

**SELF-RELIANCE IS THE  
TRUE ROAD TO  
INDEPENDENCE:  
FREEDOM AND  
INDEPENDENCE IN  
MARY ANN SHADD'S  
WRITINGS**

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From the very first it has been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people that have led and elevated the mass, and the sole obstacles that nullified and retarded their efforts were slavery and race prejudice.

W.E.B. Du Bois ("The Talented Tenth")

*Abstract*

The first literary use of the term *self-reliance* noted by the *Oxford English Dictionary* was by the English social critic and reformer Harriet Martineau –though Ralph Waldo Emerson had been using the term for several years. In *Society in America* (1837)– she observed the destructive influence of socially approved gender stereotypes, declaring, “Women are, as might be anticipated, weak, ignorant and subservient, in as far as they exchange self-reliance for reliance on anything out of themselves.” This is

*Resumen*

El primer uso literario del término *autoconfianza* que aparece registrado en el *English Oxford Dictionary* fue el de la reformista social Harriet Martineau –aunque ya Ralph Waldo Emerson lo había empleado durante años. En *Society in America* (1837)– Harriet observó la influencia destructiva de los estereotipos de género afirmando que “las mujeres son, como podía esperarse, débiles, ignorantes y serviles, en la medida en que equivocan el término autoconfianza por el de confianza en cualquier cosa excepto

not the case with Mary Ann Shadd, who was a highly controversial figure in her time. Both the expressions *Trust yourself* and *Avoid conformity*, which are repeated themes in authors like Emerson, and *Integration* in the double context of gender and race constitute the main points in Shadd's arguments. In this essay, I will attempt to get to the point that as well as for Emerson, self-reliance was the starting point for Mary Ann Shadd's idea to achieve independence. For the former, intellectual and moral independence, for the latter total human independence from the whites. Nevertheless, and not underestimating Emerson, this article has drawn attention to Mary Ann Shadd, who overcame many obstacles and craved for the harmony between blacks and whites.

*Keywords:* self-reliance, independence, integration, gender, race, harmony.

en ellas mismas.” Sin embargo, éste no es el caso de Mary Ann Shadd, figura muy controvertida en su tiempo. Las expresiones *Confía en ti mismo* y *Evita el conformismo*, repetidos temas en autores como Emerson e *Integración* en el doble contexto de raza y género, constituyen los puntos principales en su argumento. En este ensayo, intentaré llegar a la conclusión de que, igual que para Emerson, la autosuficiencia era para Mary Ann Shadd el elemento de partida para conseguir ser independiente. Para aquél una independencia moral e intelectual, para Mary Ann una independencia total de la raza blanca. No obstante, y sin ánimo de infravalorar a Emerson, este trabajo se centra en Mary Ann Shadd y en su deseo de armonía entre las dos razas.

*Palabras clave:* autoconfianza, independencia, integración, género, raza, armonía.

## I

The quote in the title of this article, “Self-reliance is the true road to independence” is from the paper which served as Mary Ann Shadd's voice and in which she worked as editor and reporter, *The Provincial Freeman*. She was the first black woman publisher in North America and the first woman publisher in Canada. To a certain extent such a personality as Mary Ann's was certainly not typical of a nineteenth century woman as she constantly transgressed the limits of respectability allowed to women, especially to black women. For this reason, she was regarded as a strange, controversial woman and she knew it.<sup>1</sup> She had a strong personality and was determined to be heard when defending her ideas confronting male authority. It is no accident that having been born a free mulatto imprinted a special something on Mary

<sup>1</sup> The reformer's life of grinding stress –with its endurance of public invective, notoriety and physical danger– was the life she chose [...] and she chose it knowingly” (Bearden and Butler 1977:17).

Ann's personality, whose life and way of thinking and behaving can be more fully understood in light of her privileged position as an educated black woman, a fact widely considered in the vast bibliography about her, so ample that any general or detailed critical revision is out of the scope of this article. It is precise to clarify here that until recently, Mary Ann Shadd, a teacher, political activist, journalist and lawyer, has been one of the least studied nineteenth century black activists. Nevertheless, the shallow approach to the study of Jane Rhodes's *The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (1998) provides significant background of the black activist politics in the United States and Canada and Shadd's own personal struggles as an educated black woman to carve out a place for herself.<sup>2</sup>

In the first place, the move of all her family from Delaware, where she was born and where slavery had not been abolished, to Pennsylvania, a free state where Mary Ann attended a Quaker school in West Chester, was essential in her life due to the support for the abolitionist cause and women's rights given by Quakers. In the second place, the fact that her father firmly believed in education as the basis for advancement and progress in life helped to shape her personality, and indeed her father insisted on the pressing need to educate his people considering the idea of returning to Africa, as many activists had in mind, as a backward step in their advancement. And finally, politically and ideologically speaking, the Shadd family was clearly linked to the reformist and abolitionist movement, taking an active part in the discussions in antislavery circles. In short, Mary Ann Shadd enjoyed a privileged position due to the pale brown color of her skin, her education and her financial situation but she greatly suffered from both the racial and the sexual discrimination prevailing in her time.

As stated, recent scholarship has claimed a place for Mary Ann Shadd within the community of nineteenth-century black women activists but despite a growing body of literature, we still know far too little about her. Her name does not resonate with popular recognition as other famous nineteenth-century black women like Harriet Tubman or Sojourner Truth. She and her contemporaries, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charlotte Forten, and Sarah Parker Remond, were freeborn, educated and thoroughly European in their outlook and in their bearing. As Nell Painter notes (1990:10), these women forced whites to reevaluate their stereotypes about black women because they lacked the *otherness* (emphasis in the original) that made a figure like Truth such a hero. Shadd's is a tale less of bravery or cunning, and more a narrative of tenacity striving for social change under difficult circumstances. Jane Rhodes, in the introduction of her book (1998) claims that one of the reasons for Mary Ann not to be so well known may be the fact that scholarly

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of Mary Ann Shadd's life, see Sadlier (1985), Bearden and Butler (1977) and Ferris (2003).

attention to Shadd first emerged out of interest in the Afro-Canadian experience. And this could be true as, for example, in this way Alexander Murray in his article (1959) refers only to the newspapers specifically conceived for black people in Canada, *The Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman*. Besides, Shadd's published and unpublished writings during the pre-and post-Canadian periods are incomplete and scattered through several archival collections. Nevertheless, Mary Ann Shadd left behind a collection of writings that holds up a mirror to her life and her political ideas. Besides, we can trace interest in Shadd to several references in women's history texts that sought to identify significant black pioneers. In this way, some of the contemporary discussion about Mary Ann Shadd originated with a biographical essay written by her daughter, Sarah Cary Evans, in 1926.

Generally speaking, one might say a true life does not exist when one's actions do not correspond with the things one believes in. What were Mary Ann's beliefs? What was, for her, the real extent of a true life, a life worth living?

In the present work I will attempt to show Mary Ann Shadd's idea of a true life, her idea of self-reliance and what was for her the best way for integrating black people into a white society. Of course her initial vitality and hope wanes with the passing of time and with her realizing of the impossibility to see her dream fulfilled in a short term. Nevertheless, all her work proves that never in her entire life did she abandon her creed on a much better future for her people. Throughout this paper I will use the terms integration, self-reliance and independence interchangeably; that is, the three terms seem to be highly relevant for the historical context in which, on the one hand, skin colour was the primary determinant for one's status in the world; and, on the other, we can probably find the finest 19<sup>th</sup> century defence of the ideal of individualism in Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance." The connection between these two people when referring to self reliance is quite deep.

Therefore, in the next section I intend to focus on Mary Ann Shadd's ideas and try to shed some light on the influences she might have had throughout her life including Emerson himself. Firstly, like many social critics, Emerson blames others for failing to live up to, or appreciate the importance of their own ideals; Mary Ann Shadd blames her own people, who wishing to avoid problems and conflicts, lived apart from the whites. Emerson saw the conspiracy of the group versus individuality as an omnipresent threat to the proper development of the human personality. The success resides in the individual who has the courage to think matters through for himself; a person whose intellectual independence enables him to surpass the most sublime achievements. Emerson was known for his repeated use of the phrase *trust thyself*; "Self-Reliance" is his explanation –both systematic and passionate– of what he meant by this and of why he was moved to make it his catchphrase. Every individual possesses a unique genius, Emerson argues, that can only be

revealed when that individual has the courage to trust his or her own thoughts, attitudes, and inclinations against all public disapproval. So, what Emerson entails with the term self-reliance is, among other elements, self-trust. The integration of black people into the white community depends, in part, for Mary Ann, on the black people and their trust on *themselves* (emphasis mine). Secondly, apart from what has been already stated, both share another important idea: conformism leads to dissatisfaction in life as it is the major obstacle to self-reliance. Emerson and Shadd's philosophies reside on optimism and hope. The responsibility extends to all living beings, and is therefore, the basis for a moral and ethical philosophy of universal respect and value. They are advocates of freedom –we must not forget here that Emerson supported movements for the abolition of slavery and the enfranchisement of women, at a time when such movements were not particularly popular– Self-reliance is then, for them, a reliance on one's own resources as opposed to dependence on others. The idea emerges from a belief that one is capable of self-guidance. Therefore, self-reliance means for both courage and enthusiasm. Their message is to follow one's own dreams. Obviously, it is an idealistic and optimistic message for black people at that time and in this way in the last section, I will mainly concentrate on the fact that despite her efforts and her creed on a perfect life for black people in Canada as explained in *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West* (1998 (1852)), Mary Ann Shadd was unable to cope with a complete satisfactory solution. And so her optimism withers at the end of the book when she refers to the prejudices against black people living in Canada as open manifestations of racism became very common. As Mary Ann was too restless to watch the developments in Reconstruction America from a distance and her options in Canada were dismal, she moved to the United States where this active woman still had to surprise us greatly.

## II

When one explores the layers of meaning of self-reliance, integration and independence, one realizes that, among other things, they are the very essential and inherent aspects in anyone's life and in the future of a country. It is a matter of humanity. Therefore, if independence, integration and self-reliance apply to any person, how could black people, according to Mary Ann, be independent, self-reliant and be like whites? According to her, blacks had to take three important steps if they wanted to reach complete freedom: education, independence and self-sufficiency. And the fact that these three issues are so closely interconnected and linked to the idea of integration permits us to explore the disillusionments she had at the end of her life.

Undoubtedly, the issue of education is clearly connected with black people's progress for mostly black abolitionists –see among others Booker T. Washington– who taught many blacks “how to improve their lives by cleanliness, industry, thrift, diversified farming, painting and mending, family budgeting, and better planning” (Toppin 1971:139). Indeed, Booker T. Washington urged black people to temporarily abandon their efforts to win full civil rights and political power and instead to cultivate their industrial and farming skills so as to first attain economic security. Labour is the motto for him as well as for Mary Ann and not directly challenging the social institutions that caused oppression and injustice.

However, there is a distinct difference in his point of view with respect to Mary Ann Shadd's. Although according to his ideas the eventual acquisition of wealth and culture by black people would gradually earn them the respect and acceptance of the white community, they would accept segregation and discrimination, a point which was not acceptable for Mary Ann Shadd. And indeed, Mary Ann saw, just to cite an example, the opportunity of establishing an integrated school in Canada for both blacks and whites –that was her idea of living with whites as equals. Besides, her idea of self-reliance made her pupils pay for their education as in this way they could appreciate this great gift. As far as we know she wanted to establish a pattern of autonomy and self-sufficiency as soon as she set foot on Canadian soil. And so, in her view, long-term survival means short-term sacrifice. Nevertheless, she encountered some difficulties that hindered her dream from coming true, blaming her own people in part.

Surprisingly, Mary Ann Shadd had the opportunity to have access to some kind of education and become a teacher. This was an exceptional fact as she was one of the very few black women to receive it, unlike the majority of the black people of her time who received no education at all.<sup>3</sup> Black people were constantly excluded from public schools so their education was either up to them or up to white philanthropists: “Many efficient persons have devoted their time and talents to their instruction” (Shadd 1998 (1852):67). However, she criticized begging for charity from the whites who apparently wanted to help instruct blacks:

Individuals in the United States often send books to those most needy, yet they are usually of such a character as to be utterly useless. I have often thought if it is really a benevolent act to send old almanacs, old novels, and all manner of obsolete books to them, what good purpose was accomplished, or even what sort of vanity was gratified, by emptying the useless contents of old libraries on destitute fugitives? (Shadd 1998 (1852):67)

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<sup>3</sup> “Mary Ann was one of the fortunate few black women who had a good education, and her family expected much of her” (Ferris 2003:13).

But, as Rhodes has claimed (1998:42) the Refugee Home Society's supporters<sup>4</sup> saw nothing wrong in seeking donations and considered Shadd's position hypocritical since she was being supported financially, in part, for her integrated school, by white philanthropy through the American Missionary Association which was founded to supply the needs of black Canadian people.

Education then was for Shadd the first step to be self-reliant, the key factor which would help blacks to change their deplorable situation. And indeed, she had this idea in mind when she started teaching. The analysis of her teaching career is something that is out of the scope of this article, but, nevertheless, it is worth pointing out some key facts necessary to understand her disappointments with people of her race.

After graduating in Pennsylvania she felt audacious enough to move back to Wilmington (Delaware) to open a school for black children as there was still no public education available to blacks there. It was at least partially through Mary Ann's hard work that by 1844 "Wilmington took steps to insure an education for the free black children of that city" (Bearden and Butler 1977:19). Then, she started teaching in several cities like Trenton, New Jersey and New York City. Her experiences in these various locations were not always positive as when she wrote to her family on one occasion, implying that the black people of Trenton were less than grateful for her efforts (Shadd 1998 (1852):13).

Later on, in Windsor (Canada) she got disappointed when Henry Bibb, a black reformist and the editor of the paper for which she wrote some articles, *The Voice of the Fugitive*, suggested that instead of creating a private school for whites and blacks together she should petition the government for a public black school. The answer to his suggestion was immediate and so in a meeting with her students' parents she said: "If they wanted an exclusive school *I would not teach for them* (emphasis in the original) (Bearden and Butler 1977:35). Of course, for an exclusive school everybody had in mind a school only for blacks, obviously a different idea to an integrated education as part of a complete integration in a white society; but without doubt white children were very unlikely to come to her private school.

Nevertheless, her ideas can be more fully understood in the light of her relationship with the non-conformist movement and reformist activities of the time. In fact, Abraham Shadd, Mary Ann's father, was very important for her in many respects and helped to shape her personality as he was an activist reformer who participated in many antislavery meetings and speeches with whom in her early life Mary Ann made her way. As a matter of fact, he was a conductor of the Underground

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<sup>4</sup> This was a black society founded for the help of slaves who had settled in Canada, project in which Henry Bibb was a key player and an important and significant person for Mary Ann's career.

Railroad, the clandestine system of routes and safe-houses through which slaves were led to freedom in the north; even their household was a station, as Delaware was ideally situated in the escape route.

Historically speaking, some prominent figures took part in this antislavery movement. The American transcendentalist, par excellence, and abolitionist H. D. Thoreau (1817-1862) helped to speed fleeing slaves north and served as a conductor himself and therefore could help to escaped slaves make their way to Canada. In fact, his famous political essay “Civil Disobedience” was, according to McElroy (2009), the response to his imprisonment that happened in July 1846 when he declined to pay a poll tax which contributed to the support of slavery. Also to be sure, his philosophical ally, friend and mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson himself became involved in social reform movements, especially anti-slavery and women’s rights. When he believed that his hero, Daniel Webster, had betrayed public trust by supporting “the Fugitive Slave Law” of 1850, he attacked him publicly, helped hide runaway slaves and spoke out openly for the abolitionist cause. These two figures, Thoreau and Emerson were crucial in Mary Ann Shadd’s life and way of thinking.

Actually, Mary Ann Shadd and Emerson shared some ideas but also differ in some respects. Both urged their people to take pride of them and confide in their own inner voice and in not being afraid of expressing their own ideas. Both urged the individual to be a risk-taker. Emerson believed in the intellectual and moral independence of the human being but a great effort was considered to be made as he explained in “Self-Reliance” in 1841:

I do not need or want the approval of other men. What I believe I should do is what concerns me, not what other people think I should do. Of course, it is not easy to follow your own inner voice, for there are always those who will try to make you conform to the public will.

He believed in individualism, non-conformity, and above all, the need for harmony between man and nature as expressed in *Nature* in 1836:

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm, is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right. Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For, nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy today. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it.



Then, there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend. The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the population.

In this respect, these two authors differ. While Mary Ann believed in the integration of black people with the whites, Emerson believed in the individual integration with nature, leaving the human society apart. He realised the importance of the spiritual inner self over the material external self. She liked to make decisions for herself and for her people; she liked to be self-reliant, as Emerson, and wanted her people to be self-reliant too. Knowledge is the key point in her theory. And also, her main rule of behaviour is that black people must be non-conformists. Nevertheless, Mary Ann Shadd thinks that although free, black people should go ahead in getting integrated with the rest of human beings and not be isolated as some others think they should be, like the transcendentalist Emerson as he tells people that “to go into solitude man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society.”<sup>5</sup>

Mary Ann Shadd’s goal –to establish a place for black people in the white American society– was extraordinarily difficult to achieve. She demanded that black people be worthy of their freedom by daring to be independent in their individual lives. And so with this idea in mind, in her essay “Hints to the Colored People of the North,” she advised black people that they should be independent doing things by themselves as having confidence in one’s self could bring success. With this piece of advice she launched a crusade against her people’s passiveness as Mary Ann urged her people to live within their means, an idea that shows her beliefs in black independence and the need for self-respect.

It is necessary to take Mary Ann’s active personality into account in order to understand her ideas about passivity and servitude, reflected in her personal motto *we should do more and speak less*.<sup>6</sup> Actually, this sentence summarizes her thoughts and comments appeared in the newspaper *The North Star* published by Frederick Douglass, a self-taught and self-emancipated black man where she published the above essay in 1849.

Mary Ann Shadd’s message was overtly present in her works: “I firmly believe that with an axe and a little energy, an independent position would result in

<sup>5</sup> Emerson opens *Nature* with this sentence. What he means is that to know stillness or quietness inside, you need to leave not only society behind but also all of the activities of your private world. He says if you want to know solitude get out and experience nature.

<sup>6</sup> As Jane Rhodes has stated (1998:21) Mary Ann considered herself guilty of the lack of effectiveness: “We have been holding conventions for years-have been assembling together and whining over our difficulties and afflictions, passing resolutions to any extent; but it does really seem that we have made but little progress, considering our resolves”.

a short period” (Shadd 1998 (1852):52). Independent in the way Shadd used the word had a double meaning: to do things by one’s self, but more importantly, independently of white people; the key was to teach people how to be self sufficient and that would surely lead to independence.

In this way, in *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West* (1998 (1852)) she expressed that black people knew they could live without begging although there are some (*very ignorant people*), in Mary Ann’s phrase, who think differently. And so she includes, for this purpose, almost entirely a letter which was published in *The Voice of the Fugitive* in 1852, written by three people from Buxton from which we can point out the following words:

The cry that has been often raised, that we could not support ourselves, is a foul slander [...] Having lived many years in Canada, we hesitate not to say that all who are able and willing to work, can make a good living [...] The boxes of clothing and barrels of provisions which have been sent in from time to time, by the praiseworthy, but misguided zeal of friends in the United States, have been employed to support the idle, who are too lazy to work, and who form but a small portion of the coloured population in Canada [...] We wish the people of the United States to know that there is one portion of Canada West where the coloured people are self-supporting, and they wish them to send neither petticoat nor pantaloons [...]. (Shadd 1998 (1852):83-4)

It is clear from this letter that the opinions and behaviour of some Afro-Americans lacking a collective conscience and self-sufficiency exasperated those who were strongly fighting for improving their lives and so Mary Ann denounced it publicly in her works. As a matter of fact, as Shamina Sneed has pointed out (2002:7), Mary Ann Shadd defends action as the key element to improve the black race although for her “there was not always collective consciousness in the black community”. Unity is strength or united we stand divided we fall is the proverb that Mary Ann seemed to have in mind; if black people worked together anything would be possible, even if it was not like this. In this way, Mary Ann Shadd’s criticism is centered mainly on this part in all her work. For instance, she criticized the policy of the Refugee Home Society as, for example, once in Canada the black slaves had the opportunity through this society to buy some acres of land but free blacks were excluded: “[...] reference to a man’s birth, as free or slave, is generally made by coloured persons, should he not be as prosperous as his better-helped fugitive brethren” (Shadd 1998 (1852):71).

Mary Ann Shadd explicitly addresses this issue when referring to the fact that free blacks were also being persecuted under the “Fugitive Slave Law” and should therefore be regarded in need of just as much help a fugitive slaves. In her view, the “Refugee Home Society” defeated the ideal of collective purpose and action by artificially dividing the black community.

Therefore, Shadd's point is then to use the collective energy, skill and expertise of anybody who is willing to work under the guidelines of her project for the development of Afro-Americans into a global white society. She wanted to unite everyone's skills to create a path toward self-determination that could help to build up their interest and integrate them as a whole community of people, blacks and whites together. That is, to move from slavery toward integration in mainstream –i.e. white at the time– society. But her anger stems from her sense of helplessness when she tries to convince her people.

And indeed, while the achievement of most of her demands lay far in the future and rooted in a passionate devotion for her people and a belief in the possibility of self-sufficiency, Mary Ann Shadd believed that the longed-for freedom was not enough for her people. In her opinion, to be free was not only to have the privilege of not being in chains. Something had to be done not to depend on whites for every single thing. This personal statement was the leitmotif of a lifetime, being the starting point of a hard, long fight even against her race. She believed and fought for equality between blacks and whites, something which would be reached through education, independence and self-sufficiency.

### III

Mary Ann Shadd had grown up amid the convention movement debates on emigration. This was, in fact, a controversial issue among the black politicians and thinkers of the time. The idea of searching for other territories to settle down far from the United States and the horrors of slavery was supported by some leading black figures like the Reverend Martin Delany who encouraged blacks to emigrate to the Niger Valley in Africa or Henry Highland Garnet, who in the late 1850s was President of the newly formed African Civilization Society, an organization that advocated a return of blacks to that continent. Others, such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison or Abraham Shadd defended the idea of remaining in The United States without even immigrating to Canada as Henry Bibb. In this way they proclaimed in *The Liberator*, the newspaper published by Garrison, in September, 1831: "We are natives of the United States [...] we have our attachments to the soil, and we feel that we have rights in common with other Americans" (Rhodes 1998:12). Nevertheless the "Fugitive Slave Act" increased the number of blacks who fled to Canada.

This Law, which imposed a \$1.000 fine or six-month jail sentence to anyone who aided a runaway, was the impetus for Mary Ann Shadd's emigration to Canada West; and her desire to offer succour and advice led her to write *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West* in 1851. Many emigrant guides have been accorded classic status in the realm of early Canadian literature; among them Susanna Moodle's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) and Catharine Parr Traill's *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1860). But Shadd's *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West* sheds new, intriguing light on Canadian history and African-Canadian realities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this book all her ideas, hopes and disillusionments are reflected so perfectly that it takes great part in Canadian history.

The book praised Canada and encouraged black people to settle in this country and become self-sufficient, independent citizens. In fact, *A Plea for Emigration or Notes on Canada West* may be considered as a travel guide in the sense that Mary Ann Shadd, as a present day travel agent, tried to attract visitors to her beloved new land. Anyone, it seemed, could create a new life by emigrating to new territory, by working hard, by seizing opportunity. Nevertheless her short book was surrounded by some kind of controversy as the printer was a white man. Once more, she had to recur to white men for help as when she asked Alexander McArthur –a white man who belonged to the American Missionary Association–, for economic help for her integrated school in Windsor. Were these two facts really significant in her idea of self-reliance and self-sufficiency? Had her creed from the writing of "Hints for the Colored People in the North" changed greatly? In attempting to answer these questions one should take into account the practical side of Mary Ann's personality because accordingly it was not wrong to make use of the whites to get one's purpose when really needed.

Therefore, Mary Ann Shadd emigrated to Canada and advised by Henry Bibb, whom she had met in the antislavery movements debates, established in Windsor as a teacher. But at the same time, Mary Ann Shadd started a journalistic career. Henry Bibb was the editor of *The Voice of the Fugitive* –where abolitionist propaganda and slaves' autobiographies were published– for which Mary Ann wrote many articles. However, as Richard Almonte has cited in the introduction of *A Plea for Emigration or Notes on Canada West* (1998 (1852):16) it is ironic that the Bibbs advised Mary Ann to come and settle in Windsor with them as with the time they would become enemies. Henry Bibb had been a successful lecturer and his status as a former slave gave him any additional credit against Mary Ann Shadd.

As a matter of fact Henry Bibb was a fervent supporter of segregation against Mary Ann Shadd's ideas and, therefore, it was clear from an early stage that these two strong personalities could not work together. Besides, her former friend was constantly attacking her in his articles, among others, for her dream of an integrated

school. Moreover, Bibb and his supporters were equally disturbed by Mary Ann's independence and her refusal to be submissive to Canada's more established black, male leadership.<sup>7</sup> She also perceived that black women, who led more traditional lives, were uncomfortable with her visibility. And exactly, in an era in which women scarcely played an active role in public, her presence was an oddity. For this reason, Mary Ann considered the idea of creating her own newspaper facing up against numerous difficulties along the way: The strict gender codes which regulated 19th century society against which Mary Ann had to fight.

Although the newspaper was her initiative and the tasks of writing, editing and production were in her hands, she convinced Samuel Ringgold Ward to help her and both were coeditors of the newspaper.<sup>8</sup> *The Provincial Freeman*. They always hid her name and symbolically placed men in positions of authority leaving her in the background. Samuel Ringgold shared Shadd's anti-segregationist views. The motto chosen for *The Provincial Freeman* was "Self-reliance is the True Road to Independence", words they lived by. Under the nameplate was the phrase "Union is Strength". In her articles her criticism had changed little since she published "Hints for the colored People". The greatest obstacle to racial progress, she believed, lay in the black community's lack of collective action: "Instead of being like the Jews, who unite the more because of oppression, unlike every other people, the more the division the better" (First editorial of *The Provincial Freeman*, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1856) The paper was first established in Windsor, then in Toronto where Mary Ann Shadd married Thomas Cary, an early supporter of *The Provincial Freeman* and had worked closely with Mary Ann for years, and finally the paper succumbed in Chatham where Mary Ann had to close it due to economic difficulties.

*The Provincial Freeman* was the means used by Mary Ann Shadd to encourage her people to settle in Canada permanently. It was also the vehicle through which she communicated her motto of integration and social and sexual equality. At the same time, *The Provincial Freeman* was a newspaper of its time and included the typical elements of the newspapers of the moment; recipes, articles on diverse topics, literary discussions, etc. It also welcomed political articles written by different thinkers. One of these was Martin Delany, an activist and a friend of Mary Ann's. He believed in the independence and self-sufficiency of black people as well, but he supported the idea of returning to Africa, instead of emigrating to Canada, as Mary Ann did—and

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<sup>7</sup> According to Rhodes (1998:73) Mary Ann was considered by many as a demon or a witch; in fact she was called "Shadd-as-Eve-the-Evil" because "if masculinity was commonly equated with political activism and influence, then how could Shadd's detractors explain her rapid ascent in the public sphere of this small community?"

<sup>8</sup> Also, some time later, Mary Ann's husband, Thomas Cary, signed as editor to disguise his wife's sex in *The Provincial Freeman*.

had actually done. With the publication of her newspaper in 1853 Mary Ann Shadd culminated her labor in Canada.

Nevertheless, supporters of black migration often extolled the advantages of life across the border and the hopes of many withered. And indeed, although Mary Ann Shadd had had her hopes in Canada her ideas and feelings towards the so-called “Paradise for Blacks” changed after the thirteen years she spent there because of the *de facto* –recognized as *de iure*– inequality between blacks and whites. In other words, the political rights of black people were not denied but their social equality actually was. In fact, the great number of black people who fled to Canada after the “Fugitive Slave Law” –a real exodus in a way– had turned into a major problem and a perceived menace for Canadian whites who accepted these people but did not integrate with them.

In fact, it has been suggested that blacks in Canada were always “unwelcome guests”, who were tolerated as long as their numbers were small, but were increasingly ostracized as they became a distinct segment of the Canadian polity.<sup>9</sup> As demographic and political circumstances changed, white people’s fears and prejudices were exacerbated. When blacks arrived in Canada, they knew that racial prejudice existed but were optimistic about the idea that it could be eradicated and that Canada’s racism was less tenacious than that of the United States. Nevertheless, Henry Bibb observed that by framing blacks as incompetent and ignorant, on the one hand, and debased and immoral on the other, Canadians, like their American counterparts, felt justified in denying their rights and privileges as British subjects.

In the same way, segregation from whites with respect to blacks and among blacks themselves was a hard issue Mary Ann had to deal with. So her optimism from the beginning withered because of the prejudices obvious in the white society against black people living in Canada. She also blamed coloured people themselves who, willing to avoid tensions with whites, decided to live apart from them. Let us see for example their proper schools and churches. It is worth comparing the following two quotes in which Mary Ann Shadd made a compendium of the qualities that Canada could offer to the blacks; so far it seems that little had improved in the political, social or economic conditions of blacks living on either side of the border:

[...] to set forth the advantage of a residence in a country in which slavery is not tolerated, and prejudice on colour has no existence whatever-the adaptation of that country, by climate, soil, and political character, to their physical and political necessities; and the superiority of a residence there over their present

<sup>9</sup> Jason Silverman coined the term “unwelcome guests” in his book of the same title (1985). Winks’ *The Blacks in Canada*, (1988) and Walton’s “Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario” (1979) generally agree with this assessment.

position at home. It will suffice, that coloured men prosecuted all the different trades; are not only unmolested, but sustained and encouraged in any business for which their qualifications and means fit them; and as the resources of the country develop, new fields of enterprise will be opened to them, and consequently new motives to honourable effort. (Shadd 1998 (1852):60-61)

[...] coloured persons have been refused entertainment in taverns (invariably of an inferior class), and on some boats distinction is made; but in all cases, it is that kind of distinction that is made between poor foreigners and other passengers, on the cars and steamboats of the Northern States. There are the emigrant train and the forward deck in the United States. In Canada, coloured persons, holding the same relation to the Canadians, are in some cases treated similarly. (Shadd 1998 (1852):87)

And indeed, her pessimism and disillusionment were more than justified as schools in Canada remained racially segregated until well into the 1870s, and government support for black education limited. Furthermore, while African Americans were celebrating their liberation in the United States, race relations in Canada worsened. Nevertheless, she clung to the quasi-freedom and security that Canada had provided her for many years. In terms of Canadian history and cultural heritage and in terms of black history and heritage, the story of Mary Ann Shadd remains unique and exemplary. Her book *A Plea for Emigration or Notes on Canada West* was designed to counter claims by Southern US slave owners. The 40-page book is a carefully crafted appeal to black Americans to emigrate to Canada and she extolled the virtues of farming, climate and integrated schools to prospective settlers. But although Canada was for Mary Ann a place to seek an opportunity to express oneself in every respect, one could say that she did not find the real and unhindered freedom. The return of Mary Ann to the United States was due to several reasons apart from the ones stated. She probably was feeling exhausted from urging her people to act without seeing effective results and witnessing the prejudices existing in Canada against blacks (although she insisted on denying this fact). Maybe, the absence of her husband, who had passed away in 1869, leaving her with a child was influential, not to mention another child about to be born and three other children from her husband's previous marriage.

Homecoming –The United States– should be prepared in the long term. It is curious to note here that while the Bibbs never returned to the United States, Mary Ann Shadd, who believed in being safe from indiscriminate racism in Canada, did return to her country. Therefore, with the outbreak of the American Civil War, Mary Ann Shadd Cary returned and in the aftermath of the war Mary Ann Shadd had seen part of her dream come true: the abolition of slavery. But, at the same time, she learned that there was no escape from racial tyranny, either in the United States or Canada, in the north or south.

Moreover, her time in the United States was extremely fruitful. Apart from her career in education, she could continue her journalist activities as well. But this extraordinary woman was to astonish the world with a bigger challenge: to enroll in the Law School of Howard University. She was a pioneer in journalism and intended to be so in law. Again she encountered with sexual discrimination. In fact, Mary Ann Shadd was possibly the first woman to enroll at a law school. Shamina Sneed (2002) has studied this aspect of Mary Ann's life, so little considered up to now, concentrating on three of the legal works passed on by this amazing woman. Further information about her fight in getting the degree at the age of sixty can be found in that revealing analysis of this part of Mary Ann's life. In fact, very little is known about her legal practice but she is recognized as one of the first black women lawyers of her country.

Furthermore, after successfully challenging the US House of Representatives Judiciary Committee for the right to vote, she actively campaigned for women's rights through an organization she founded, the Coloured Women's Progressive Franchise Association. During the late 1860s and 1870s, Mary Ann Shadd fought for women's rights and fiercely defended the right of women to vote entrenched in her statement on the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments of the United States Constitution. Defending this right she took part in numerous activities –among others, her collaboration with Susan B. Anthony and the foundation of the short-lived Coloured Women's Progressive Franchise Association. Nevertheless, she soon became aware of the discrimination that black women suffered within the feminist movement as they were consigned to minor activities. It is also worth noting that there was traditional discrimination by black men who wished to keep their women fulfilling the role for which they were “naturally” born as Jane Rhodes expressed (1998:200). However, as expressed at the beginning of this article that was not the case of Mary Ann Shadd. As far as she could she did really achieve to be self-reliant and self-sufficient and not depend in her entire life on anyone but herself.

To conclude, it is worth pointing out that the notion of confidence appears to gain a noteworthy significance with Mary Ann Shadd as it is with Emerson who in a widely reprinted 1837 address, called on the person engaged in writing and thinking to “feel confidence in himself, [...] to never defer to the popular cry”, and to find and trust his own “definition of freedom”. Mary Ann Shadd always had the concept of integration in her mind. For this reason, as seen, she opened an integrated school in Windsor although with great financial difficulties and having failed at being attended by white children. She considered the idea that people of color should benefit from contact with whites, while simultaneously promoting racial pride and autonomy. Furthermore, she believed that the political, social and cultural unification of black people was essential for their survival. She tended to blame African Americans for their condition even as they recognized the demands of racial oppression. Throughout



her political life, she believed that black people bore the primary responsibility for improving their lot and changing their social position.

In a word, Mary Ann Shadd was the kind of woman who could not rest idle. She would never see her dream of racial integration come true but she paved the way for future generations to achieve it. The history of this fight against slavery and for the dignity of individuals remains in history. As Emerson she also believed in individual work, non-conformity and in this case the harmony between blacks and whites. The emblem of her newspaper, "Self-reliance is the True Road to Independence" makes her worth being considered the foremother of far future generations who succeeded in seeing her dream fulfilled. Self-reliance, then, is the triumph of her principles.

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