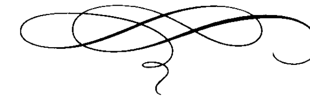
CIVIL WAR WRITING

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ICONIC TEXTS



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CONTENTS

1 Introduction
STEPHEN CUSHMAN AND GARY W. GALLAGHER

13 Joseph T. Wilson's *The Black Phalanx:* African American Patriotism and the Won Cause
ELIZABETH R. VARON

43 The Soldier Who Never Was: Loreta Velasquez and *The Woman in Battle*
WILLIAM C. DAVIS

81 Surrender According to Johnston and Sherman
STEPHEN CUSHMAN

109 *Little Women*: Louisa May Alcott's Novel of the Home Front
J. MATTHEW GALLMAN

139 "Duty to My Country and Myself:" The Jubal A. Early Memoirs
KATHRYN SHIVELY

171 Considering the War from Home and the Front: Charlotte Forten's Civil War Diary Entries
BRENDA E. STEVENSON

201 "Forget to Weep My Dead:" Mary Chesnut's Civil War Reading
SARAH E. GARDNER

Charlotte Forten, ca. 1870. From Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, Cartes-de-Visite Collection. Image ID DS_18SCCDV.

Considering the War from Home and the Front

Charlotte Forten's Civil War Diary Entries

BRENDA E. STEVENSON

Charlotte Forten's iconic five-volume journal chronicles her life among the South Carolina Sea Island "contrabands" during the Civil War.[1] From the time of her arrival in the "Sunny South" on the Tuesday evening of October 28, 1862, until her final entry in volume 4 on May 15, 1864, the sophisticated intellectual and inveterate abolitionist wrote of her encounters with the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts and the First and Second South Carolina Volunteers; of the culture, living conditions, and aspirations for freedom of the Gullah people; of her interactions with "typical" Union soldiers and illustrious military figures such as Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Brigadier General Rufus Saxton; and of encounters with Harriet Tubman, who was nurse and guide to the troops. Charlotte's privately penned thoughts underscore the profound significance of the war in the imagination of African Americans, both enslaved and free. Forten's journal from her time in the South among the contraband men, women, and children; Union troops; teachers; missionaries; shopkeepers; and labor supervisors certainly was not the only one kept by a woman, or even a woman of color.[2] Nonetheless, her journal remains singularly important because of Charlotte Forten's unique status as an elite black female abolitionist and scholar. Her social status and familiarity with leading abolitionists, black and white, gave her a special entrée into the private world

of her white contemporaries as they spoke to and acted on the changing status of race relations at this critical moment in the nation's history and in this hotbed of Civil War activity.

Equally significant, she allows readers to witness and benefit from her intellectual curiosity and evolving racial identity as it led her to turn ethnographic attention to the African-derived cultural and linguistic uniqueness, as well as to the social structures and experiences, of the Gullah/Geechee people located along the coasts and islands of South Carolina and Georgia. In addition, Charlotte's status as a single woman, along with her romantic and romanticist natures, fueled her Civil War writings with vignettes of an active biracial social life contextualized by the natural beauty of Low Country forests and beaches.

Charlotte Forten was an avid diarist before she turned her attention to the layered dramas of the Civil War and her part in them. Her journals give readers a comprehensive description of the personal life, education, social strivings, and activist evolution of an elite, northern female of color from adolescence through young adulthood. The journal portrayals include her extensive activist network within her African American community and across the color line among those who, like her, were dedicated to the termination of black slavery and the initiation of equality for her race. Her diary makes clear that Charlotte and many of her family, friends, and associates believed the Civil War could revolutionize the status of blacks in the United States. It really was the only reason she determined to be part of the war effort and document it in her journal. Wielding as she did this double-edged sword of black emancipation and black egalitarianism in her published poems, letters, essays, and journal entries, Forten left a formidable public, and private, record of her "sacred cause" as she pursued it through her Civil War activities. Writing on January 1, 1863, from the effusive celebration on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, to mark the issuance of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Charlotte beamed: "Ah, what a grand, glorious day this has been. The dawn of freedom which it heralds may not break upon us at once; but it will surely come, and sooner, I believe than we had ever dared hope before. My soul is glad with an exceeding gladness."[3]

If Charlotte Forten's diary entries about the late-antebellum years and the Civil War tell us anything about their author, they vividly illustrate that issues related to race defined her life. She believed aid to her race was her

singular moral duty as a woman, an African-descended person, a Christian, an elite, and an intellectual. From the time that Charlotte Louise Bridges Forten (called Lottie by her family and friends) was born to Robert Bridges Forten and Mary Virginia Woods Forten on August 17, 1837, in Philadelphia to the moment of her death on July 22, 1914, in Washington, D.C., just shy of her seventy-seventh birthday, her African-derived racial status and her resultant place in American society were constant themes in her life, in the lives of those closest to her, in the work that she pursued as a teacher, civil servant, minister's wife, literary artist, and scholar—and, of course, in her journal entries. Reading Charlotte's life through the lens of her journal entries, which she began when she was only fifteen and had just left Philadelphia to reside and attend school in Salem, one hardly could be surprised that the Civil War, in her imagination and in the activities she took on, was a struggle of liberation for four million southern black enslaved people and, more personally, a force of personal liberation for her as an activist female of color.[4]

Born just four years after the creation of the American Anti-Slavery Society[5] to a family that was centrally located on the radical side of the battle for the expulsion of slavery and the expansion of free black rights, Charlotte's destiny as a prominent "race" woman was inevitable.[6] Looking into the inner and intimate world of the young Charlotte Forten, one would find an extended family of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who created a home that was warm and loving, nurturing, structured, and overflowing with tireless reformers. Religion was vital to the moral and intellectual character and activities of Forten women, men, and children, and they were members of Philadelphia's venerable St. Thomas Episcopal Church. The expression of one's religious beliefs for Charlotte's family, as for many Christians of the era, especially meant service to one's community and nation. Lottie described her duty in poetic form in 1856:

In the earnest path of duty, With the high hopes and hearts sincere,
We, to useful lives aspiring, Daily meet to labor here.
Not the great and gifted only He appoints to do his will,
But each one, however lowly, Has a mission to fulfill.
Knowing this, toil we unwearied, With true hearts and purpose high;
—We would win a wreath immortal
Whose bright flowers ne'er fade and die.

Within the constructs of her time and place, that duty meant advocating the abolition of slavery and establishing black equal rights, even if that advocacy required supporting revolt, as it did in the case of her ideological backing of John Brown's 1859 insurrection in Harpers Ferry and the bloody Civil War that ripped apart the nation.[7]

It was, after all, a war whose desired consequences had been fought for by generations of her kin. Everyone in Charlotte's family, everyone she knew, admired, emulated, and loved, was in this battle for black freedom and equality. Her grandfather, the well-respected businessman James Forten, among many other abolitionist efforts publicly opposed black colonization to Africa and organized the campaign against the idea; helped to organize the first National Negro Convention; was one of the earliest and most generous supporters of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*; and became the backbone, along with his sons and sons-in-law, of the American Moral Reform Society. The elder Forten, along with Charlotte's father and her uncles, commanded the core of the Philadelphia male elite helping to create, define, and sustain the antislavery movement in the City of Brotherly Love. Her brilliant father, Robert, served on the Board of Managers for the Young Men's Antislavery Society of Philadelphia and was a member of the New England Antislavery Society and the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee.[8] Charlotte's affluent, Amherst-educated uncle, Robert Purvis, not only accompanied James Forten in supporting Garrison's *Liberator* but also was known as the "godfather"/"President" of the underground railroad through his support and governance of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee that he created in 1837.[9] Purvis also helped to found the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 and served as president of the latter five times.[10]

Two generations of Forten men and women taught Lottie, through example and instruction, that her gender, like her race, was to have no impact on her deep commitment to and public support of black egalitarianism. The family and their close associates supported a woman's right to take up public reform efforts almost as much as they promoted abolition and racial equality. Robert Purvis was the first vice-president of the Woman's Suffrage Society, headed by Lucretia Mott.[11] All of Charlotte's female kin, moreover, were well-educated, public activists. Charlotte's mother, Virginia Woods; her grandmother Charlotte Vadine Forten; and her paternal aunts, Margaretta, Harriet, and Sarah, were all founding members of the

Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Margaretta had helped to draft the organization's constitution and was its secretary, while Sarah served on its Board of Managers.[12] Sarah Forten Purvis also was a founding member of the Philadelphia Female Vigilance Committee, the first nonwhite vice-president of the National Women's Suffrage Association, and an active antislavery poet, sometimes publishing under the pen name "Ada."[13] Harriet Forten, Robert Purvis's spouse, was a member of the Free Produce Society, which opposed purchase of items produced by slave labor. The couple also were major activists in the American Equal Rights Association, which advocated the franchise for all men and women.[14] Indeed, the Forten sisters were so well regarded in abolitionist circles that John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the poem "To the Daughters of James Forten" in their honor.[15]

The Fortens' stately brick home on Philadelphia's Lombard Street, where Charlotte was a constant visitor and actually lived for a decade after her mother's untimely death from consumption in 1840 and her little brother's demise several weeks earlier, would have been witness to growing racial tensions, including the Lombard Street race riot of 1842, which involved black and Irish immigrant workers, and a nearby antiblack riot in 1849.[16] These violent events and the angry discussions of them by her family (Robert Purvis moved his family out of the city after the 1842 riot) would have influenced a young Lottie tremendously. Her socialization, however, was affected more by the Forten home typically being filled to the brim with radical antislavery theorists and workers, black and white. The home was also a stop on the Underground Railroad, even stocked with a trapdoor that led to a secret place for refugees from slavery to hide on their way to a more secure freedom. So too probably was the Byberry country home of Robert Purvis that served as one of Charlotte's rural retreats. William Lloyd Garrison; Charles and Sarah Remond; Lucretia Mott; Sarah Mapps Douglass and her parents, Robert and Grace; Peter Williams's family; Joseph and Amy Williams Cassey; Wendell Phillips; John Greenleaf Whittier; William Nell; Lucy Larcom; William Wells Brown; and William Still were all part of the Forten inner circle of friends and fellow reformers. Charlotte was raised for the great resistance against racial oppression, and by the time she was an adolescent, she too was publicly involved in the "family business."

Everything Charlotte did, including her own "self-improvement" efforts, was supposed to be ammunition for the struggle. Lottie had to be an exemplar of intellectual accomplishment, cultural refinement, and moral

perfection in order to prove to the world that blacks were not, as was commonly believed, even among many "radical abolitionists," intellectually, socially, and culturally inferior. Black people had to demonstrate over and over again that they were naturally the equals of whites in every way and, as such, should have equal rights. Nothing, not even her health or her happiness, should have greater priority in her life. How could she, after all, be happy in a world where racism raged? Why would she even want to live in such a world that she could not hope to change? These were heady concepts and a heavy burden for the shy, introspective girl growing up in a home with a father growing more frustrated each year over the plight of his race in the United States, a frustration that eventually led Robert Forten in 1855 to emigrate to Canada and later to Great Britain with his second wife and two sons, leaving Charlotte behind to continue the fight without his financial or psychological support.[17]

It is little wonder then that Charlotte, deemed the shining star of the new generation of Forten activists and a radical woman of color, took on the mantle of immediate abolition and racial equality as her great missions in life. Her work in the Civil War as a teacher, troop supporter, war correspondent of sorts, and nurse for the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts after its disastrous defeat at Fort Wagner, would contribute profoundly to her lifelong ambitions. But first came her intellectual and political preparations.

The Fortens were as passionate about developing their intellectual acumen as they were about abolition, temperance, women's rights, and the other social causes they embraced. Education, they believed, provided them with opportunities to know the world and the people within it. The family, like many of their free people of color friends and associates, regarded it as a basic tool of freedom for the mind, spirit, and condition—a tool, therefore, necessary for every free person and one that distinguished the free from the enslaved. Moreover, to be educated demonstrated that people of color had a natural intelligence that was equal to that of other races. Indeed, their formal education elevated the Fortens and their black associates above most white citizens at the time, given the incomplete and poor state of public education nationally, but particularly in the slaveholding South.

The Fortens had to be able not just to read and write but also to think, to analyze, to debate, and to create possible solutions to the many problems of their race. The large family spent many hours talking and debating academic, social, and political issues—discussions that had long-lasting and

profound impact on the developing intellect of Lottie. James Forten Sr. attended the free primary school for black children in Philadelphia established by the famed abolitionist Anthony Benezet. His formal education ended at the age of ten when his father died and he had to go to work in order to help support his family. Still, his intellectual curiosity, the rudiments of a formal education that he had been able to get, and his continued efforts at self-education stood him well. Forten's businesses—sailmaking and real estate investments—were for a time some of the most successful and lucrative in antebellum Philadelphia, stemming in large part from his sailmaking inventions. James Forten's ability and his intellect created an expectation within his household. The family patriarch's dedication to education was matched by that of his wife. Charlotte Vadine was a teacher, and the two together socialized their children to appreciate the value of an excellent education.

James Forten supplemented his wife's teaching of their children with private tutors, trying to assure that the next generation of Forten men and women would be an intellectual force of some reckoning. The children succeeded admirably. Charlotte's father, Robert, in particular, was academically gifted. As a young man, he was known locally as a talented mathematician, poet, and orator. During his youth, he constructed a nine-foot telescope that was exhibited at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute.[18] Robert might have been considered the most intellectually accomplished—but he had stiff competition, particularly from the women in his life. His sisters Sarah and Harriet also were noted poets, Margaretta founded the Lombard School for black youth in Philadelphia, and Charlotte's mother clearly also had an impressive formal education.

Charlotte's father had especially elevated intellectual goals for his daughter. Like his father, he hired tutors for Lottie even though her Aunt Margaretta administered her school in their father's home. Robert refused, on principle, to place Charlotte in a racially segregated school. He decided to send the studious teen to board away from Philadelphia so she would have richer educational opportunities and be able to continue to evolve as an abolitionist and reformer. He chose Salem, a bustling Massachusetts city with the third largest black population in the state at the time Charlotte went to reside there.

In 1854, the year that Charlotte Forten started to keep her journal, she began to matriculate at the Higginson Grammar School in Salem, where

she lived in the home of family friends—the celebrated antislavery lecturer Charles Lenox Remond, and his wife, an old Forten family friend and race activist, Amy Matilda Williams Cassey. Remond was the most important African American lecturer before Frederick Douglass arrived on the scene. His sister, Sarah Parker Remond, visited his home often. She too was a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society—the first black woman to hold that distinction. Despite the close ties between the Fortens and the Casseys, however, one can only imagine Lottie's despair at being sent away from everything and everyone whom she knew intimately to a new city, a new home, and a novel and challenging intellectual world. It was, however, a sacrifice that her father and stepmother, Mary Hanscome, deemed necessary for the "cause" and Lottie's intellectual well-being.

Charlotte obliged. Although she struggled with her health—particularly through bouts of "lung fever," depression, social anxiety, and a deep longing to be reunited with her family—she thrived intellectually and became politically engaged. A year and a half after arriving in Salem, Charlotte graduated from the Higginson Grammar School with "decided éclat" and produced the winning graduation poem, which was published in the *Liberator.* It was the first of her public honors for academic merit and literary talent. In the next two years, Charlotte graduated from the Salem Normal School, ranking first in her class and again writing the best poem, which also was published in the *Liberator.* She became fluent in French and German and read Latin and Greek, voraciously exploring ancient history and philosophy, reading literary classics, and studying algebra. Forten's nightly reading schedule would cause any intellectual of the day to blush. She also played the classical piano and organ beautifully.

As was the custom for women in her family and those with whom she lived in Salem, the adolescent Lottie threw herself into the world of radical abolition soon after she arrived. She joined the biracial Salem Anti-Slavery Society in 1855 and became an active member. Along with the Remond, Purvis, and Cassey women, Charlotte routinely attended lectures, fairs, bazaars, plays, and musical recitals dedicated to the cause of abolition.

Although Lottie would not have admitted it because genteel gender conventions of the era mandated extreme modesty, and her adolescent self-doubt obscured it, she became a budding star in the antislavery movement. Many things contributed to this phenomenon, including her numerous published poems—in the *Liberator* in 1855, 1856, and 1859; in the *National Antislavery Standard* in 1858, 1859, and 1860; and in Bishop Daniel Payne's *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1858. Her impressive antislavery pedigree and striking physical beauty also certainly played a role. By her late teens and early twenties, Charlotte was well known in most radical abolitionist quarters as a beautiful, brilliant young member of the "proscribed race," whose presence and accomplishments would put any proslavery argument linked to ideas of natural black inferiority to shame. John Greenleaf Whittier, the "Poet of Abolition" and a close friend, described Forten to Theodore Dwight Weld as "a young lady of exquisite refinement, quiet culture and ladylike and engaging manners and personal appearance. I look upon her as one of the most gifted representatives of her class."[19] A local journalist concurred, noting in 1856 that Charlotte Forten "presented in her own mental endowments and propriety of demeanor an honorable vindication of the claims of her race to the rights of mental culture and privileges of humanity."[20] By age nineteen, as the nation edged closer to division and the Civil War, Charlotte publicly lived the life of the gifted, if financially strapped, race woman.

Forten's fine education was not thought necessary just to expand her intellectual horizons, to assist in her reform efforts, or to impress those who would deem her intellectually inferior because of her race. It also was meant to provide her with a means to support herself as a single woman with no anticipated inheritance. Despite her family's earlier financial success, Robert Forten had lost most of his money, which was tied up in his father's debt-ridden sailmaking business and real estate holdings, even before Lottie moved to Salem. Her family had all been living off her stepmother's separate estate since Charlotte was a child, but most of that income had been put aside for her younger half-brothers.[21] Robert Forten's family struggled financially both at home and after he moved to Canada. By the time Lottie had completed her formal education at the Salem Normal School, it was painfully clear that she would have to be a full-time working woman in order to provide for herself. She sought help from the head of her school for a placement.

By the fall of 1859, Charlotte had acquired a position teaching at the Epes Grammar School, making her the teacher of color at a mostly white public school in Salem.[22] Within the year, however, she had to resign her position temporarily because of her poor health. She suffered terribly from "lung fever," known today as viral pneumonia. Her illness was both physically and emotionally debilitating. Charlotte, no doubt, continuously was reminded

of and frightened by its deadly risks since her mother, her favorite cousins, an uncle, and two of her best friends in Salem all had died of the illness.[23] She sought treatment at a water cure in Worcester, where she met Dr. Seth Rogers, who was to become her dear friend in Massachusetts and in South Carolina when they both arrived to do service during the Civil War. One of her visits with the "excellent" doctor, she noted, "did me a world of good—spiritually as well as physically. To me he seems one of the best and noblest types of manhood I ever saw. In my heart I shall thank him always."[24] Rest and the "cure" gave Charlotte some physical ease. Nonetheless, her health problems, which grew to include poor eyesight, dragged on for the next couple of years, depriving her of much needed income and eventually driving her back to Philadelphia to reside with her grandmother, aunts, and cousins.[25] Noting her lack of funds because of illness, she wrote in 1857 after her doctor mandated that she rest instead of teach: "Shall be glad to rest if it can only be arranged so that I may have school again in the Fall. If it cannot be so, I know not what I *shall* do."[26]

Despite her popularity and intellectual acclaim in radical abolitionist circles, Lottie was terrorized by self-doubts concerning every aspect of her life—her talent, her intellectual abilities, her looks, her private relationships, her health, and even her commitment to the cause. While the abolitionist public saw her as a shining example of black feminine excellence, she saw herself as mediocre in everything she attempted, desperately trying not to fail or to be publicly exposed. Her self-doubt and criticism arose from years of enduring racist encounters in a society in which she was a numerical minority and nearly everyone thought blacks inferior, as well as from the lack of emotional and financial support from her family after she moved to Salem. Even her elite status and exceptional opportunities could not shield her from the bitter effects of racist exclusion. Writing on April 7, 1858, she noted one of the several examples of pain and humiliation: "Had a manifestation of the wicked, contemptible prejudice, which made my blood boil with indignation," she wrote. "How long, how long will this last! It is *very* hard to bear."[27]

All of her life, Charlotte strove to prove herself the equal of whites, not only to them but also to herself. Her diary revealed a pervasive sense of unworthiness and insecurity. One long entry, dated June 15, 1858, reads as a personal psalm of her deep failure. "Have been under-going a thorough self-examination," she wrote: "The result is a mingled feeling of sorrow,

shame and self-contempt. Have realized more deeply and bitterly than ever in my life my own ignorance and folly. Not only am I without the gifts of Nature, Wit, beauty and talent; without the accomplishments which nearly every one of my age, whom I know, possesses; but I am not even intelligent." She could muster "not the shadow of an excuse" for these failures, which came despite her "many advantages of late years." "[I]t is entirely owing to my own want of energy, perseverance and application," she continued, "that I have not improved them. It grieves me deeply to think of this. I have read an immense quantity, and it has all amounted to nothing, because I have been too indolent and foolish to take the trouble of reflecting. I have wasted more time than I dare think of, in idle day-dreams, one of which was, how much I should know and do before I was twenty-one." Approaching twenty-one with "only a wasted life to look back upon," she confessed "to intellectual defects [and] a disposition whose despondency and fretfulness have constantly led me to look on the dark side of things, and effectually prevented me from contributing to the happiness of others; whose contrariness has often induced me to do those things which I ought not to have done, and to leave undone those things which I ought to have done, and wanted to do,—and we have as dismal a picture as one could look upon; and yet hardly dismal enough to be faithful. Of course, I want to try to reform. But how to begin!"[28]

The Civil War provided Lottie the profound opportunity to "begin again" that she desperately sought. Her desires concerning the war were, in part, the hope of many black radical abolitionists—a conflict that would bring the end to slavery in the United States. After all, the institution might have been growing in the number of enslaved and in economic importance nationally, but it already had been eliminated in most of the United States by 1861 and throughout most of the Americas—beginning in Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1793, Haiti in 1804, parts of Central America in 1824 and Mexico in 1829, gradually in the British colonies beginning in 1833, in French and Danish Caribbean colonies in 1848, and increasingly in South America (except Brazil and Surinam). In the ten years between 1813 and 1823, for example, slavery was abolished in Argentina, Columbia, and Chile. From 1831 to 1854, the institution had been outlawed in Bolivia, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.[29] Was it such a leap, then, for many like Charlotte to hope that the Civil War would sound the death knell to slavery and open the path to free black citizenship and social equality in the United States?

War, however, was a man's domain—a white man's domain principally because black men were excluded from active service in the U.S. Army for nearly half of the Civil War. Still, Lottie longed to be part of it. She had participated in the struggle against slavery in her classrooms, as part of sewing circles, in petition drives, in her literary publications, and certainly in her private conversations and correspondence. But now was the time for a different kind of action. When John Greenleaf Whittier suggested that she apply through a northern freedmen's relief society to travel to the "Sunny South" to teach the black contrabands behind Union lines, she put aside her self-doubt and fears about her health and, for the first time, pursued a life away from her community of elite, well-educated people of color and family friends.

Although the cause of the race was her major inspiration, Charlotte also needed paid work. She wanted to be financially independent. She also yearned to make life-altering decisions, to have an experience that would build self-confidence and help her become an independent woman. At twenty-five, Charlotte was beginning to believe she might not marry or have a family. She had witnessed her Aunt Margaretta's confined life as the family spinster of her generation—taking care of aging parents and young nieces and nephews and teaching in a segregated school located in her family home. Margaretta Forten's activism in the cause had been hemmed in by her duty to family in exchange for financial dependence as a single, undercompensated teacher. Charlotte wanted more for herself. To live and work in the hated South, physically and academically to help emancipate her race, to bring support and aid to black Union soldiers and their families, permitted Charlotte to believe she was standing on the threshold of miraculous change for herself, her race, and her nation—that she was an agent of that change. This was her chance, perhaps her singular chance, she believed, to prove her Christian worth and racial equality—to rescue her race, and in so doing, to rescue herself. It also was her first chance truly to embrace her African heritage, to recognize and accept her distinction as a person of African descent. It was a profound moment in Charlotte's sense of self-realization and acceptance.

Charlotte Forten's diary detailing her life among Union soldiers and Low Country contrabands for seventeen months is, foremost, a deeply personal record of her physical, emotional, and intellectual life. Yet the Civil War started and moved quickly forward for more than a year before Lottie

even mentions it in her journal. To be fair, she makes no entries between January 1, 1860, and June 22, 1862—one of the few gaps found in the first four of her five diaries that have been located. Certainly she knew of the war and its potential importance to the abolitionist cause because of her active role in radical abolitionist circles at the time. Even in the first entry once she began journal-keeping again, a summary explanation of what had occurred during the period of silence, Charlotte does not mention the Civil War. Her remarks, however, do indicate that neglect of her diary was linked to severe bouts of "lung fever" that brought her at one point "very, very near the grave." Her frail health again had curbed her financial and political ambitions, but that would not continue to be the case.[30]

Three weeks after Charlotte resumed writing in the diary, she gave her first indication of the war's relevance from her perspective. Commenting on abolitionist Wendell Phillips's famed "Address Delivered Before the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society" at the Music Hall in Boston on July 6, 1862, she expressed complete agreement with Phillips's biting criticism of President Abraham Lincoln. Philips had used his speech to criticize Lincoln for his reluctance to use the war to force black liberation. The president's failure to do so, Philips concluded, indicated an appalling lack of leadership. "Oh dear A. let us pray to the good All Father," Forten wrote that night after returning from Phillips's speech, "to spare this noble soul [Phillips] to see the result of his life-long labors—the freedom of the slaves."[31]

Her second mention of the war came after she visited her old friend and mentor John Greenleaf Whittier and his sister Elizabeth in early August 1862.[32] Whittier, who adored Lottie and the other Forten women, whom he had met years before through their common abolitionist efforts, believed Charlotte should go to the South to try, through her teaching and example, to "uplift" the lowliest of her race—the provisionally freed contrabands in the Low Country of South Carolina. It did not take much for him to convince her to do so. On her birthday, a week after she had stayed with Whittier and his sister, Charlotte decided that, while she did not have the "accomplishments, the society, the delights of travel which I have dreamed of and longed for all my life [and] am now convinced can never be mine," the move to Port Royal could be useful. "If I can go to Port Royal, I will try to forget all these desires," she wrote: "I will pray that God in his goodness will make me noble enough to find my highest happiness in doing my duty."[33]

Whittier wrote a letter of recommendation to aid in her young friend's application for a teaching position. For the next two months, Charlotte busied herself traveling back and forth between freedmen-aid organizations in Boston and Philadelphia, chasing the opportunity to go to the heart of the Confederate States of America with Union-aligned doctors, teachers, and missionaries.

On October 22, 1862, Forten sailed from New York City for St. Helena Island, South Carolina, on one day's notice—relieved to finally be employed by the Port Royal Relief Committee as a teacher of the contrabands.[34] Her excitement was infectious. Approaching Port Royal, she exclaimed: "We were in a jubilant state of mind and sang 'John Brown' with a will. . . . [W]e soon began to feel quite at home in the very heart of Rebeldom."[35] Charlotte would be one of more than ninety persons, about one-fifth of them women, representing freedmen-relief organizations in that area. With an annual salary of about $300, Charlotte worked in the primary school that Laura Towne, a physician and teacher, and fellow instructor Ellen Murray had created on an abandoned plantation on the island.[36] She taught young children during weekdays and adults in the evenings and in Sabbath school. The needs of people there, including Union soldiers with whom she came into contact, were diverse enough to mandate that she sometimes step outside her educational role. During almost two years there, Forten labored as a missionary, nurse, music mistress, performer, seamstress, and store clerk. Her intellectual curiosity and refined manners equipped her well to take on the additional roles of explorer, keen observer, reporter, and, in addition, a much sought-after dinner companion and romantic interest. But was she as well equipped to confront "race" as manifest in the South Carolina Low Country? Unlike African Americans that Charlotte might have encountered almost anywhere else in the United States, those in the Low Country typically were Gullah, arguably the most culturally distinct, linguistically different, African Americans in North America.[37]

Her first reaction, not surprisingly, was negative: "'Twas a strange sight as our boat approached the landing at Hilton Head," she wrote upon arrival. "On the wharf was a motely assemblage,—soldiers, officers and contrabands of every hue and size. They were mostly black, however, and certainly the most dismal specimens I ever saw."[38]

For a member of Charlotte's hyperintellectual, assimilationist, multiracial, elite cadre located in the urban North, the Sea Islands and their

Gullah inhabitants proved a shock. It is not certain what she expected of the contrabands—her diary largely details expectations of herself. Race, for Charlotte, was bound up in the notion of social, political, and economic power hierarchies determined by one's skin color and phenotype, not culture. It is not clear Charlotte had considered that she would find an array of cultures among black southerners, for nothing in her formal education, or even in the lectures from former slaves she had encountered at abolitionist events in Boston, Salem, Philadelphia, or New York, really spoke to this diversity. Like most Yankee missionaries and teachers who arrived during the war, she assumed the enslaved were culturally distinct from free blacks outside of the South largely because, as slaves, they had been denied a formal education, humane treatment, and respect—not because they had managed to maintain significant attributes of ancestral western/western-central African cultures.

But Charlotte proved to be a quick study. She soon became attracted to the Low Country's Gullah people, particularly the children, whom she greatly enjoyed teaching and preparing for freedom. "We went into the school," she wrote in her diary on October 29, 1862, "and heard the children read and spell. . . . I noticed with pleasure how bright, how eager to learn many of them seem. . . . Dear children, born in slavery but free at last! . . . My heart goes out to you. I shall be glad to do all that I can to help you."[39]

Charlotte also was interested in and committed to their parents and the other adults she encountered. She searched deeply to understand the cultural context of their lives and developed an appreciation of it and its practitioners. While she was not initially comfortable with the cultural and class differences between herself and the "contraband," the predominance of the "black race" in her temporary home reassured Charlotte, and even comforted her. The coast of South Carolina—Beaufort, St. Helena, Edisto, and the other islands that Charlotte visited—with its magnificent flora and fauna, its physical warmth, the ocean and marshes, its teeming black population, military victories, and resulting "freedom" proved to be a perfect setting for new introspection and communal experiences for Charlotte. She felt serenely happy and fulfilled during most of her stay.

Forten fell in love with the Low Country Gullah people, who, she quickly realized, shared with her the burdens of their race and a desire for freedom. She often recorded in her journal small biographies of the formerly enslaved with whom she came into daily contact—lauding (sometimes roman-

ticizing, occasionally with a patronizing tone) their heroism and survival of the physical and psychological pain they had endured under slavery. She summarized, for example, the story of the centenarian Daphne, who had been brought as an enslaved adolescent from Africa just after the American Revolution.[40] Forten wrote the story of "old Harriet," the child of Africans who lost three of her children to the domestic trade and who spoke a "very foreign tongue"; of Harriet's daughter Tillah and Tillah's husband, "a gallant looking young soldier—a member of the black regiment," and their sweet baby who died soon after birth; and of Celia, "one of the best women on the place," Charlotte explained, "a cripple" because "her feet and limbs were so badly frozen by exposure that her legs were obliged to be amputated just above her knees." "But she," Charlotte added admiringly, "manages to get about almost as actively as any of the others. Her husband, Thomas, has been a soldier, and is now quite ill with pneumonia."[41]

Forten's journal captured many other stories of these black people she met and served. Indeed, Lottie was so moved by her sense of *belonging,* in a somewhat superficial but nevertheless primal manner, to the contrabands that she even fantasized about building a family of her own by adopting one of their children—which would have meant her becoming part of their community and culture and they part of hers. Not even she could fully understand her exposed passion, her profound sense of being connected to this community of contrabands. "It is a very wild thing," she noted, "I am quite in love with one of the children here—little Amaretta. . . . She is a cunning little kittenish thing with such a gentle demure look. She is not quite black, and has pretty, close hair but delicate features. She is bright too. I love the child. Wish I c[ou]ld take her for my own."[42]

Charlotte was mesmerized by, and found beauty in, the sound of voices and linguistic difference in the Gullah people's language, the movement, rituals, clothing styles, and sense of time that recalled African cultural antecedents. The rhythm and harmony of their voices prompted her to ask the Gullah people, even the children, again and again, to sing for her. Soon after reaching Beaufort, Charlotte heard her first "concert" by boatmen hired to row the northerners to St. Helena. "As we glided along," she wrote, "the rich sonorous tones of boatmen broke upon the evening stillness. Their singing impressed me much. It was so sweet and strange and solemn. . . . It was very, very impressive. I want to hear these men sing Whittier's 'Song of the Negro Boatmen.'"[43] Once she finally arrived at her school, again it

was the people's singing and dance movements that deeply affected her. "The singing delighted me most," she noted: "They sang beautifully in their rich, sweet, clear tones, and with that peculiar swaying motion which I had noticed before in the older people, and which seems to make their singing all the more effective." Charlotte often celebrated characteristic forms of Gullah movement in religious ritual, particularly the ring shout. "This evening," she wrote in May of 1863, "the people, after 'Praise,' had one of the grandest shouts, and Lizzie and I, in a dark corner of the Praise House amused ourselves with practicing a little. It is wonderful that perfect time the people keep with hands, feet and indeed with every part of the body. I enjoy these 'shouts' very much."[44]

Ritualized events among Low Country blacks, she came to understand, also meant special clothing quite distinctive from what she, as an elite free woman of color from the North, had been socialized to believe appropriate for solemn, or serious, occasions. Bright-colored handkerchiefs as symbols of celebration adorned the heads of women, who wore white for sacred rituals such as baptism and at funerals. "Clean gowns on, clean head handkerchiefs, bright colored, of course," she remarked of one church service. "I noticed that some had even reached the dignity of straw hats, with bright feathers."[45] And time, in Forten's opinion, was something simply not well kept. Both as a testament to their lives and work in an agrarian economy, as well as to different concepts of time influenced by their western/western-central African cultural origins, the Gullah did not, from Lottie's northern, industrialized perspective, either arrive or leave "on time." She attributed this tardiness to the general lack of clocks and the Gullah people's inability to tell time.[46]

Although Charlotte initially chafed at the tardiness of adults and children alike, she soon found herself loosening some of the tight controls that had defined her life before she moved among them. Similarly, female gender conventions that bound her like a tight corset in Salem, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York began to give way as she blossomed in her new freedom. She slept late, routinely rode horseback, owned and was prepared to shoot a handgun, flirted a great deal with several of the officers stationed nearby, and even fell passionately in love with one of them. Overall, her life as a Civil War teacher among the contrabands and Union army in South Carolina proved fulfilling in ways she had never allowed herself completely to anticipate.

Before long, in fact, Charlotte began to understand that, no matter what her professional and political intentions had been when she applied for her teaching position, life in a military zone prompted, indeed demanded, profound personal change. She did remain a little shy and certainly experienced moments of the self-doubt and depression that had shadowed her as a sickly adolescent and young adult. But Forten's life in South Carolina changed forever her self-perception as a woman and as a person of African descent—of what she could expect to enjoy in her life and what she had to contribute to society.

Forten's diaries document these transformations as they unfolded within herself and also as she observed them among her fellow teachers, plantation supervisors, the contrabands, and the black and white men who fought for the Union. Much of her assessment of how well individuals performed their duties to the war effort was based, not surprisingly, on her perception of how they perceived and interacted with black people—the contrabands, soldiers, and herself. They had to be, in Charlotte's estimation, "true friends" of the "People." She believed that most of the teachers were such friends. She described her supervisor, Laura Towne, for example, as "the most indispensable person on the place, and the people are devoted to her. And indeed she is quite a remarkable young lady. . . . I like her energy and decision of character." Ellen Murray, their associate, was "whole-souled warm-hearted.[47] Charlotte had noticed, however, that some of the Union officers, as well as some of the plantation supervisors sent to manage the valuable cotton crop, were racists who "should not come here." Of the supervisors' interactions with contrabands, she added, some are "strongly prejudiced against them and they have a contemptuous way of speaking of them that I do not like."[48] Having spent her public life exposed to the racist gaze in the antebellum North, Forten was keenly aware that some of the Union officers did not believe black soldiers were sufficiently courageous, disciplined, or intelligent.

Charlotte did establish close personal relationships with Union officers such as Brigadier General Rufus Saxton and, most especially, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, commander of the First South Carolina Volunteers, whom she remembered as a staunch supporter of the fugitive slave Anthony Burns. Higginson's regiment consisted of approximately seven hundred black men from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Charlotte

deeply admired these officers' efforts in the war, particularly their leadership of black southern soldiers. She appreciated the sustained emotional and physical burden the command and care of these troops prompted and openly worried about their health. Speaking of Colonel Higginson, she noted that "Col. H. is a perfectly delightful person in private.—So genial, so witty, so kind. But I noticed when he was silent, a care-worn almost sad expression on his earnest, noble face."[49]

Charlotte was deeply concerned with the treatment and fate of the black soldiers she encountered, particularly their physical survival, the well-being of their families, how well they demonstrated their military ability, and the ways in which white army officers treated them. Taking note of a dress parade she witnessed with the First South Carolina Volunteers—on the occasion of the grand celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation—Forten could not contain her pride and hope for the future of these men whom she believed held the destiny of their race in their hands. Conversely, she bitterly resented anyone who appraised their military skill and potential as free men with less enthusiasm. "The Dress Parade—the first I have ever seen—delighted me," she wrote. "It was a brilliant sight—the lone line of men in their brilliant uniforms, with bayonets gleaming in the sunlight," she continued. "The Col. looked splendid. The Dr. said the men went through the drill remarkably well. It seemed to me nothing could be more perfect. To me it was a grand triumph—that black regiment doing itself honor in the sight of the white officers, many of whom, doubtless 'came to scoff.' It was typical of what the race, so long down-trodden and degraded will yet achieve on this continent."[50]

Charlotte was extremely honored, as well, to meet Harriet Tubman in Beaufort. She and some of her peers spent a day with Tubman while the famed formerly enslaved woman recounted her efforts to assist fugitive slaves to freedom and to provide intelligence to, and serve in, the Union military. "She is a wonderful woman—a real heroine," Charlotte pronounced in her diary. "How exciting it was to hear her tell her story. . . . My own eyes were full as I listened to her. . . . I am glad I saw her—*very* glad."[51]

Charlotte was never more impressed than when she met Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, commander of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry, and his African American troops. Their first encounter occurred on July 2,

1863, when Shaw and Major Edward Needles Hallowell, the regiment's second in command, visited the home Lottie shared with Laura Towne and other teachers in order to have tea. She was immediately enthralled with the young Bostonian. "I am perfectly charmed with Col. Shaw," she gushed. "He seems to me in every way one of the most delightful persons I have ever met. There is something girlish about him, and yet I never saw anyone more manly. To me he seems a thoroughly lovable person. And there is something so exquisite about him." Although she had "seen him but once, yet I cannot help feeling a really affectionate admiration for him. We had a very pleasant talk on the moonlit piazza, and then went to the Praise House to see the shout. The Col. looked and listened with the deepest interest. And after it was over, expressed himself much gratified."[52]

A subsequent visit heightened her enthusiasm for Shaw. "What purity, what nobleness of soul," she wrote, "what exquisite gentleness in that beautiful face! As I look at it I think 'the bravest are the tenderest.' . . . May his life be spared to her! [his mother]."[53] Charlotte made a point to request his safety in the lists that comprised her daily prayers. "God bless him!" she scrawled on July 8, "God keep him in His care, and grant that his men may do nobly and prove themselves worthy of him!"[54]

Charlotte was devastated when, on July 20, she received the news of the Fifty-Fourth's disastrous defeat at Fort Wagner two days early. The report indicated that one-tenth of the regiment was lost, including Robert Shaw. Her journal captured her pain from that week: "[O]ur (*ours* especially he seems to me) noble, beautiful Colonel is killed and the regt. cut to pieces," she confessed.[55] "To-night comes news oh, so sad, so heart sickening," she confided in her diary a few hours later. "I cannot, cannot believe . . . I can scarcely write. There was an attack on Fort Wagner. The 54th put in advance; fought bravely, desperately, but was finally overpowered and driven back after getting into the Fort. Thank Heaven! They fought bravely."[56] The following day Charlotte set aside her teaching and went to Beaufort in order to nurse the soldiers of the Fifty-Fourth, which she did, as well as mending their torn and shot up uniforms, writing letters home for them, and generally trying to cheer their "brave, grateful hearts" for the next several days.[57]

Charlotte's experiences with freed people, as well as soldiers, teachers, and other Union sympathizers, included romantic encounters. Indeed, Forten's diaries from the Civil War era strongly suggest that she fell in love

with one particular officer—Dr. Seth Rogers, who had been one of her personal physicians in Massachusetts. Rogers was born in 1823 and raised as a Quaker on a farm in Danby, Vermont. Like Charlotte, he was an ardent and radical abolitionist. He had left his business, as owner and resident physician of the Worcester Hydropathic Institution, to serve as surgeon alongside his longtime friend Higginson in the first organized southern black Union regiment to fight in the Civil War. Higginson and Rogers had a history as abolitionists together—the two had helped organize the Massachusetts Kansas Aid Committee to keep Kansas "free soil" in the 1850s. Rogers was married to Hannah Mitchell, and they shared a daughter, Isabel, who was eight in 1863.[58]

A married, older white man hardly was an eligible bachelor, but Rogers's marital status must have reassured Lottie that her feelings would not be realized physically, thereby avoiding a scandal that neither she nor he likely would survive. Her emotional involvement with a white man, moreover, would not have been beyond Lottie's emotional capability or even yearning. Biracial social relationships were not novel in her family. Charlotte's mother, stepmother, and uncles Robert and Joseph Purvis were all the children of biracial relationships between black women and white men—men who had made certain their children were well educated and very secure financially. At age twenty-five, with few past romantic encounters, Charlotte had a freedom during her Civil War experience that provided a ripe time to experience her first great love.

Despite their racial differences, Lottie and Seth were quite compatible. She found him to be well educated, friendly, attentive, and compassionate—and devoted to black freedom and equality. They also shared a love of nature, horseback riding, and reading. He seemed to be equally attracted to Charlotte, and with good reason. By most accounts, she was beautiful, brilliant, and had the open admiration and social acceptance of Rogers's dear friend Thomas Higginson. Rogers also was a friendly, familiar face from Charlotte's Massachusetts home. Seth would confide to his wife that Charlotte was the same for him. "But the dearest friend I found among them," he wrote regarding his first week at Camp Saxon, "was Miss [Charlotte] Forten, whom you remember. She is a teacher of the freed children on St. Helena Island."[59] Charlotte wrote more passionately in her diary of that same meeting: "Just as my foot touched the plank, on landing, a hand

grabbed mine and a well known voice spoke my name. It was my dear and noble friend, Dr Seth Rogers. I cannot tell you dear Ami how delighted I was to see him; how *good* it was to see a friend from the North, and *such* a friend."[60] She later wrote of the "*unspeakable*" happiness she experienced when they met. "But I fear for his health," she confessed," I fear the exposure of a camp life. Am glad to see that he has warm robes and blankets, to keep him comfortable. I wish I c'ld do something for him."[61]

The romance flourished over the next year as Lottie and Seth continued to have regular contact and spend time with mutual friends. When Charlotte was ill, Dr. Rogers came to attend to her, as he did the week following their first meeting. Charlotte was delighted to see him on that occasion, though he could only stay a short while. During that visit, the doctor extracted a promise from Charlotte. "He said he would write to me often if I would write to him," she noted. "I shall do so gladly, for the sake of having letters from him. I don't deserve it I know."[62]

In the meantime, Rogers continued to correspond with his wife, describing his life in the South. A month after arriving, he confessed that he had tried to get Colonel Higginson to confiscate a piano they found in a warehouse and bring it to St. Helena. "I thought it would especially please Miss Forten to have it in her school," he explained. In the interim, the two had seen each other. He had written to Charlotte two more times—letting her know that he would be away on an expedition with the First South Carolina and describing how he was occupying his time. Charlotte, fearful that Seth had not received a letter she had sent, was openly anxious: "I fear he has not got my note. Not that 'twas of much importance, but I w'ld like him to know how constantly I think of him."[63]

Charlotte was elated when Dr. Rogers returned to the area with his regiment a few weeks later. Soon thereafter, he paid her a visit, sharing copious notes of what had transpired with the regiment while they were away. "It makes me so happy to see him safe back again," she wrote. "The kind, loving words he spoke to me to-night sank deep into my heart." But Rogers's words that evening were perhaps not exactly what Charlotte wanted to hear. It seemed that time away had given him an opportunity to get some emotional distance from the young teacher. He wanted her, he explained, to think of him as a brother. Charlotte complied but could not check her attraction. She noted in her diary: "He was in full uniform to-day. Makes a

splendid looking officer. I looked at him and his horse with childish admiration."[64]

Dr. Rogers also seemed to have difficulty pulling back. The next day he sought Charlotte out and walked her to school while confessing that "he wished he lived nearer that he might come in and read to me sometimes."[65] Ten days later, Seth and Charlotte shared dinner and then rode alone by horseback four miles. It was, Charlotte testified, "the most delightful ride I ever had in my life." The two stopped in the beautiful coastal woods, filled with flowers and scented evergreens. Upon dismounting, Rogers gathered and then wrapped long sprays of jasmine around Lottie's body, making her feel "as grand as a queen" and prompting one eyewitness to convey a sense of surprise. Of their trip back, Charlotte wrote almost in a swoon: "The young moon [was] just a silver bow—had a singular, almost violet tinge, and all around it in the heavens was a rosy glow, deepening every moment which was wonderfully beautiful." "How wild and unreal it all seemed," she continued in her journal, "and what happiness it was as we rode slowly along. . . . There is such a magnetism about him impossible to resist. I can never be thankful enough."[66] It was that same evening that Dr. Rogers told Charlotte that Col. Higginson intended for her to travel with the First South Carolina on its next expedition.[67] The following day, Dr. Rogers returned to his camp, and a day later Charlotte arrived, bringing him some of her ginger cakes. It was not the first time she had appealed to his sweet tooth. Writing to his wife the week earlier, the doctor had observed: "Yesterday, Miss Forten sent me, from St. Helena Island, a generous box of ginger cakes. I don't know how she learned my weakness."[68]

Their next few meetings, which usually occurred on weekends, involved exchanges of gifts and intimate conversation. Charlotte even spent time alone in Dr. Rogers's tent during her visit on February 21, 1863. When apart she mended his socks and sent copies of his much-loved contraband songs; he sent her sweet notes and her favorite flowers. The two wrote often, and he even sent her a note that his eight-year-old daughter Isabel had sent to him. "Indeed, it is very kind of him to let me see this little note," she confessed. "It somehow brings me closer to him." The thought of never seeing him again, Charlotte wrote, "makes my heat ache."[69] Two months passed with the two exchanging letters frequently. On April 3, Charlotte recorded that she had received a letter from Dr. Rogers and "a very light, pretty rocking chair"

he sent as a gift. "He says he will see me soon and tell me *all,*" she wrote, adding wistfully: "I hope it will be very soon, indeed. I do long to see him."[70]

Dr. Rogers did return after a couple of weeks, and the two continued to meet regularly, ride and dine together, and exchange intimacies. The plan for Charlotte to accompany the First South Carolina as a teacher for the enlisted men, however, fell through. Charlotte wrote in her journal on May 18 that Seth arrived bringing her a letter from Colonel Higginson. The colonel did not mince words—he could not allow Charlotte to accompany his regiment because "there have been of late scandalous reports of some of the ladies down here."[71] It seemed as if Charlotte and Seth had been found out, or at least their behavior had raised enough eyebrows to cause their mutual friend Higginson to take matters into his own hands.

Not surprisingly, the relationship between Forten and Rogers cooled soon thereafter, although they remained close. Lottie made a conscious effort to shift her attentions elsewhere—to Edward Pierce, for one.[72] Pierce, who supervised operations in the Sea Islands for the federal government, was young, well educated (Harvard and Brown), single, and quite attentive to Charlotte. He offered just the distraction she and Seth needed to bring their relationship back within the bounds of propriety. Pierce was, she confessed, "always so kind, so full of noble sympathy, and of eager enthusiasm in the great work in which he is engaged."[73]

After her nursing stint with the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts following the debacle at Fort Wagner, Charlotte returned to Philadelphia for much-needed rest. She traveled with other weary and depressed teachers, labor supervisors, and military personnel, including Seth Rogers and Edward Pierce. Although Seth subsequently returned to South Carolina with Charlotte on the same ship, their romantic moment seemed to have passed. The last mention of Dr. Rogers in her diary occurs on October 16, 1863, in which she describes their trip from New York to Hilton Head: "In spite of the pleasant company with me . . . had a rather dreary voyage being half sick nearly all the time."[74] Charlotte left the beautiful Sea Islands, her magnificent Gullah people, Laura Towne, Edward Pierce, and her "good" Dr. Rogers seven months later. Her father, who had returned from England to serve in the Union army, had died on April 24, 1864, of typhus in their Philadelphia home. It was time for Charlotte to bring an end to her Civil War experience. Grief-stricken and sick, she traveled back to Philadelphia to find other ways to continue her duty to her race.

The Civil War had changed Forten profoundly, as it had all those she knew at home and untold others throughout the nation. For years to come, she recalled her time in the war, having committed so much of it to her diary. She used her entries to inform letters to William Lloyd Garrison regarding the efforts of aid societies, military forces, missionaries, and the federal government to liberate the contrabands. He subsequently published them in the *Liberator* in 1862. A two-part article, which Charlotte called "Life on the Sea Islands," appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1864.[75] Her published writings helped the cause of the newly freed for material, medical, educational, and social assistance in the wake of war depredations and a hostile white southern master class that sought to maintain white supremacy.

The rich content of Charlotte Forten's diary entries from her time in the Sea Islands remained unavailable to a substantial audience until the middle of the twentieth century. The first published version, edited by Ray Allen Billington, appeared in 1953 under the title *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten: A Free Negro in the Slave Era.* Billington included about two-thirds of the first four journals but none of the fifth in his edition, omitting a considerable amount of important information from the antebellum and war years relating to Forten's relationships and intellectual development. Thirty-five years later, as part of the Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers, Oxford University Press published all the journals with full scholarly annotation. As editor of the new edition, I drew on several decades of scholarship that had enriched the literature since the early 1950s, which helped frame Forten's life and what she had written in her journals. In wealth of detail and historical value, the unabridged journals rank among the best and most revealing of those produced by the wartime generation. Readers seeking memorable testimony from the Civil War can turn with profit to the sections devoted to Forten's experiences in South Carolina. They convey wonderful insights into a remarkable young woman as well as providing an invaluable snapshot of the immense social, political, and military developments that unfolded in the South Carolina Low Country.[76]

NOTES

1. Charlotte Forten Grimké completed five journals, the third and fourth of which contain her Civil War entries. The dates for the five are as follows: Journal 1, 1854–56; Journal 2,

1857–58; Journal 3, 1858–63; Journal 4, 1863–64; Journal 5, 1885–92. The manuscript copies of the originals are in the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. All quotations in this essay are from *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké,* ed. Brenda E. Stevenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

2. See, for example, other published journals of Forten's contemporaries, including: Laura Matilda Towne, *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne: Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina, 1862–1884,* ed. Rupert Sargent Holland (1912; rpt., Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Library, 2009); Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment and Other Writings* (1870; rpt., New York: Penguin Classics, 1997); Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp With the 33d United States Colored Troops, Late 1st S.C. Volunteers* (1902; rpt., Laconia, N.H.: Laconia Publishers, 2016); Esther Hill Hawks, *A Woman Doctor's Civil War: Esther Hill Hawks' Diary,* ed. Gerald Schwartz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984); and Cyrus F. Boyd, *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861–1863,* ed. Mildred Thorne (1953; rpt., Diamond Bar, Calif.: Golden Springs Publishing, 2016).

3. Grimké, *Journals,* 434.

4. For details about Forten's early life and family, see Brenda E. Stevenson's introduction to Grimké, *Journals,* 3–55.

5. On January 6, 1832, abolitionist publisher and activist William Lloyd Garrison met in Boston with eleven other men, none of them of African descent, to form the New England Anti-Slavery Society (NEASS). The American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), a biracial umbrella organization of men and women that encouraged the development of state and local affiliates, was formed in December 1833, with a number of members from the NEASS as well as twenty-one Quakers; three blacks, including Robert Purvis; and four women (Brenda E. Stevenson, *What Is Slavery?* [London: Polity Press, 2015], 164; Mark L. Kamrath, "American Anti-Slavery Society," in *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia,* ed. Junius P. Rodriguez, 2 vols. [Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio, 2007], 2:161–62).

6. Regarding the illustrious Forten and Purvis families, see, for example: Grimké, *Journals*; Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Margaret Hope Bacon, *But One Race: The Life of Robert Purvis* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007); Janice Sumler-Lewis, "The Forten-Purvis Women of Philadelphia and the Anti-Slavery Crusade," *Journal of Negro History* 6 (Winter 1981–82): 281–88.

7. Regarding John Brown, see Grimké, *Journals,* 390.

8. "Robert Bridges Forten," *The Forten Family,* Fine Ancestry Project, 2009, establisher.angelfire.com/fortens.html.

9. Margaret Hope Bacon, "The Double Curse of Sex and Color: Robert Purvis and Human Rights," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 121 (January–April 1997): 63.

10. Margaret Hope Bacon, "Robert Purvis: President of the Underground Railroad," hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/legaciespurvis.pdf; Joseph A. Boromé, Jacob C. White, Robert B. Ayres, and J. M. McKim, "The Philadelphia Vigilance Committee," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (July 1968): 321.

11. Bacon, "Robert Purvis."

12. Sumler-Lewis, "Forten-Purvis Women of Philadelphia," 283–85.

13. Don Ammerman, "Purvis, Sarah Forten (c. 1811–c. 1898)," *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia,* 2002, www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/purvis-sarah-forten-c-1811-c-1898.

14. Sumler-Lewis, "Forten-Purvis Women of Philadelphia," 285.

15. Stevenson, "Introduction" to Grimké, *Journals,* 8–9.

16. Patrick Grubbs, "Riots (1830s and 1840s)," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia,* philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/riots-1830s-and-1840s/; Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840s and 1850s," *Pennsylvania History* 36 (October 1969): 387–88; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color* (Kindle Edition), location 5481.

17. Robert Bridges Forten remarried after the death of Charlotte's mother. He and his wife had two sons. They moved, in 1855, to Canada, staying until 1858. That year, they moved to England, where they remained until 1862 ("Robert Bridges Forten").

18. Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* Kindle location 4771.

19. Stevenson, "Introduction" to Grimké, *Journals,* 32–33.

20. Ibid.

21. Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* Kindle locations 5714–23.

22. Ibid., Kindle location 5937.

23. Stevenson, "Introduction" to Grimké, *Journals,* 34.

24. Grimké, *Journals,* 363.

25. Ibid., xxxii–xxxvi.

26. Stevenson, "Introduction" to Grimké, *Journals,* 35.

27. Grimké, *Journals,* 299.

28. Ibid., 315–16.

29. Stevenson, *What Is Slavery?* table 4.4, "Abolition time line (The Americas and the Caribbean)," 163.

30. Grimké, *Journals,* 362–63.

31. Ibid., 369.

32. Ibid., 372–74.

33. Ibid., 376.

34. Ibid., 380–82. On the relief efforts at Port Royal, see G. K. Eggleston, "The Work of Relief Societies During the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History* 14 (July 1929): 272–99 (regarding the number of aid workers, see 272); Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (1964; rpt., New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Ruth Clark, *Strangers and Sojourners at Port Royal* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

35. Grimké, *Journals,* 390.

36. Regarding teacher's salaries, see Eggleston, "The Work of Relief Societies," 277.

37. Regarding the Gullah people, see, for example: William S. Pollitzer, *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Michael Montgomery, ed., *The Crucible of Carolina: Essays in the Development of Gullah Language and Culture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

38. Grimké, *Journals,* 388.
39. Ibid., 391.
40. Ibid., 439.
41. Ibid., 412.
42. Ibid., 410.
43. Ibid., 389–90.
44. Ibid., 482.
45. Ibid., 393.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 392.
48. Ibid., 419–20.
49. Ibid., 433.
50. Ibid., 432.
51. Ibid., 442.
52. Ibid., 409–10.
53. Ibid., 493.
54. Ibid., 494.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 496.
58. "Wartime Letters from Seth Rogers, M.D., Surgeon of the First South Carolina, Afterwards the Thirty-Third U.S.C.T., 1862–1863," *Florida History Online,* floridahistoryonline/Projects/Rogers/index.html.
59. Dr. Seth Rogers to Hannah Rogers, January 1, 1863, "Wartime Letters from Seth Rogers, M.D."
60. Grimké, *Journals,* 428–29.
61. Ibid., 434.
62. Ibid., 436.
63. Ibid., 440.
64. Ibid., 447.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., 454–55.
67. Ibid., 455.
68. Dr. Seth Rogers to Hannah Rogers, February 5, 1863, "Wartime Letters from Seth Rogers, M.D."
69. Grimké, *Journals*, 461.
70. Ibid., 468.
71. Ibid., 484.
72. Regarding his work at Port Royal, South Carolina, see United States Department of the Treasury, *The Freedmen of Port Royal, South Carolina. Official Reports of Edward L. Pierce* (New York: Rebellion Records, 1863).
73. Grimké, *Journals,* 455.
74. Ibid., 508.

75. *The Liberator,* December 12, 19, 1862; *Atlantic Monthly*, May, June 1864.
76. Charlotte L. Forten, *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten: A Free Negro in the Slave Era,* ed. Ray Allen Billington (1953; paperback ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).