in the sense that it warned of consequences with the failure to enact black suffrage. The address states that, in order to hinder the development of racial conflict, the nation must grant suffrage or else it will suffer from "the just and terrible vengeance of God, and the curses and hatred of an outraged and indignant community."¹⁵⁰ Ultimately, the consequences were not delivered as black Philadelphians placed pressure on Philadelphia Radical congressman William D. Kelley in 1868, who supported the

¹⁴⁹ Memorial to Congress, Feb. 1866, Papers of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1-3.

¹⁵⁰ Memorial to Congress, Feb. 1866, Records of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1-3.

Fifteenth Amendment through the judiciary committee.¹⁵¹ The Republican Party wished to entrench its national power by obtaining the black vote. Therefore, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869 and was promptly ratified by the requisite three-fourths of the states in 1870. Octavius Catto and equal rights organizations forced the Republican leadership to acknowledge the importance of the black vote and ultimately were successful. Congress granted African Americans suffrage rights and further placed a precedent for the federal regulation of suffrage in the future.

Although passage of the Fifteenth Amendment was influenced by the Republican national platform, Catto and the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League were instrumental in persuading Congress to seriously consider the concept of equal rights. Celebrations among Philadelphia's black leaders were held at the Union League, which presented a banner to Octavius Catto to commemorate the event and his integral leadership in uplifting the black race.¹⁵² Catto's short speech promised his fellow Republican leaders that, "the black man knows which side of the line to vote."¹⁵³ Octavius Catto and fellow black leaders demonstrated the virtues of manhood, obedience, discipline and a political, communal focus to ensure the success of a suffrage amendment. Catto is representative of the active lifestyle that he preached within the African American community as a means of uplifting the race. The League's effort was a successful, aggressive, and overtly political attempt in pursuing the

¹⁵¹ William D. Kelley to Jacob C. White Jr., Dec. 7, 1868, American Negro Historical Society, Historical Society of Pennsylvania NHSC, Brown, "William D. Kelley," 329.

¹⁵² Silcox, Harry C., "Nineteenth," 71.

¹⁵³ Silcox, Harry C., "Nineteenth," 71.

inclusion and advancement of the African American race through the political process.

By agitating and ultimately winning legislation, black leaders addressed grievances seen as an inherent right to citizens. Men like Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. were civic-minded individuals who fully recognized their vision for blacks within American society, and suffrage was a step towards this vision.

The recent changes in America's political framework were portrayed through political cartoons, some of which connected the increasing rights of blacks with baseball in order to comment on the black community's opportunity to demonstrate white middle class values on an equal playing field. From the white perspective, blacks would never display the civilized conduct of a gentlemanly sportsman which baseball so desperately requires. *Harper's Illustrated Weekly*, however, published a political cartoon entitled *The Great National Game* in 1870, which presents a black man in the batter's box and ready to hit a baseball with a bat labeled "15th Amendment" (See Appendix, Image E).¹⁵⁴ The cartoon illustrates the popular aspects of the Negro representation. The black man is gigantic and evidently overwhelms the frame, dwarfs the woman holding a bat labeled "16th Amendment," an Inuit representing the Alaska Purchase and a Chinese immigrant representing the Naturalization Act of 1870.¹⁵⁵ As an extremely progressive newspaper, *Harper's Weekly* chose *The Great National Game* to allude to future debate in American politics, which would discuss the whether to grant suffrage to women, non-white immigrants from Asia, and Alaskan natives. The

¹⁵⁴ James Brunson, *The Early Image of Black Baseball* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co, 2009), 15.

¹⁵⁵ Brunson, 15.

woman cradles the bat like a baby, reinforcing her traditional gender role as the submissive caretaker and inability to express an educated opinion. The Asian dons his native dress and the Eskimo appears ill suited to step inside the batter's. The cartoon marginalizes these groups while presenting the African American as strong and ready to perform, revealing athletic prowess through his stance.

This image reinforces the symbolism of the black male's body during a time characterized by the fight for civic and social equality. Considering the recent passing of the Fifteenth Amendment, the batter's box is analogous with the voting box. According to Author James Brunson, the batter's facial features identify with stereotypical representations of black men of the time: wide and flat nose, large lips, and small, narrow eyes. The political cartoon, however, demonstrates the imminent threat of a new social order: the inclusion of blacks ready and eager to ascend the post-Civil War center stage.¹⁵⁶ *The Great National Game* exemplifies one of many black baseball images, which became increasingly popular in framing the current political and social debates and mainstream representations of blacks during the Reconstruction era.

¹⁵⁶ Brunson, 14.

Chapter Five: Black Baseball and Establishing the Color Line

Chapter Five offers a discussion of how blacks negotiated their newfound freedoms through the sport of baseball, America's national pastime. This chapter aims to prove that, through his intimate involvement in the Pythian Baseball Club, Octavius Catto demonstrated athletic prowess and white middle class values of manhood, discipline, and formality to gain respectability from the white community. In addition, Catto used baseball as a vehicle for his social and civil rights activism by applying for membership in the white baseball associations. The emergence of baseball and the rise of Octavius Catto occurred coincidentally.

While baseball was played well before the onset of the Civil War, the Civil War years secured the game's place in the American heart, as it became a unifying factor on training camps, war prisons and even front lines. The game became integral in both Northern and Southern camps as baseball equipment became an increasingly important item to pack for recruits, particularly the Union Army recruits. By 1862, baseball was played regularly in army camps in the North and southern prisoner of war camps.¹⁵⁷ Baseball exploded in popularity in the northeast during the 1850s and soldiers were encouraged to partake in the leisurely activity to escape the mental and physical pain of battlefield fighting.¹⁵⁸ The sport provided a distraction from combat and officers encouraged, and often times participated, in baseball games to foster

¹⁵⁷ Andrew Merrifield. "The Origins of Baseball to 1896." *Sports Encyclopedia North America*. Cooperstown, NY: n.p., 1984. 19+. Print.

¹⁵⁸ George Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 41.

camaraderie amongst soldiers.¹⁵⁹ In 1862, *The New York Clipper* reported, “Many officers who never before took a ‘hand in’ at any of our out-door games, are now among the leading spirits in the conduct of such matters.”¹⁶⁰ Informal matches in army and prison camps kept the pastime alive. These matches did not overshadow the real horror of life during the Civil War, “but if nothing else, the fact that men deprived of their freedom and most of their physical comforts nevertheless found time for the sport demonstrates how deep a chord baseball had struck in 19th-century American culture, and foreshadowed how quickly it would spread after the war ended.”¹⁶¹ Union and Confederate soldiers played baseball to find happiness amidst the overwhelming death surrounding them. The sport became a unifying symbol and established itself as a popular social institution in the post-Civil War years.

Complementing his leadership at Camp William Penn and activism in Philadelphia, Octavius Catto’s Civil War experience was also characterized by the social vindication of baseball. Octavius Catto’s involvement at Camp William Penn undoubtedly attracted him to the game as he switched his athletic focus from cricket, a sport he played since his introduction at the Institute for Colored Youth, to baseball in the post Civil War period. The reason for the switch in sports is unknown and undocumented, but understanding Catto’s visionary goals for the African American race may help to explain the switch. Given the political culture of the time period,

¹⁵⁹ Kirsch, George, *Baseball*, 42.

¹⁶⁰ *The New York Clipper*, January 1862.

¹⁶¹ George Kirsch, "America's Pastime, Behind Bars." *New York Times* [New York] 2 Apr. 2013

baseball took a heightened significance for Octavius Catto because he pushed to overcome racial boundaries and gain full access to American society. Octavius Catto, along with William and George Wright, brothers enshrined in America's Baseball Hall of Fame, and Albert G. Spalding, enjoyed playing baseball during the Civil War era and ensured that the game would thrive in the war's aftermath. For Catto, however, baseball served many purposes beyond providing enjoyment.

Baseball contributed to the formation of America's post-war identity because both the white and black middle classes used the sport as a way to preserve traditional values through athletic prowess. As time progressed, baseball formed a new idea of American manhood that was displayed through physical characteristics and athleticism obtained by hard work. Baseball exemplified the value of manhood and reflected white middle class ideals that the African American middle class wished to fulfill: self control for success, strength, and courage. To Catto, baseball developed a moral and intellectual self by instilling its players with values linked to white respectability. Octavius Catto, whose aspired to achieve equality, found baseball to represent an opportunity for African Americans to demonstrate and fight for a level playing field. Although Catto's social and civic activism had long been an integral part of his effort to achieve respectability, honor, and ultimately equality, baseball offered him an unforeseen opportunity. Catto utilized baseball as a vehicle for his civil rights platform in a way that would propel him into increased power in Philadelphia for the purpose of advancing the African American race.

Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. were very much aware of the challenges in establishing a black voice within national politics and believed baseball was an alternative path to achieving recognition on the national stage. Catto and White founded the Philadelphia Pythian Baseball Club in 1866 to gain the acceptance of the white baseball community and further the political and social agenda of Philadelphia's black community. The Philadelphia Pythians consisted of native-born Americans who were slightly older than their white counterparts and nearly 70% identified as mulattoes during a time when lighter skin signified higher social status and greater access to limited opportunities provided to non-whites.¹⁶² As a result of their status and skin color, the mulatto members could afford the leisure time and financial resources necessary to partake in the Pythian organization. By 1870 the Pythian players ranked at the top of Philadelphian society with a mean combined wealth of over \$3,000.¹⁶³ The Pythians had also devoted time to black social and civic organizations, with two-fifths belonging to the Banneker Institute and one-third affiliated with the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Statistical Association of the Colored People of Pennsylvania.¹⁶⁴ Other Pythians members were activists, which included Billy Wormely, a rising leader amongst the colored Republicans and James W. Purnell, a major figure in the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania.¹⁶⁵ The privileged socioeconomic status of the Pythians resulted in opportunities unique to Philadelphia's black community, such

¹⁶² Kirsch, George, *Baseball*, 150.

¹⁶³ Kirsch, George, *Baseball*, 151.

¹⁶⁴ Lomax, Michael, *Black Baseball*, 17.

¹⁶⁵ Randall Brown, "Blood and Base Ball," *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* 3, no.1 (2009): 4.

as the Pythians' relationship with white baseball clubs. Evidently, the Pythian B.B.C was an elite black sports organization with the intention of using baseball as a vehicle for advancing the black race. Given the political culture of the time, members saw their participation in baseball as another means in their struggle for social and civic equality, which can be witnessed in their attempts to compete against white clubs and become a member in baseball associations.

Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr modeled the Pythians' rigid organizational structure after the Banneker Institute to establish the values of American manhood and acceptance from white clubs with similar structure. The Pythians functioned much like fraternal and political associations of the time, with a set of bylaws, constitution, code of conduct, and an executive board to ensure active participation within a professional and courteous environment. The Pythian Baseball Club Code Of Conduct of 1867 stated that "All spirituous liquors are positively excluded from this room. All gambling, betting on games, and card playing is strictly prohibited."¹⁶⁶ Any member who violated this law "shall be suspended or expelled as his association may decide."¹⁶⁷ All members were required to pay dues of five dollars per year and behave in a gentlemanly manner benefitting the team and undoubtedly benefitting the evolving perceptions of the black community.¹⁶⁸ The code of conduct also lists that any member participating in any unflattering behavior or language that would reflect poorly on the

¹⁶⁶ "Reports and Minutes," *Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*, (microfilm, American Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1867), Roll No. 7, Frame No. 1116.

¹⁶⁷ "Reports and Minutes."

¹⁶⁸ "Reports and Minutes."

association or bring the association into disrepute, they “may be fined, suspended or expelled.”¹⁶⁹ Proper conduct and professional manner were undoubtedly inspired by the strong foundation provided by the Banneker Institute, which promoted the ideals of discipline, morality, and respect. Taking into account the formalized manner in which the Pythians conducted themselves, it is unquestionable that they occupied the higher tiers of African American society. With the knowledge of their socioeconomic separateness from the majority of Philadelphia’s blacks, the Pythian organization attempted to close the social gap by employing the services of black business. Jacob C. White Jr. kept detailed records of the club’s expenses, revealing that the Philadelphia Pythians provided support to the black community infrastructure by utilizing Daniel Fisher for baked goods, James Steele for chinaware, N.B. Manning for tobacco products, in addition to black caterers and boarding houses.¹⁷⁰ Evidently, Pythian members used their privileged status to foster a moral image that aligned with white middle class values while promoting the advancement of blacks.

The Pythians’ displayed formality and gentlemanly conduct by challenging other teams and accepting challenges in polite exchanges. Challenges were carefully handwritten and detailed which demonstrated the Pythians’ attempt at formality and respectability. One such exchange occurred with the Mutual Base Ball Club of Washington D.C., a black team with equal courtesy. Their challenge read:

Washington D.C. April 23rd 1867

¹⁶⁹ “Reports and Minutes.”

¹⁷⁰ “Bills and Receipts, 1867-1870,” *Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*

To the members of the Pythian Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, PA
Gentleman,

The Mutual Base Ball Club of Washington D.C. of which I have the honor to be Secretary, has instructed me to address you a friendly note, congratulatory of the high position you, as an organization, have attained in our National Game, and to request that you will enter out Club as a friendly competitor for its honors.

With much respect
Your most obedient servant
Leo Johnson
Secretary¹⁷¹

Johnson recognizes that the Pythian Baseball Club has succeeded on the playing field as well as demonstrating gentlemanly character off of it. The complimentary and pleasant discourse used by the Mutual B.B.C. is evident in the Pythians' response. As secretary, Jacob C. White Jr. responds promptly, "[The Pythians] accept the proposition to play a match game of baseball with the club you represent...with the expression of hope that nothing may transpire to interfere with our mutual desires."¹⁷² It is possible that the formal and gracious reply was a conscious effort to demonstrate the manhood and professional behavior required to earn respect. With challenges accepted, the Pythian Baseball Club was ready to begin their inaugural season in 1867.

Between the 1867 and 1868 seasons, the Pythians garnered success and notoriety within the sporting world as they played challenges against other African American teams in the Philadelphia and Washington D.C. area, with only one loss by a

¹⁷¹ "Correspondence. 1867-1869" *The Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905* (microfilm, AHSP, 1867), Roll No. 8, Frame No. 0134.

¹⁷² "Correspondence, 1867-1869" *The Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905* (microfilm, AHSP, 1867), Roll No. 8, Frame No. 0064.

single run.¹⁷³ Meticulous record keeping and statistics reveals that the Pythians' outscored opponents 274 to 143 in 1868, implying that an emphasis on measurable performance to ensure success.¹⁷⁴ Octavius Catto led the Pythians to a successful season as team captain and shortstop. Catto and White's vision for the Pythians became increasingly clear because they noted that the members "performed their labors with zeal and with an ardent desire to do all in their power to sustain our character and reputation as a baseball club and as an association of gentleman."¹⁷⁵ The Pythians understood that baseball's popularity was a prime opportunity to publicly exhibit values of manhood while competing with the white structure on an equal playing field. Octavius Catto understood baseball as a politicized sporting movement and a vehicle for civil rights activism.

Not all blacks agreed with Catto's view including famous abolitionist organizer and civil rights leader William Still, which attests to the differing tactics in uplifting the black race. Still was reprimanded for not having paid his Pythian membership dues and, in response, Still framed his justification with the present Christian duty of northern free blacks. In his letter to the Pythians', William Still stated:

Our kin in the South famishing for knowledge, have claims so great & pressing that I feel bound to give of my means in this direction to the extent of my abilities, in preference to giving for frivolous amusements. Again, the poor are all around us in great want, whose claims I consider cannot be wholly ignored without doing violence to the Spirit of Christianity & humanity. At all events it

¹⁷³ Biddle, 365.

¹⁷⁴ "Correspondence, 1867-1869" *The Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905* (microfilm, AHSP, 1867), Roll No. 8, Frame No. 0130.

¹⁷⁵ "Membership, 1867-1869" *The Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905* (microfilm, AHSP, 1867), Roll No. 8, Frame No. 028.

seems to accord more fully with my idea of duty to give where it will do the most good, and where the greatest needs are manifest.¹⁷⁶

William Still, abolitionist and civil rights activist, argued that northern blacks of privileged socioeconomic status must financially uplift those blacks suffering from poverty and disenfranchisement in the South instead of involving themselves in “frivolous amusements” which channeled their mental and physical efforts elsewhere. William Still did not consider the importance of the dual opportunity to which baseball presents African Americans. Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. performed a novel method for attacking racial inequality by demonstrating sporting success, male black prowess, masculinity, and competence to gain respect and validation from the white community. William Still and the Pythians represent differing tactics that Reconstruction era leaders pursued to financially secure and socially uplift the black population. In fact, some African Americans favored Octavius Catto’s method and went as far as sending an advance on membership dues before being accepted into the club; Willie Jones was one of these black men. His letter states, “I embrace this hasty opportunity to send you part of my dues (\$3.00). Do write me an acknowledgement, and tell me the base ball news. I wish to know what balance remains-calculating up to Sept. My love to the champion Pythians.”¹⁷⁷ His eagerness to join and participate in the Pythian Baseball Club is evidence of the Pythians popularity and success of black baseball within Philadelphia’s sporting world. It is also evidence of the pride that

¹⁷⁶ Letter from William Still to Pythian’s Base Ball Club, January 30, 1869, Leon Gardiner Collection on Negro History, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

¹⁷⁷ Letter from Willie Jones to Pythian Baseball Club, August 4, 1867, Leon Gardiner Collection on Negro History, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

African Americans felt for a team that was fighting for sporting success on the field and civil rights success off the field.

In the summer of 1867, the Pythians received challenges from the Mutual BBC and the Alert BBC of Washington D.C., which reveals the prominence and rising popularity of the Pythians. Charles Douglass, Secretary of the Alert BBC and son of famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass, stated, "I have no doubt that a large crowd would be out, as you have gained considerable notoriety of late."¹⁷⁸ The leadership of Octavius Catto on and off the field attests to the fast rise of the Pythian Baseball Club. If Catto was not identifiable within Philadelphia's community, it became a household name as a result of the success of the Pythian Baseball Club. The Pythians even received attention from white reporters from the Philadelphia Sunday Mercury, who described the team as a "well-behaved gentlemanly set of young fellows."¹⁷⁹ While Catto and the Pythians began to receive recognition from both the white and black community, Catto knew that true baseball equality lay within the membership of the white national championship system.

At this time, the Pythian Baseball Club had made an impression on fellow sporting clubs and had grabbed the attention of the Philadelphia's white community, leading to their application into the Pennsylvania Association of Amateur Base Ball Players. This association was a white amateur baseball body formed in 1866 to facilitate and regulate competition. The Pythian Baseball Club sent Raymond Burr, its

¹⁷⁸ "Correspondence, 1867-1869" *The Papers of the Pythians Baseball Club, American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905* (microfilm, AHSP, 1867), Roll No. 8, Frame No. 057.

¹⁷⁹ Casway, Jerrold "Octavius Catto," 12.

vice president, as a delegate to the PAABBP's annual convention in Harrisburg on October 18, 1867 to apply for membership.¹⁸⁰ With the support of delegate Hicks Hayhurst and President D.C. Domer, head of the most prominent white club in Philadelphia at the time, the Pythians were hopeful for admission. To their dismay, Hayhurst approached Burr upon arrival and expressed, "tho' they and the President were in favor of our acceptance, still the majority of the delegates were opposed to it and they would advise me to withdraw my application, as they thought it were better for us to withdraw than to have it on record that we were black balled."¹⁸¹ The decision was adjourned to the following morning to provide Hayhurst and Burr the opportunity to withdraw, which they finally did after finding no hope in gaining admission. Although the majority of delegates sympathized with the Pythian's admission, they were well aware of the prevailing societal opinion regarding integration and believed it best to stray from any possible political statement.¹⁸² The PAABBP's decision to bar the Pythian Baseball Club from admission coincides with the streetcar desegregation movement in Philadelphia, which Octavius Catto and other Pythian members had an integral hand in. It is possible that the Pennsylvania Association of Amateur Base Ball Players saw the Pythian members as more than ball players, but as mulatto elite agitating for racial equality. Therefore, the PAABBP reinforced racial inequality and a segregated system that characterized the nation during the Reconstruction era.

¹⁸⁰ Schiffert, John, *Baseball in Philadelphia*, 54.

¹⁸¹ "Report of a Delegate of the Pythian to the Pennsylvania State Convention," 18 October 1867, PBBC Papers.

¹⁸² Harry Reed, "Not By" 146.

Although the PAABBP set a racial precedent, Octavius Catto and the Pythians continued to fight for recognition and civil rights within the baseball community. Despite Catto's disappointment with the PAABBP's decision, he became even more determined and committed to achieve equality within the national championship system. In December 1867, the Pythians applied for membership to the National Association of Base Ball Players at a convention in Philadelphia. The report of the Committee on Credentials, which handled the Pythian's application, tackled the issue of black membership. James W. Davis, a member of the Nominating Committee and the New York Knickerbocker BBC, read the report and named the twenty-eight clubs who accepted into the baseball fraternity.¹⁸³ The final passage read, "It is not presumed by your committee that any club who have applied are composed of persons of color, or any portion of them; and the recommendations of your committee in this report are based upon the view, and they unanimously report against the admission of any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons."¹⁸⁴ James W. Davis also adds that excluding black baseball clubs was important in order to "keep out of the convention the discussion of any subject having a political bearing, as this undoubtedly had."¹⁸⁵ The NABBP set a color line precedent ideologically justified by the combination of white bigotry and black civil and social activism. The NABBP rejected the Pythian's application by defining racial issues as political, which identified with the overtly racist

¹⁸³ Schiffert, John, *Baseball in Philadelphia*, 55.

¹⁸⁴ Dean A. Sullivan, "The Exclusion of African Americans from NABBP (1867)" in *Early Innings: A Documentary History of Baseball, 1825-1908* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 1995: 69.

¹⁸⁵ "The Exclusion of African Americans from NABBP (1867)," 69.

policy at the center of the nation's struggle during the Reconstruction era. It is possible that the NABBP did not wish to support the ideological influences of the elite men who composed the Pythian Baseball Club as these influences served as a means to uplift the race from sociopolitical plight and eliminate racial barriers.

Although the Pythians were barred entrance into the PAABBP and the NABBP, Catto remained determined in demonstrating respectability and middle class manhood in the 1868 and 1869 seasons. The club made a push to prove competitive with white teams in their 1868 season by defeating the Blue Sky (26-12) and the Active BBC (31-9; 31-30) of Philadelphia; the Monitor BBC of Philadelphia (71-16); the Monrovia BBC of Harrisburg (71-16); and the Mutual BBC (49-33) and Alert BBC (46-34) of Washington D.C.¹⁸⁶ Along with their efforts on the field, the Pythian Baseball Club wished to strengthen the athletic abilities of their team by recruiting players in hopes of playing white teams in the future. On August 12, 1869, Octavius Catto wrote to Mr. McCullough, a Pythian member, explaining his plan to obtain elite black players from other teams. Catto wrote, "...We can put a conquering nine in the field and some money in our treasury... Clark and Wilson could be obtained to play on our nine...with good promises of success it had best be done immediately--especially in view of the probability of our meeting our white brethren--and the additional strength these two men would give our nine."¹⁸⁷ Catto and White began a conscious effort to improve their

¹⁸⁶ "Pythian BBC 2nd Annual Report," 4 November 1868, Pythian Baseball Club Papers, *American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*

¹⁸⁷ Octavius V. Catto to McCullough, 12 August 1869, Pythian Baseball Club Papers, *American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*

talent by acquiring the talented Frank J.R. Jones, Andrew Glasgow, and Franklin H. Jones from the Excelsior BBC, which the Pythians had beaten in all previous contests. Catto, White and the Pythian leaders saw these moves as a means to place the best nine black baseball players on the field in future interracial challenges. Though club membership was strict during this time, there seemed to be an understanding amongst black baseball clubs regarding the significance of an interracial challenge, which contributed to the negotiation of the Pythian acquisition of black players and subsequent success.

In just three years, the Pythian BBC went from creation to national attention as they took on the Olympic BBC and the Philadelphia City Items, which garnered an unprecedented level of white acceptance, especially in the white national media. The first documented interracial baseball game was between the Olympic BBC and the Pythian BBC on September 3, 1869, in which the Pythians were defeated 44-23. Preceding the challenge between the Olympic BBC and the Pythian BBC, the *Morning Post* reported, "The contestants will be the Olympic and the Pythians, both clubs belonging to this city. The latter is a powerful organization with the chance of winning this game on their side. This is the first game of its kind, and it is hoped it will not be the last."¹⁸⁸ The Olympic club, founded in 1831, made history as one of the first organized baseball clubs in the United States and made history again by playing the

¹⁸⁸ *Morning Post*, August 28, 1869.

Pythians.¹⁸⁹ While the difference in score was impressive, the loss was not detrimental to the Pythians organization or to their visions for the black community. In actuality, reports of the game were optimistic, including the *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* newspaper, which claimed the first interracial baseball game and signaled that, "old-time prejudices are melting away in this country."¹⁹⁰ Two weeks later, player acquisition aided in the Pythian's success as they saw their hard work came to fruition when they defeated the Philadelphia City Items, an all white team, on September 18, 1869.¹⁹¹ With this news, *The Morning Post* recognized that "The Pythians are said to be strong batters and good fielders, and a good game may be expected. They are all young men, hard workers and well behaved. We want to see a fair game and the best club win."¹⁹² The Pythians beat the City Items 27-17 while demonstrating genteel behavior, white middle class manhood, and competence. Although the Pythians were formally excluded from the NABBP, their impressive performance in interracial baseball games served as vindication for their efforts in demonstrating the abilities of the black race within mainstream American society.

Following these impressive feats, the Pythian's success diverted towards the political sphere and away from the baseball field as many of its members were central in the agitation for the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which occupied their efforts following the 1869 season. There is no record of the Pythian's schedule or box

¹⁸⁹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 374.

¹⁹⁰ Kirsch, George, *Baseball*, 126.

¹⁹¹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 376.

¹⁹² *Morning Post*, September 3, 1869.

scores from 1870 and the Pythians are only known to have played two baseball games in 1871.¹⁹³ The effect of the intensifying political scene in the late 1860s can be seen in Jacob C. White Jr.'s letters to the Mutual BBC. White reveals that it is "impossible for us to play any matches away from home" because "circumstances will not allow us to leave the city at the present season."¹⁹⁴ The beginning of the 1870s witnessed shifting structural relations and an increasing amount of interracial baseball games, which attests to the pioneering efforts of its most famous black baseball organization, the Pythian BBC. After years of fighting for civic and social equality, Octavius Catto was finally making an impact that he dreamed of as a young ICY student and Banneker member. The Pythian BBC, with Catto as its figurehead, set goals that went beyond the baseball field; the club represented an alternative path to end segregation and prejudice throughout American society. Black baseball provided an alternative and novel path of black civil and social activism as evidenced by the Pythian BBC. With Octavius Catto and Jacob C. White Jr. leading the organization, the Pythian BBC grabbed the attention of whites in the public and national sphere by displaying similar qualities of white middle class manhood, respectability, discipline and courtesy. The heightened meaning of baseball beyond mere sport for blacks reflects the sociopolitical culture of the Reconstruction era. As a result of the inherent values of the sport, baseball was instilled with the opportunity to demonstrate true American-ness. Philadelphia's leading black civic activists took advantage of this opportunity through

¹⁹³ Casway, Jerrold, "Octavius Catto," 14.

¹⁹⁴ Jacob C. White, Jr to the Mutual BBC, 19 September 1869 and 9 October 1869, Pythian Baseball Club Papers. *American Negro Historical Society Collection 1790-1905*

the foundation of the Pythian Baseball Club, which added a racial component to the American vision. As a result of his level of sociopolitical consciousness, Octavius Catto saw the Pythian BBC as a way to battle race relations, uplift the status of blacks, and assimilate into the mainstream fabric of American society.

Epilogue

While the Fifteenth Amendment was significant for Philadelphia's black community, white backlash from the Democratic Party and its followers created an increasingly racist and violent environment for Philadelphia. In subsequent years, Philadelphia's municipal elections proved dangerous for the black community as mobs of white citizens rioted in the streets to prevent the newly enfranchised black voters from casting their ballots. For the first time, large numbers of African Americans arrived at polling sites and racial tensions increased significantly as a result. Mob violence during Election Day 1870, however, did not compare to that of the following year.

The morning of October 10, 1871 witnessed mass violence at the polls and Octavius Catto was a victim of this controversy. City policemen did not make adequate attempts at stopping the racial rioting and Philadelphia became unsafe by noon that day.¹⁹⁵ Octavius Catto dismissed his ICY students early so they could reach home before violence erupted outside of the ICY walls. Catto reported to brigade headquarters to retrieve his National Guard uniform and weapon to help maintain the peace at six o'clock as scheduled.¹⁹⁶ Given the political and social spotlight on Catto, he was an obvious target for white rioters on this important day for blacks. Yet, Catto did not envision the imminent danger, which lay close to his residence. Octavius Catto encountered Frank Kelly, an Irish Democrat, who shot Catto twice and inflicted a wound to his left shoulder and chest. He was soon pronounced dead at the Fifth

¹⁹⁵ Silcox, Harry C., "Nineteenth Century," 73.

¹⁹⁶ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 422.

District Station House, a local police station.¹⁹⁷ Octavius Catto was only thirty-two years old.

Although multiple violent acts were perpetrated on Election Day 1871, the assassination of Octavius Catto was headline news, which attests to his prominence within Philadelphia's community. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a white newspaper, released an article reporting that Catto and white rioters “got into an altercation” and “three other shots...fired in rapid succession by the white men and when the smoke had cleared away the men had made their good escape.”¹⁹⁸ The article described Catto as “a young man of considerable talent,” “a fine speaker,” and that “his death will be mourned by a large number of friends, both white and colored.”¹⁹⁹ Typically, the story would end here as an investigation regarding the murder of a black man amidst a mass riot would not be worthy of further investigation by white authorities. The murder of Octavius Catto, however, was an exception. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* printed a first hand account from Mr. Samuel Wanamaker, an eyewitness to Catto’s murder. Wanamaker referred to the incident as “a cold-blooded assassination of a peaceful, inoffensive man.”²⁰⁰ It continues:

A man who was pursuing him fired a pistol. Mr. Catto still continued to run, and the man fired two shots more, which took effect, and deceased whirled around and threw up his hands...The murderer at first dodged back toward the crowd, and then ran along South Street to Ninth, and down Ninth to Bainbridge, and

¹⁹⁷ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 427.

¹⁹⁸ *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA). 11 October 1871, 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2.

²⁰⁰ *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA). 12 October 1871, 2.

into a tavern on the upper corner, where it is said, he disappeared through the backyard.²⁰¹

Wanamaker's first hand account reveals that Octavius Catto was likely assassinated because the shooter attacked and pursued Catto, and had an established escape plan secured in a local tavern. At the end of the article, Mr. Samuel Wanamaker describes the shooter as answering "the description of a man who participated in several of the disturbances previous to the shooting of Mr. Catto, and was supposed to have been a ring leader."²⁰² Octavius Catto was a target of white rioters, which attests to his prominence as a civil rights leader within Philadelphia's African American community. Therefore, it is possible that white rioters perceived Catto as a legitimate threat to the white power structure within the city.

Considering the time period in which racist tension ran rampant, the nation's response to Catto's death was unprecedented as evidenced by his funeral and the national news coverage of his untimely departure. Octavius Catto received a full military funeral on October 16, 1871 and was laid to rest at the Lebanon Cemetery.²⁰³ The Philadelphia City Council closed all city departments to allow city employees the opportunity to attend the ceremony. Members of Catto's former regiment carried the coffin through the streets with members of the Banneker Institute and Pythian Baseball Club, two integral organizations in Catto's life. Family members, including William T.

²⁰¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2.

²⁰² *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2.

²⁰³ Ryan A. Swanson, *When Baseball Went White: Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Dreams of a National Pastime*. N.p. University of Nebraska, 2014. Print. 121.

Catto, followed close behind. The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* coverage of Catto's funeral reinforced the influence and prominence Catto held within the community. The newspaper reported, "The remains of Major Octavius V. Catto were yesterday followed to their last resting place by an immense concourse of people, irrespective of color. White and black, side by side, participated in doing homage to the memory of the dead man."²⁰⁴ *The Philadelphia Press* reported that approximately five thousand Philadelphia's attended Catto's funeral, which was the most attended public funeral since that of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, and the crowd became so dense that a large police force was dispatched to maintain the accessibility of roads outside the City Armory.²⁰⁵ Octavius Catto's death and funeral was mourned on the national scale as evidenced by the public condolences in newspapers across the country. Complimenting the myriad of condolences and resolutions made by Philadelphia's social and political associations, the *Trenton Star Gazette* of Trenton, NJ, the *Morning Republican* of Little Rock, AK, and the *Weekly Louisianan* of New Orleans, LA published reports on the incident in the following weeks.²⁰⁶ The *Morning Republican* referred to Octavius Catto as "another addition to the long list of martyrs who have been assassinated for their fidelity to the principles of liberty" while the *Trenton Star*

²⁰⁴ "The Last Rites. Obsequies of Major Octavius V. Catto" *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) 17 October 1871.

²⁰⁵ Avery, Ron. "An Election Day Murder: Octavius Catto." *City of Brotherly Mayhem: Philadelphia Crimes & Criminals*. Philadelphia: Otis, 1997. Print. 21.

²⁰⁶ Swanson, 121.

Gazette called Catto a “brilliant and highly cultivated young colored man.”²⁰⁷ The nation recognized Catto as an African American civil rights leader who pursued greater racial equality with qualities embodied in the white middle class society: respectability, masculinity, and intellect. Evidently, Octavius Catto’s assassination and funeral was a spectacle for the black and white community, which attests to his influential and far reaching work as a social and civic activist.

After Philadelphia Police retrieved Frank Kelly from Chicago in 1877, *The Trial of Frank Kelly, for the Assassination and murder of Octavius V. Catto, on October 10, 1871* commenced in a ten-day marathon of prosecutions and testifications, which ended in the dismissal of all charges. Despite overwhelming evidence from a total of thirty five black and white witnesses, including Pythians Jacob Purnell and Robert Adger, Frank Kelly was acquitted of the assassination and murder of Octavius V. Catto by an all white, male jury seven years after the incident. Although Kelly’s record was expunged, Catto’s legacy in nineteenth century Philadelphia was that of martyrdom.

More recently, Philadelphia has made efforts to honor Catto and reclaim his forgotten legacy by naming public schools, lodges, and residence halls after him and inducting him into America's Baseball Hall of Fame.²⁰⁸ Additionally, the Octavius V. Catto Memorial Fund erected a headstone at Catto's gravesite in Philadelphia with the inscription "The Forgotten Hero."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ “Octavius V. Catto” *Morning Republican* (Little Rock, AK) 20 October 1871 and *Trenton Star Gazette* (Trenton, NJ) 17 October 1871.

²⁰⁸ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 484.

²⁰⁹ Biddle and Dubin, *Tasting Freedom*, 484.

Today, scholars debate what more could have been accomplished by this talented young man and what his death signified for the immediate future of American race relations. Ron Avery, author of *City of Brotherly Mayhem*, argues that Catto “might have become the first Philadelphian African American elected to political office--a city councilman, a state legislator.”²¹⁰ Samuel Donnellon, sports columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News, states that “He [Catto] was Martin Luther King one day, Malcolm X another, Jackie Robinson the day after that...Had he lived, our world would know Octavius Catto much better than it does today. He might have saved us a little from ourselves, too.”²¹¹ More broadly, Roger A. Bruns, author of *Negro Leagues Baseball*, states that “The death of Octavius Catto in 1871 not only foreshadowed increasing racial violence in postwar America, but also signaled the plight ahead for black baseball players who tried to make their way through a white society.”²¹² Scholar Andy Waskie asserts that, “Catto’s death generated sympathy and acceptance of the voting rights of blacks and moved the black community solidly behind the rising Republican Party.”²¹³ Octavius Catto's commitment to examining the corrupt policies inherent in America’s foundation, coupled with the development of a sense of black community and leadership, aided in uplifting the race during the Reconstruction era.

²¹⁰ Avery, 17.

²¹¹ Donnellon, Samuel. "Civic Leader Changed Society on the Baseball Diamond." *Philly-archives*. Philly.com, 10 July 2014. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.

²¹² Bruns, Roger A. "The Beginning Horrors of Jim Crow." *Negro Leagues Baseball*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012. Print. 4.

²¹³ Waskie, Andy Ph.D., "Important Pennsylvanians." *Pacivilwar150*. Civil War Pennsylvania. 15 July 2015. Web. 30 September 2015.

Catto's vision was decades ahead of its time and his vision for full racial equality and integration was adopted by future generations. The battles Catto and fellow black leaders fought in the nineteenth century bear a striking resemblance to those of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which came a century later. Catto and his generation sat down as Rosa Parks did, challenged the baseball color line as Jackie Robinson did, marched for the right to vote as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did, and fought for equal access to education just as Oliver Brown did in *Brown V. Board of Education*. There is no question, Octavius V. Catto is an unsung hero a trailblazer of civil rights.

Image A.

MEN OF COLOR TO ARMS! TO ARMS! NOW OR NEVER

This is our golden moment! The Government of the United States calls for every Able-bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for the

Three Years' Service!

And join in Fighting the Battles of Liberty and the Union. A new era is open to us. For generations we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, outrage and wrong; our manhood has been denied, our citizenship blotted out, our souls seared and burned, our spirits cowed and crushed, and the hopes of the future of our race involved in doubt and darkness. But now our relations to the white race are changed. Now, therefore, is our most precious moment. Let us rush to arms!

FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED

On this the soil of our birth. We must now awake, arise, or be forever fallen. If we value liberty, if we wish to be free in this land, if we love our country, if we love our families, our children, our home, we must strike now while the country calls; we must rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arms that we are worthy to be freemen. Our enemies have made the country believe that we are craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers. Shall we die with this stigma resting upon our graves! Shall we leave this inheritance of Shame to our Children? No! a thousand times NO! We WILL Rise! The alternative is upon us. Let us rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Want is life without liberty? We say that we have manhood; now is the time to prove it. A nation or a people that cannot fight may be pitied, but cannot be respected. If we would be regarded men, if we would forever silence the tongue of Calumny, of Prejudice and Hate, let us Rise Now and Fly to Arms! We have seen what Valor and Heroism our Brothers displayed at Fort Hudson and Milliken's Bend, though they are just from the galling, poisoning grasp of Slavery, they have startled the World by the most exalted heroism. If they have proved themselves heroes, cannot WE PROVE OURSELVES MEN!

ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES

More than a Million White Men have left Comfortable Homes and joined the Armies of the Union to save their Country. Cannot we leave ours, and swell the Ranks of the Union, to save our liberties, vindicate our manhood, and deserve well of our Country. MEN OF COLOR! the Englishmen, the Irishmen, the Frenchmen, the Germans, the Americans, have been called to assert their claim to freedom and a manly character, by an appeal to the sword. The day that has seen an enslaved race in arms has, in all history, seen their last trial. We now see that our last opportunity has come. If we are not better in the scale of humanity than Englishmen, Irishmen, White Americans and other Races, we can show it now. Men of Color, Brothers and Fathers, we appeal to you, by all your concern for yourselves and your liberties, by all your regard for God and humanity, by all your desire for Citizenship and Equality before the law, by all your love for the Country, to step at no hesitating, listen to nothing that shall deter you from rallying for the Army. Come Forward, and at once Enroll your Names for the Three Years' Service. Strike now, and you are henceforth and forever Freemen!

E. D. Bassett,	Rev. J. Underdue,	P. J. Armstrong,	Rev. J. C. Gibbs,	Elijah J. Davis,
William D. Forten,	John W. Price,	J. W. Simpson,	Daniel George,	John P. Barr,
Frederick Douglass,	Augustus Dorsey,	Rev. J. B. Trusty,	Robert M. Adger,	Robert Jones,
Wm. Whipper,	Rev. Stephen Smith,	S. Morgan Smith,	Henry M. Cropper,	O. V. Catto,
D. B. Turner,	N. W. Depee,	William E. Gipson,	Rev. J. B. Reeve,	Thos. J. Dorsey,
Jas. McCummell,	Dr. J. H. Wilson,	Rev. J. Boulden,	Rev. J. A. Williams,	I. D. CHIEF,
A. S. Cassey,	J. W. Cassey,	Rev. J. Asher,	Rev. A. L. Stanford,	Jacob C. White,
A. M. Green,	James Needham,	Rev. Ellihu Weaver,	Thomas J. Bowers,	Morris Hall,
J. W. Page,	Ebenezer Black,	David B. Bowser,	J. C. White, Jr.,	J. P. Johnson,
L. R. Seymour,	James R. Gordon,	Henry Minton,	Rev. J. P. Campbell,	Franklin Turner,
Rev. William T. Catto,	Samuel Stewart,	Daniel Colley,	Rev. W. J. Alston,	Jesse E. Glasgow.

A Meeting in furtherance of the above named object will be held

And will be Addressed by

U. S. Steam-Power Book and Job Printing Establishment, Ledger Buildings, Third and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

Image B.



Image C.



Image D.

DEFENCE OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA



Office of the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia.

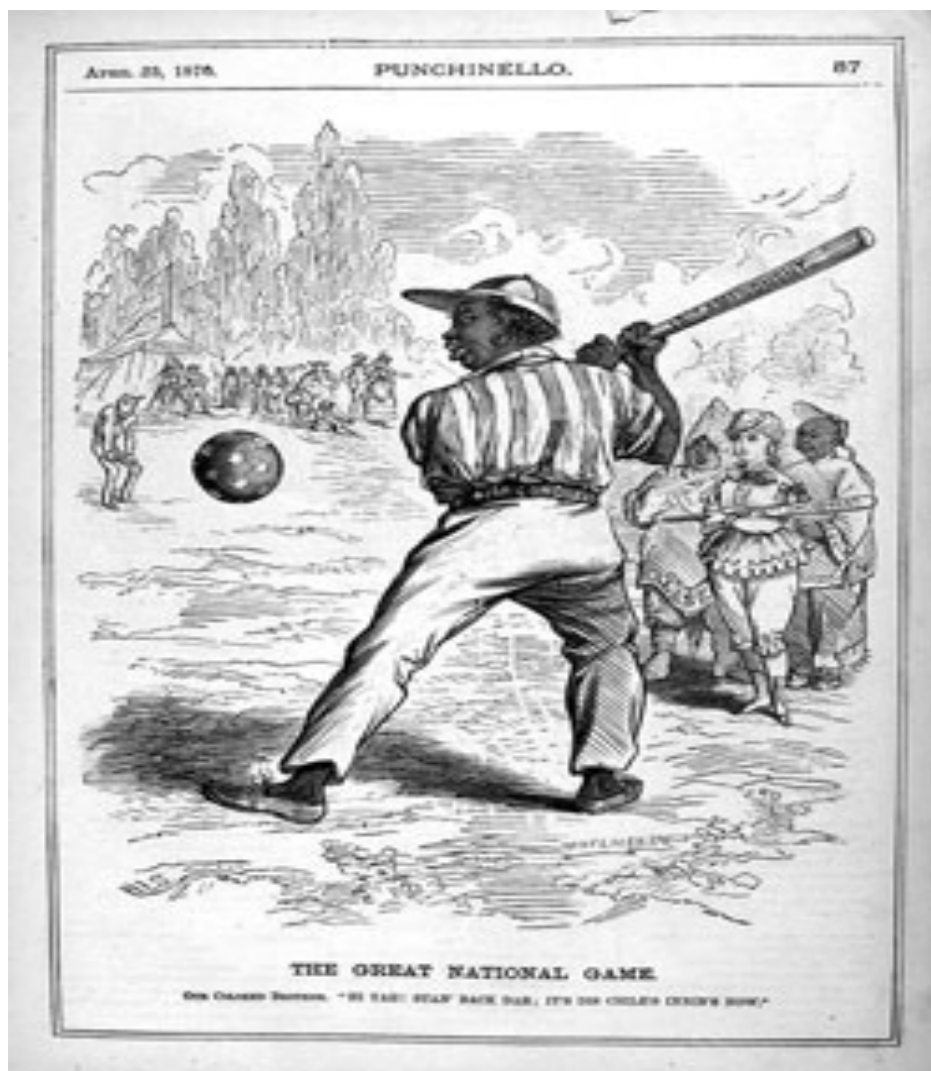
BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY vested in me, by the Act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, entitled, "An Act relating to the Home Guard of the City of Philadelphia, Approved the Sixteenth day of May Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and sixty one.

I do hereby require Brigadier General A. J. FLEASANTON, Commander of the HOME GUARD, to order out (and into the service of the City of Philadelphia,) THE WHOLE OF THE HOME GUARD, for the preservation of the public peace AND THE DEFENCE OF THE CITY. And I hereby call upon all persons within the limits of the said City, to yield a TRUST AND READY OBEEDIENCE to the Orders of the said Commander of the HOME GUARD, and of those acting under his authority in the execution of his and their said duties.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Corporate Seal of the City of Philadelphia, to be affixed, this sixteenth day of June, A. D., one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one.

ALEXANDER HENRY,
Mayor of Philadelphia.

Image E.



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