

Race, Riot, and Recovery  
Identifying Motive and Methods of Response to the Violence  
of the 1863 New York City Draft Riots

By Lynda Vernia

Mention the New York City Draft Riots to almost anyone and they will likely tell you they know all about the riots: after all, they've seen the movie *The Gangs of New York*.<sup>1</sup> While the movie successfully depicts the difficulties of everyday life in late-nineteenth century urban New York, it does not address the racial atrocities committed during the Draft Riots. The riots resulted from intersecting issues: the tensions of opposing Civil War factions within the city, increasing anger regarding economic inequality, and worsening race relations between blacks and immigrant groups<sup>2</sup>. This paper begins with details of the four days of mob violence that comprised the 1863 New York City Draft Riot, identifies groups who responded with assistance to those attacked, and examines the motives and methods of assistance given during the riot and the recovery period afterwards. For all the hatred expressed towards the African-American victims of the riots, there were also many New York residents, of all classes and national origins, who displayed the other side of hatred: compassion and an altruistic willingness to help their fellow human beings.

The New York City Draft Riots were not the first time, nor the last, that riots were used as a form of political protest. Riots were a regular occurrence throughout America by the time of the Civil War. Journalist Joel Tyler Headley's *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873*, gives a thorough account of New York City's long and violent history of riots, with at least fifteen riots

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<sup>1</sup> *Gangs of New York*, directed by Martin Scorsese (2002); New York City: Touchstone Pictures. Film. The plot of the movie is based in the Five Points area of New York City which emerged somewhat unscathed from the violence of the draft riots, despite the brief depiction of the riots in the film.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, Leslie M. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2003. 280-284.

protesting various issues occurring between 1712 and 1873, including the 1834 and 1835 Anti-Abolitionists Riots that were specifically directed towards the homes and churches of abolitionists and blacks.<sup>3</sup> While there was precedence for mob violence directed at black citizens, there had been no loss of life and the intensity of aggression and hostility of the 1863 Draft Riots had not been seen before. For four days, from July 13<sup>th</sup> to July 16<sup>th</sup>, the city of New York was immersed in the bloodiest riot in American history.

Although 1860's New York City working-class neighborhoods were well integrated with blacks, whites, and immigrants living in the same communities, there were many racial and social issues between these groups that were not being resolved. The general population had greatly increased over the last few years, and demographics were rapidly changing. According to the 1860 US Census, New York ranked second in African-American population with most of the free blacks in the state living in New York City<sup>4</sup>. Irish immigrants made up nearly twenty-five percent of the total population.<sup>5</sup> Many of the arriving immigrants struggled to find employment that paid a living wage; out of desperation Irish immigrants were willing to take lower wages for jobs that had been traditionally held by black workers, thus threatening black employment.<sup>6</sup> Many immigrants were concerned that the influx of emancipated slaves from the south, willing to take even lower wages, posed a threat to the immigrants' jobs<sup>7</sup>. In his book *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum*, William Seraile traces the origins of the racial conflict between the Irish and the blacks: "The Irish

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<sup>3</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*. New York: E.B. Treat. 1873. 9.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Office. "Population of the United States in 1860". Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. 1864. 337.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Office, "Population 1860", 609.

<sup>6</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. 225.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, Leslie M. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*, 280.

despised the Negro, with whom they often competed for the most menial positions.

Economically, they were at the bottom, mired in poverty and held in contempt by the Protestant white elite”.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the black community felt hostility towards the Irish as well: the Irish immigrants had not only taken their jobs, they also had citizenship rights denied to the blacks. Barnet Schecters’ *The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and The Fight to Reconstruct America* analyzes the developing tensions surrounding emancipation and citizenship that contributed to the conflict. Schecter points out that “blacks...were furious that recent immigrants could vote as soon as they were naturalized and faced no property requirements... emancipation did not mean political equality.”<sup>9</sup> Compounding these problems were rising inflation and stagnant wages leading to staggering poverty.<sup>10</sup> The animosity that was developing between immigrants and African-Americans would soon lead to violence and tragedy.

The United States government was two years into the Civil War at this time and to win the war the Union needed to find solutions to two of its most serious problems: economic instability and military recruitment. Iver Bernstein explains in *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War* that Lincoln chose to implement several policies for the Union to “centralize its authority and...finance the unprecedented cost of the Northern war effort,” the most controversial of which was the Emancipation Proclamation legally freeing the slaves in the southern states.<sup>11</sup> Lincoln believed that the Proclamation would solve the Union’s economic issues: by encouraging slaves to escape

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<sup>8</sup> Seraile, William. *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Schecter, Barnet. *The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and The Fight to Reconstruct America*. New York: Walker & Company. 2005. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Cook, Adrian. *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1974. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1990, 16.

to freedom in the North, the resulting increase in workforce and productivity would strengthen the Northern economy while simultaneously deteriorating the Southern economy. Many in New York did not agree with this solution to the slavery issue. The same issues that caused the split of the Union - federal rights versus states' rights and the resolution of the slavery issue - bitterly divided New York State politics, contributing to the heightened tensions during this time period. Many politicians and citizens alike held the opinion that the federal government had illegally expanded its powers by infringing on the rights of the state; this perception only worsened with the announcement of the Enrollment Act of March 1863.<sup>12</sup>

The Enrollment Act was an attempt to solve the Union's military recruitment issue. The Union Army faced high levels of attrition as many of the Union troops fulfilled their three-year volunteer enlistments and left the army. Adrian Cook, author of *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863*, says of the draft: "The old system of reliance on volunteer enlistments simply could not supply the number of men the army needed."<sup>13</sup> The Union desperately needed more men for the war effort and the Act's federal draft system was established to meet that need. The Enrollment Act became law in March 1863, requiring that all male citizens between the ages of twenty and thirty-five sign up for the Union draft with a random lottery to decide who would serve. The Act included a Commutation Clause that allowed exemption from service via a three hundred dollar payment or the provision of a substitute.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1990, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Cook, Adrian. *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*, 10. The \$300 figure was insulting to many potential draftees not simply because rich men could avoid the draft, but for the symbolism of the number: black men of draft age were "worth" more because if sold as slaves they cost \$1,000, while draftees were being "sold" for \$300. *Inflation Calculator*. (<http://www.in2013dollars.com>). (Accessed 15 Nov 2017). \$300 in the year 1863 is equivalent to \$5,634.13 in 2017.

While there was no specific mention of race in the Act, black men had been granted freedom but not citizenship with the Emancipation Proclamation, so they were considered ineligible for the draft. Carla L. Peterson, author of *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City* notes, “members of New York’s white working class grew increasingly angered that they were being asked to risk their lives in an armed conflict in which neither those who had decided on the war - political elites who could buy their way out of military service - nor those who they believed to be the cause of the war - blacks excluded by law from service - were forced to fight.”<sup>15</sup> Amid public outcry that the draft act itself was unfair and unconstitutional, the two issues of citizenship and economic inequality fueled the start of the protest by highlighting the conflict between black and white, rich and poor.

Despite complaints that the draft was unfair and unconstitutional, despite a national history of riots as political protest, and despite rumors of an organized protest movement the United States government proceeded with plans for the New York City draft selection process to begin on Saturday, July 11. There were no serious concerns by the government or draft personnel regarding dissent and no extra police or military presence to maintain public order. Local newspapers downplayed concerns about rumored disruptions by draft opposition as the first day of the draft went well with no interruptions from the assembled crowd.<sup>16</sup> On Monday July 13<sup>th</sup>, the crowd of spectators grew to twelve thousand people who came to see what the protestors would do.<sup>17</sup> As Evert A. Duyckinck wrote in his firsthand account of the riots, *National History of The War for The Union, Civil, Military, and Naval. Founded on Official and*

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<sup>15</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, 225.

<sup>16</sup> *The New York Daily Tribune*. “The Draft”. 11 July 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*, 25.

*Other Authentic Documents*, when the draft drawing began, conflict immediately broke out:

“Only a few names had been taken from the wheel when the building was furiously assailed with various missiles, the mob rushing in, seizing the records, and putting the officers to flight.”<sup>18</sup>

The New York City Draft Riot of 1863 had begun.

The goal of the protestors was stopping the draft, which was accomplished with the physical destruction of the draft documents and lottery machines; the draft offices were burned to the ground. The vandalism continued and spread; according to Harris, “The rioter’s targets initially only included military and government offices, symbols of the unfairness of the draft. Mobs attacked only those individuals who interfered with their actions.”<sup>19</sup> With word that New York Governor Horatio Seymour had suspended the draft, the diverse group of rioters felt that they had accomplished their goal.<sup>20</sup> This shared purpose took a dark turn as it became obvious that there were those in the mob who were willing to be much more violent and destructive. The attacks escalated from merely halting the draft to the destruction of private property and then quickly turned to physical attacks on people. First, the rioters began to loot and burn the homes and businesses of the wealthy. According to *The New York Herald*, the rioters had begun to physically attack “every well-dressed man, shouting ‘Down with the rich men’ in retaliation to those who could pay the three-hundred-dollar commutation fee.”<sup>21</sup> Soon after this, the focus of the mob turned to attacking abolitionists and destroying their property in disapproval of their role

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<sup>18</sup> Duyckinck, Evert A. *National History of The War for The Union, Civil, Military, and Naval. Founded on Official and Other Authentic Documents*. Vol. III. New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company. 1861. 266.

<sup>19</sup> Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 280

<sup>20</sup> Duyckinck, Evert A. *National History of The War for The Union, Civil, Military, and Naval. Founded on Official and Other Authentic Documents*, 268. Draft was reinstated in August 1863. “The draft, after various delays, was enforced in twelve States, bringing 50,000 soldiers into the service, and by the commutation clause contributing the large sum of over \$10,000,000 to be employed as a fund for procuring substitutes.”

<sup>21</sup> *The New York Herald*. “The Negro Troubles. York Street Sacked – the Negroes Leaving in Multitudes – A Child Killed”. 16 July 1863.

in the emancipation of the slaves. According to Bernstein "...the social complexion of the crowds had changed. Midweek rioters were more predictably Irish and Catholic... German-Americans seem to have shunned the looting, the hanging and mutilation of black men, and the attacks on war industries."<sup>22</sup> As the violence increased, some rioters ceased their participation; they wanted to stop the draft but wanted no part of the mounting destruction and violence.<sup>23</sup>

The mob soon shifted to racial violence as they began to attack any African-American they encountered on the street as well as looting, burning, and destroying their homes and property. Journalist Joel Tyler Headley reported accounts of huge mobs chasing after lone black men who if caught, might be beaten, tortured, lynched, mutilated, and burned.<sup>24</sup> During the course of the riots, there were twelve racially motivated murders, ranging in age from seven year old Joseph Reed to sixty-three year old Peter Heuston; many more were injured. It was not just African-Americans that were attacked; anyone associated with a black person could be targeted including landlords who rented homes to black tenants, employers of black workers, prostitutes who served black men, and even white women married to black men. White victim Ann Derrickson was murdered when the mob that arrived for her black husband turned on their twelve-year old mixed-race son instead; Mrs. Derrickson protected her child with her life when she used her own body to shield her child from the attack.<sup>25</sup> The long-standing racial resentments held by whites and immigrants were finally being expressed through inhumane and terrifying actions towards the black population.

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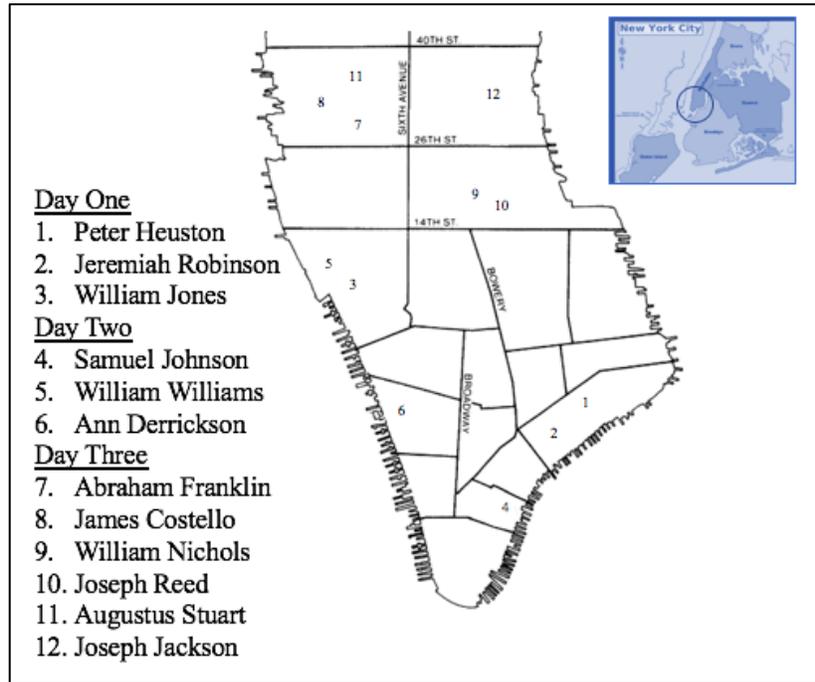
<sup>22</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 181.

<sup>25</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 208. .

**Exhibit 1. Location of Racially Motivated Murders by Rioters  
During the 1863 New York City Draft Riots<sup>26</sup>**



July 13-16, 1863

Source: Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*

By the afternoon of the first day, the crowd moved on to destroy the Colored Orphan Asylum. Headley reported that the rationale for this violence was “there would have been no draft but for the war – there would be no war but for slavery...the slaves were black so ergo all blacks are responsible for the war. This seemed to be the logic of the mob...they did not stop to consider how poor helpless orphans could be held responsible...”<sup>27</sup> A mob of three thousand attacked the Orphan Asylum; with advance notice, the terrified children were evacuated safely but the man who forewarned them was severely beaten. The rioters took the opportunity to

<sup>26</sup> Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in The Age of The Civil War*, 282.

<sup>27</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 169.

destroy or steal everything in the building before burning it to the ground.<sup>28</sup> The attack on the orphanage seemed to be motivated by the envy that black orphan children lived in better conditions than those of their own children in their immigrant slums.<sup>29</sup>

**Exhibit 2 - Colored Orphan Asylum, , 1861<sup>30</sup>**



Source: Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*. (NY Historical Society).

The New York City Metropolitan Police were greatly outnumbered by the rioters who were estimated to be fifty thousand in number.<sup>31</sup> Minimal military support was available to the police as the New York state militias had been sent to fight for the Union forces at the Battle at Gettysburg in the weeks immediately preceding the riots. As the seriousness of the New York riot became apparent, President Lincoln ordered the diversion of these troops back to New York

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<sup>28</sup> Seraile, William. *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*. 1863. "The Draft." "The rioters who have been arrested are all Irish...."

<sup>30</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*. (New York Historical Society), 233.

<sup>31</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 162.

from Gettysburg to provide military reinforcements, but these troops would not arrive to assist the police forces until Wednesday, July 15th.<sup>32</sup> The only military forces remaining in the city to assist the Metropolitan Police were the Army Invalid Corps made up of soldiers in various stages of recovery from battle wounds and illness. These combined forces of several hundred men were not enough manpower to restore law and order to the city. According to William Stoddard's *The Volcano Under the City, by a Volunteer Special*, when New York City Mayor George Updyke declared the city to be in a state of insurrection, over three thousand citizens answered the mayor's call to volunteer to be deputized as Volunteer Special patrolmen to provide additional forces to control the rioting mobs.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the military reinforcements of six thousand New York state militiamen returned from Gettysburg and were ordered to put an end to the riot with "whatever force might be necessary... for the maintenance of law and order" which they quickly achieved with military action.<sup>34</sup> When challenged about the legality of this show of force Governor Seymour stated, "When men begin to burn and plunder dwellings, attack station houses, hang negroes, and shoot down policemen, it is too late to attempt to restore peace by talking about the constitutionality of laws."<sup>35</sup> The decision to use decisive military action put an end to the riot and loss of life. And finally, after four days of unimaginable violence, the New York Draft Riot of 1863 was over.

The cost of the riots to the city of New York was substantial in human terms as well as damage and destruction of property. The official death toll was one hundred and twenty with

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<sup>32</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 162.

<sup>33</sup> Stoddard, William. *The Volcano Under the City, by a Volunteer Special*, 124.

<sup>34</sup> Duyckinck, Evert A. *National History of The War for The Union, Civil, Military, and Naval. Founded on Official and Other Authentic Documents*, 267.

<sup>35</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 222.

thousands more injured as a result of battles and attacks. More than fifty buildings were destroyed, with an even greater number of homes and businesses looted and damaged. The estimated loss of property was more than one million two hundred dollars.<sup>36</sup> There were two immediate goals for the black community: first, the rebuilding of the Colored Orphans Asylum and second, recovery for the devastated black community. Efforts to complete the first goal of rebuilding the orphanage hit a snag when fear of future attacks created neighborhood opposition to rebuilding at the original site. The issue was resolved with the purchase of another property outside of Manhattan, acquired using private donations along with compensation awarded by the Riot Claims Committee of the Board of Supervisors of New York City.<sup>37</sup> The second goal of black community recovery was spearheaded by an association of New York City businessmen, known as “The Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York”. The Committee was formed immediately after the riots to financially assist the black community in recovery; their main function was the creation of a fund to aid black residents harmed by the riot. In its *Report of the Committee of Merchants*, the Committee informed the public that \$40,779.08 had been raised for the fund from individual and group donations.<sup>38</sup> Funds were dispersed in two ways: an emergency fund that distributed small dollar amounts for immediate needs, and a fund that issued larger dollar amounts on the recommendation of black pastors who worked with the committee. By the end of August, funds

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<sup>36</sup> Barnes, David. *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*, Preface. *Inflation Calculator*. (<http://www.in2013dollars.com>). (Accessed 15 Nov 2017). \$1,200,000 in the year 1863 is equivalent to \$22,536,515.75 in 2017

<sup>37</sup> Seraile, William. *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum*, 78.

<sup>38</sup> Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York. *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*, 39-46.

had been disbursed for 12,782 persons and the group had assisted with legal claims against the city for 2,000 claimants for a sum of over \$145,000.<sup>39</sup>

It is much more difficult to quantify the long-term effects of the violence committed against the black residents of New York City. According to Peterson, the black press, the black clergy and black professionals played an important role in the recovery of the black community by “using their words and deeds to encourage the demoralized black community, and to tactfully challenge New York's white community to ensure fair treatment of black New Yorkers in the future.”<sup>40</sup> While these efforts helped the immediate situation, they did not solve the underlying issue of racism and economic inequality. Despite positive steps there was a well-founded fear that this type of violence would occur again. As a result of the riots, New York City’s African-American population dropped as many left the city, relocating from the integrated neighborhoods of Manhattan northward to black communities in Brooklyn and Harlem.<sup>41,42</sup> As Headley states, the black community was aware of the “intense hatred entertained toward them... they felt unsafe”, and the process of healing for the black community depended on the determination that they would take steps to protect themselves.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York. *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*, 39-46.

<sup>40</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, 259.

<sup>41</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, 253. Many wealthy blacks had already settled in Brooklyn prior to the riots, so there was an established black community, while Harlem was then at the far outskirts of the city.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Wash., DC, 1864); Franklin B. Hough, *Census of the State of New York for 1865* (Albany, 1867). According to the Census, the black population in New York City dropped from 12,472 in 1860 to 9,943 in 1865, a 20% drop.

<sup>43</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 268.

As historians we seek to not only record history, but to analyze and understand the events of history as well. Identifying the various population groups who responded with assistance to those who suffered violence during the riots, along with an examination of the motives and methods of that assistance, leads not only to better understanding of the New York City Draft Riots, but to an overall understanding of response and recovery from racist violence. As a result of my research and analysis of primary sources I have identified four population groups that provided assistance. In analyzing these groups it is important to note that these groups offered aid in different ways to all citizens affected by the violence of the Draft Riots. As outlined below, in each case the motives and methods of this assistance were slightly different.

The first group, which I have classified as the Law and Order group, consists of policemen or military who prepared for armed combat with the rioters, as well as offering physical aid and assistance to victims during the riots. The thousands of Volunteer Specials who were deputized to help restore law and order to the city belong in this group as well. The Law and Order group is comprised of adult, white men, both immigrant and native born. The motive of this group was the restoration of law and order; the Law and Order group had no expectation of reward or acknowledgement after the riots for duties performed. However, their efforts to protect lives and property often went above and beyond their duties at a risk to their own lives. David Barnes' *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record* gives details describing the scene: Frightened black citizens admitted to the Police Station for protection, food, first aid, and shelter; attempts by the rioting mob to remove blacks met with officer promises to shoot anyone who tried.<sup>44</sup> The police

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<sup>44</sup> Barnes, David. *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*, 58-71.

also engaged in battle to recover the mutilated remains of African-American men to preserve the dignity to the deceased<sup>45</sup>. In spite of being badly outnumbered and under vicious attack, the police and soldiers made innumerable heroic efforts to protect the population and restore the peace; many policeman and soldiers were killed or badly injured as a result of the violent battles.

The second group, classified as the Civilian Rescuers, consists of private citizens who offered emergency assistance to those in need during the riots. This group is comprised of all ages, genders, classes and national origins: rich, poor, American, Irish, German, African-American, and many others. The motive of this group is altruistic; they gave assistance without expectation of post-riot acknowledgment, often risking their own lives and property to help others. According to Headley, in the face of indiscriminate violence, citizens of all races and nationalities offered help to the wide range of those attacked: black and white, rich and poor, immigrants and native-born, landlords, abolitionists, store owners, newspaper publishers, policemen and soldiers, and even New York City Police Superintendent John Kelly<sup>46</sup>.

Barnes describes instances of civilians assisting policemen and soldiers seeking protection from the mob: a policeman hidden by a young German woman between two mattresses as rioters searched her home; wounded soldiers given first aid and hidden in homes until it was safe to move them.<sup>47</sup> Author William Stoddard, who was one of Mayor Updyke's Volunteer Specials, gives an account in his book *The Volcano Under the City* of the mob's attempt to burn a hospital containing two hundred and fifty wounded Union soldiers that was

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<sup>45</sup> Barnes, David. *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*, 58-71.

<sup>46</sup> Headley, Joel Tyler. *The Great Riots of New York 1712-1873, Including a Full and Complete Account of The Four Days Draft Riot of 1863*, 155-157. Police Superintendent John Kelly was ambushed and severely beaten as the first casualty of violence during the riots; he was near death when he was rescued from further attacks by a private citizen.

<sup>47</sup> Barnes, David. *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*, 58-71.

thwarted by heavy battle with armed citizens.<sup>48</sup> Later reports detailed many specific incidents of the help extended to black victims of violence: the evacuation of orphans from the Colored Orphan Asylum, citizens helping black neighbors scramble to safety as the mobs attacked.<sup>49</sup> Barnes relates other incidents: a citizen stopping a brutal attack by brandishing his firearm at the mob; an Irish family who fed and concealed a dozen black people in their home for several days.<sup>50</sup> The response of these concerned citizens to protect the lives of people unknown to them minimized the loss of human life and helped to prevent an even greater catastrophe than what occurred.

The third group, classified as the Merchants and Businessmen group, consists of businessmen who offered financial aid and assistance to the black population after the riots, forming The Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York to achieve these efforts. The Committee was established to administer funds from individual and group donations as well as provide assistance with legal claims against the city for damages incurred during the riot.<sup>51</sup> This group is comprised of rich, powerful, white businessmen, most likely native born. While the stated motive of this group was to provide financial assistance to aid in the recovery of the black population, some modern scholars, like Peterson, believe that this offer of aid was self-serving and paternalistic:

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<sup>48</sup> Stoddard, William. *The Volcano Under the City, by a Volunteer Special*. New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert. 1887. 168.

<sup>49</sup> Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York. *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*. New York: G.A. Whitehorne. 1863. 22-26.

<sup>50</sup> Barnes, David. *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*, 72, 81. It is important to note here that while a large percentage of the mob rioters were Irish, certainly not all Irish were rioters. I have found mention of many Irish who kindly offered help to those who needed it.

<sup>51</sup> Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York. *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*, 46. *Inflation Calculator*. (<http://www.in2013dollars.com>). (Accessed 15 Nov 2017). \$40,779.08 in 1863 is equivalent to \$771,739.89 in 2017. \$10 in 1863 is equivalent to \$187.80 in 2017.

More than anything else, the merchants wanted to ensure long lasting social and economic stability in the city that would keep the lower classes— both blacks and whites— in their place. To that end, they recognized the necessity of black labor. They worried that if the city’s black population remained unemployed, it might become a permanent “pauper race” that would drain the city’s charitable institutions or, just as bad, that white laborers from the country might flood into the city, thereby reducing wages, and becoming equally mired in poverty...the merchants enlisted members of the black elite to help them carry out their cause.<sup>52</sup>

The Committee’s paternalistic nature can be seen by their insistence on controlling the funds rather than handing them over to the black community to be dispersed as they saw fit and the requirement that fund recipients maintain employment.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the other groups, the Merchant group expected great recognition, appreciation and gratitude for their actions after the riots.

The fourth and final group, classified as Private Donors, consists of private citizens who made financial donations to black community recovery efforts after the riots. This group is comprised of all ages, genders, classes and national origins. The motive of this group is altruistic, with no expectation of acknowledgement or reward. Members of this group donated to two major fundraising projects: the first to raise funds to rebuild the Colored Orphans Asylum at its new site outside of Manhattan, the second to raise funds for the Committee Fund.<sup>54</sup> My extrapolation of data from the Committee Fund “Subscriptions to the Fund for the Relief of Colored Sufferers by Late Riots” document lists of donor names and amounts reveals, what is to the best of my knowledge, original research regarding these donations as depicted in Exhibit 3 below.<sup>55</sup> Although the fund was created by the businessmen’s Committee Group, the majority of

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<sup>52</sup> Peterson, Carla L. *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, 258.

<sup>53</sup> McGruder, Kevin. 2013. "A Fair and Open Field: The Responses of Black New Yorkers to the Draft Riots." *Afro Americans in New York Life and History* 37 (2). 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Seraile, William. *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum*, 78.

<sup>55</sup> *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*, “Subscriptions to the Fund for the Relief of Colored Sufferers by Late Riots”,39-46. I have not located any analysis of the donor information in any of the research I have done.

contributions came from private individuals rather than businesses; of the 660 individual donations to the fund, 504 were private donations (76%).<sup>56</sup> Of these private donations, 45% of the donations to the Committee Fund were private donations under \$20, of which many were much lower amounts; thirty-three donations were under \$5.00 and the smallest donation was \$.50.<sup>57</sup> Also of note were the donations by churches, Sunday school groups, and employee groups: Churches in Blakely, PA \$19.75; Sunday School of the Congregational Church, Flushing, Long Island \$25; Proceeds of Fair, by Children of Families Boarding at the house of W.H. Dibble, Stamford, CT \$75; Baptist Church, Middletown Rockland \$5; The Waiters of the U.S. Hotel, Saratoga Springs, NY \$113; Friends of the Colored People \$50. More research is necessary to uncover complete socioeconomic details of the donors, but I believe these donations patterns reveal a grassroots effort at assisting the black community in recovery.

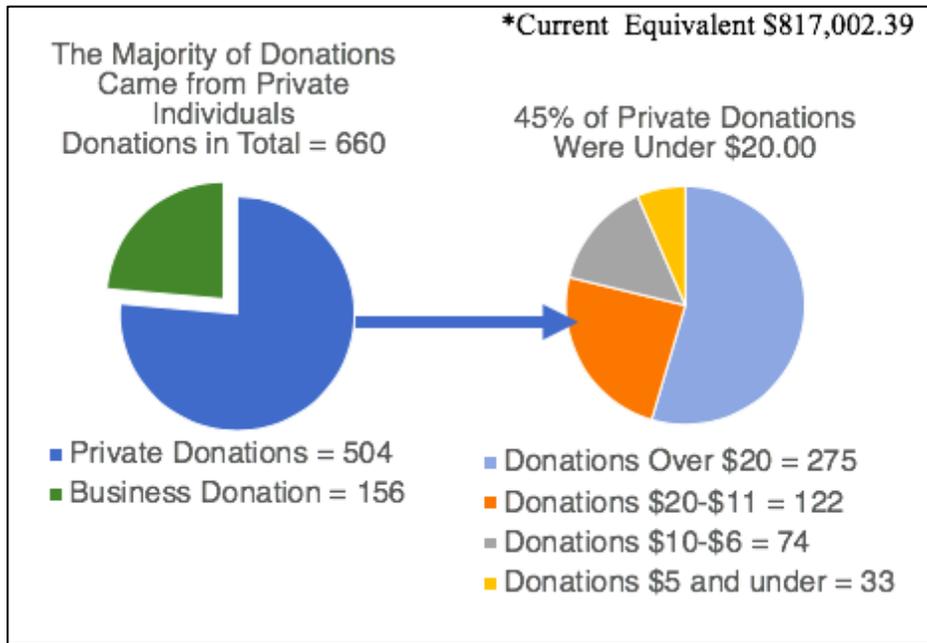
**Exhibit 3 - Donations to Recovery Efforts Totaled \$40,779.08\*<sup>58</sup>**

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<sup>56</sup> *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering From the Late Riots in the City of New York*, "Subscriptions", 39-46.

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People*, "Subscriptions", 39-46. Mr. W.W. Waldron donated \$.50, as noted on page 45. [Inflation Calculator. \(http://www.in2013dollars.com\)](http://www.in2013dollars.com) (Accessed 21 March 2019). A \$.50 donation in 1863 is equivalent to \$10.03 in 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Vernia, Lynda. *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People*, "Subscriptions", 39-46; <http://www.in2013dollars.com>



Source: Lynda Vernia. Data Source: *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People*, 39-46; <http://www.in2013dollars.com>

There is much written about the racial conflict and hatred expressed towards African-Americans throughout the history of the United States; the 1863 New York Draft Riots were the ultimate expression of this racism and hatred as intersecting issues of racism, economic inequality, and objection to the Civil War exploded into violence. Initial attempts to destroy the unfair draft system were successful, the mob soon shifted to racist anger and violent attacks on human beings with the brunt of the violence directed at African-Americans. There were many decent people who came to the assistance of the black population, both during the riots to literally save lives, and after the riots to help rebuild those lives. The motives of those who provided that assistance were not always altruistic, but undoubtedly every act of compassion extended towards those in need, no matter the motive, saved the lives of many of the victims of the 1863 New York City Draft Riots.

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