



The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States and Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party

Martin R. Delany

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Introduction by Toyin Falola

A preeminent African American abolitionist, author, public intellectual, physician, the highest ranking black officer during the Civil War, and a notable activist for the emigration of blacks to Africa, Martin Robison Delany has left an enduring legacy in his writings, the power of his ideas, and his political activism. So influential was he during the nineteenth century that a number of people now refer to him as the "Father of Black Nationalism." He spent most of his career working toward the goal of seeking black emancipation through practical projects aimed toward returning African Americans to Africa, where he hoped his people would make a new beginning within the context of political freedom and a society devoid of racism. Two of his most influential works on black nationalism are presented in this volume.

The Condition, Elevation, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States (1852) presents Delany's separatist views. To many scholars of African American political thought, this book marks the origin of black nationalism in print. However, its scope is much broader than this single focus might suggest. It is the first book-length study to present an account of the economic and political status of blacks in the United States. Because of the intractable nature of U.S. racism and the deplorable living conditions of most African Americans, Delany concluded by recommending emigration of African Americans to Central America.

Some years later Delany turned to Africa as the better choice for relocation of black Americans. Based on an exploratory journey he took to West Africa in 1859, he wrote Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party. The report provides clear information on the conditions in West Africa of that time to give immigrants an idea of what they would encounter. He also provides an impressive amount of data on how to improve agriculture, land, ventilation, and housing to promote better living standards.

With an introduction by Toyin Falola, the Frances Higginbotham Nalle Centennial Professor in History at the University of Texas at Austin, this new edition of these two provocative and intriguing nineteenth-century documents sheds much light on the black nationalism movement in the context of African American history.

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